The word *Vipāka* means the ripening, maturing, effect, result, consequences of actions done in the present or former births and pursuing those who commit them through their subsequent existences. In brief it means *Karma phala*, fruits on maturing of actions.

There is wide unanimity in the definition of *Karma Vipāka* in the literature of different Indian religions.

Umāsvāmi (AD 135-219) in *Tattvārtha sūtra* (a Jaina text) 8.21 defines it as *vipāko anubhavah*: *Vipāka* is experiencing. His commentator Pūjyapāda (5th-7th Century AD) in *Sarvārthasiddhi* 8.21 explains: *prāgupacitanānā prakārakarma vipāko anubhavah*: Experience of previously accumulated *Karmas* of various types is *vipāka*.

The Buddhist acarya Vasubandhu (4th Century AD) in *Abhidharmakosā* 2.56 defines *vipāka* thus: *vipākah phalamantyasyeh pūrvasya adhipatam phalam*: Fruit is the end result of *vipāka*: *vipāka* controls the result.

The *Bodhisattavabhūmi* (4th Century AD) 2.5 of Asanga says: *Yadistānātadvinavānuśamsamyuktam phalamabhinirvartayanti tattesam vipākaḥ*: Vipāka means the result produced successively by desired (*iṣṭa*), disliked (*aniṣṭa*), ignoble (*ādīna*) and noble or praiseworthy (*anuśamsamyuktam*) actions.

Buddhaghosa (5th Century AD) in the *Visuddhimagga* XIX.17 speaks of *Kammātaran C'eva vipakantaran*: Round of *Karmas* and round of results: from *Karma* came to pass results. Result has *Karma* for its source. *Visuddhimagga* XIX 18 says: *Kamma Vipāka vattanti vipāka kamma sambhavo*: Vipāka follows *Karma*: *vipāka* is born of *Karma*. The Brahmanical texts define *Karma vipāka* likewise. Īśvarakṛṣṇa (AD 200) in *Sāṅkhyaikā* 46 defines *vipāka* as: *dharmena gamanamūrdhvagamanamadhadastad bhavatya adharmena*: Good deeds lead to birth in heaven and bad deeds to birth in hell.

The *Dasapadāratha śāstra* (AD 6th Century) of the Vaiśeṣikas gives a very simple definition: *hita-ahita vipāka*: Ripening of good and evil (which produces pleasure and pain).
Saṁkara⁷ (AD 788-820) in his bhāṣya on Brahma sūtra III.2.38 defines Vipāka as: Yatkalām hi yatsukham dukkham va ātmanā bhunyayrti tasmaiva loke phalatvam prasiddham: When at a time a self experiences pleasure or pain, that is generally known among people as fruition. Nyāyakandali,⁸ (AD 10th Century) a commentary on the Prāṣastapāda bhāṣya on Vaiśeṣika sūtras says: tato dharmadharma tatasca samsāraḥ: Karmas are the womb (yoni) of various beings; they mature in various ways with the passage of time into fruits or results.

The doctrine of Karma Vipāka was developed by the Buddhists, Jainas and Brahmins by relating the type of birth, human and non-human, length of life, happiness and suffering etc experienced as being the consequences of specific acts done by a being in his previous existences. While the destruction of Karmas (Karmanirodha) and detachment (vairāgya) lead to emancipation (nirvāṇa) and cessation of transmigration, performance of Karmas leads to repeated births in the five or six planes of existence; the duration of life in those planes of existence, the quality of life, such as ill or good health, wealth and poverty, pleasure and pain etc depend upon the maturing of the Karmas.

The Buddhist canonical texts (B.C. 3rd-2nd Century) give an exposition of Karma vipāka. In the Majjhmanikāya 3.35 and Āṅgut-taranikāya 3.46 it is stated by the Buddha that, after death, bad conduct (duccaritam) leads to hell or birth as an animal or a ghost and that good (Kalyāṇam) conduct leads to birth in heaven or as a human-being. The Cūla kamma-vibhaṅga-sutta of the Majjhimanikāya sets out the retributive rebirths of an individual after death with reference to the quality of his actions in a previous existence; thus a person guilty of violence and destruction of life, is reborn in purgatory or as a short-lived human being, a person guilty of assaults either goes to purgatory or becomes an ailing human being, a miser is born either in hell or as a poor human being etc. The Vīmāṇavatthu⁹ commentary of Dhammapāla (AD 5th-6th Century) says: “By giving a seat (to a person) one gets a very high position, by bestowing food one secures health and wealth, by the gifts of clothes one acquires good complexion (varṇa) and property, the gift of conveyances procures for the giver special happiness and that of lights begets powers of vision, by giving a house one gets all sorts of property.” Again the Pañcagatiḍīpanam¹⁰ (AD 13-14th Century) says
that among the gods and men and demons, those who are malicious
do not live long, but those who are free from malice, attain long life.
Those who oppress others by confining and beating them, are sub-
ject to leprosy, madness etc. Those who misappropriate property of
others and do not make gifts to anybody, cannot earn money even
with great efforts. “Those who give stolen wealth to others at first
become rich but are afterwards reduced to poverty. Those who
acquire wealth by honest means but do not give it to anybody, get
wealth with great effort. Those who do not steal wealth and are very
charitable obtain wealth which cannot be destroyed by theft etc.
Those who offer food daily are long lived, endowed with great
beauty, strength, intelligence, health and happiness....Those who
always abuse others and are liars are reborn as hunchbacked and
dwarfs”.

Likewise those who commit violence, theft, adultery etc., are
born in hell and pay for their misdeeds by sufferings in hell and in
relatively higher forms of life, that is as plants, birds and animals.
As soon as the effects of Karmas which cause birth in a particular
plane of existence, are exhausted, the being is reborn in other
planes, higher or lower, depending upon the quality of the residual
Karmas: the human plane represents the norm from which a being
falls or to which he rises or from which he goes above or to which he
falls back.

The religious beliefs regarding Karma vipāka are supported
by philosophical justification. The Bodhisattvabhūmi\textsuperscript{11} I.7 says:
\textit{akusalānām dharmānām apāyesu vipāka Kuśalāsāravānām sugatau
vipacyate tadvipāka phalam:} Evil deeds (on fruition) bring about evil
(calamity, injury, loss), whereas good actions lead to happy birth;
this is the fruit of maturing of Karmas. Again the Bodhisattvabhūmi I.3
distinguishes between \textit{vipāka (fruition), vipāka-hetu (cause of frui-
tion)} and \textit{hetu-phalam (result of vipāka)}. The causes of \textit{vipāka} are all
types of actions, violence, non-violence, dāna (charity), truthfulness
etc.; they produce results in the form of the length of the life span
(āyuḥ), caste status (varṇa), wealth (aiśvarya) etc. These in turn are
the results of fruition, \textit{vipāka-phala}.

Sthiramati (AD 5th Century) in para 51 of his Bhāṣya\textsuperscript{12} on
Vasubandhu’s Trīṃśikā Vijñāptimātratāsiddhi 3 cites the view of other
Buddhist schools about Karma Vipāka in these words: \textit{Śubhānām kar-}
manām sukkho anubhavāḥ phalavipākaḥ / Aśubhānām dukkhaḥ: Good deeds on maturing, lead to experience of happiness as their fruit; evil deeds lead to unhappiness, misery.

The Jaina canonical texts (B.C. 4th-AD 2nd Century) give a parallel exposition of Karma vipāka. The Sūtra kṛtāṅga¹³ 2.1.13 explains human inequalities, noble or lowly birth, beauty & ugliness, success and status in life etc. as due to a person’s Karma.

Jaina texts (such as Bhagavati Sūtra 8.9.9) link specific states of existence with specific Karmas, those who indulge in violent deeds, kill creatures, eat flesh etc. are born in hell; deception, fraud, falsehood lead to the birth of the offender as animal and plant; kindness, compassion, humble character lead to birth as a human being; austerity, observance of vows etc lead to birth in heaven.

The Vipāka Śrutam¹⁴ sets out dukkhavipāka and sukhavipāka in ten stories each. The dukkhaVIPĀKA stories relate the intense sufferings an individual has to undergo in various existences (bhavas) for his misdeeds; the results of good deeds are illustrated in sukhavipāka stories: specific fruits (suffering and happiness) are related to specific previous misdeeds or good deeds of an individual.

The Jainas made an elaborate classification of Karmas: they are of eight types: jñānāvārṇīya (obscuring knowledge), darsanāvārṇīya (obscuring right faith), mohaniya (causing delusion), vedaniya (causing pain or pleasure), āyuḥ (Karma which determine the life span in planes of existence, heaven, hell etc, on rebirth), nāma Karma which determines individuality (species, body etc), gotra, the social status and antaraśya (which is a hindrance to doing good karma).¹⁵

The Jainas also believed that the duration (sthiti) or the time for ripening and fruition and the period for which the Karmas remain dormant (abādha-kāla) are different for different classes of acts. Thus the jñānāvārṇīya karma have a minimum time span of 48 mts (muhūrta) and a maximum of 30 kodākodi sāgaropamas (an extremely long period); the period of dormancy (abādha-kāla) is 30000 years.

The Brahmanical or Hindu law¹⁶ givers (BC 500 to AD 300) deal with the fruition of karmas elaborately specifying (i) the various forms of existence in which a jīva or living being takes rebirth, such as human being, worm, insect, bird, animal, plant etc, (ii) the diseases with which he might be afflicted such as leprosy, consumption, epilepsy etc. and their duration, (iii) the deformities from
which he might suffer such as being born dumb, deaf, blind, etc, (iv) the status a being occupies in society such as that of a King, Brahmin etc.

The earlier purāṇas, (such as Vāyu, Brahmāṇḍa, Matsya, Mārkandeya, Viṣṇu, Bhāgavat AD 300-600) as pointed by Hazra, deal with Karma Vipāka. They deal with it in the same manner as the Dharmaśāstras viz. the souls are embodied in different forms of existence due to their deeds; they are born in heaven, hell or on this earth, as a result of their Karmas; they suffer various tortures in different hells for their sins done in previous lives; and thereafter they are born as insects, birds, animals, human beings and as gods depending upon the progressive exhaustion of their evil Karmas and ripening of their good Karmas.

Sāṁkara, in his commentary on Brahmasūtra III.1.8, states that the souls of those who perform sacrifices and the like, rise to the sphere of the moon and when they have done with the enjoyment (of the fruits of the works) again descend (to the earth). “Having dwelt there (heaven) they return again that way as they came”. Those whose conduct has been good obtain good birth of a Brahmin etc. Those whose conduct has been evil obtain the birth of a dog etc”.

The doctrine of Karma vipāka is a natural and apparently logical development of the basic law of Karma; it deals with the mechanism of operation of the law and specifies specific punishments and rewards for particular evil and good deeds. It is in the nature of a penal-cum-procedure code. But a critical examination of Karma vipāka reveals many unsatisfactory features which makes the operation of the law of Karma either arbitrary or mysterious; it unmasks the deceptive logic of the moral law of Karma. This would be amply evident from the many questions it leaves unanswered:

(i) What is the time lag between the commission of a moral action, Karma, and the ripening of its results? In other words, how much time does a Karma take to ripen? Is the time lag uniform or does it vary in respect of different Karmas? Only the Jainas attempted to lay down the life span of each type of Karma. But the concept of time lag also introduces the paradox of evil doers flourishing and guilty men enjoying the ill-gotten
gains and good men and good doers and innocent men suffering in the world of experience and reality.

(ii) Does each Karma fructify separately by itself or are the potential effects of various Karmas amalgamated into a composite Karma or Karmas producing one or more results? If the Karmas are amalgamated, do good (Kusala, punya sukta) Karmas and (akuṣala pāpa, duṣkṛta) Karmas combine or amalgamate only with Karmas of identical character or also with Karmas of opposite class or type?

(iii) In case the Karmas combine or amalgamate to yield a resultant Karma, does it mean that good and evil Karmas can neutralise each other partially or wholly?

(iv) What is the role of purusāratha human effort, in the fulfilment of Karmas? Do the Karmas remain unproductive if there is no effort?

These problems appeared to have exercised the minds of Indian thinkers, though they did not and could not provide adequate answers. They suffer from ambiguity and contradictions. Here also their unanimity ends.

Regarding the time within which the Karmas fructify, the Majjhimanikdya 1.373 says: The fruit of a deed is threefold, it may arise here and now, or later in a succession of lives.

About the interaction of different Karmas, in the Sāmaṇṇaphala Sutta of the Dīghanikāya20 2.20 it is said that the ease and pain measured out as it were with a measure cannot be altered in the course of transmigration; there can neither be increase nor decrease thereof, neither excess nor deficiency. In other words, good and evil deeds bear their own results. The story of the death of Moggallāna as narrated in Milindapaṇha21 4.4.1 and in Buddhaghosa’s commentary22 on Dhammapada 137 emphasises that good and bad actions are independent and do not balance against one another.

The Āṅguttaranikāya23 3.10.99 on the other hand, strikes a different note in explaining the disparity in the results of Karmas. It discusses the cases of two individuals who have done the same deed but with entirely different consequences: one who does some slight deed of wickedness (appamattakam) goes to hell (nirayam); another individual who does the same slight deed of wickedness and expiates it in present life (ttādi samyeva, which is to be experienced in this very life) treating it as serious, is saved from hell.
The Buddha explains this apparent disparity—inequality before law—on the basis of an analogy: a certain quantity of salt added to a cup of water makes that water undrinkable; but the same quantity of salt added to the waters of a big river like the Ganga will produce no effect on its drinkable quality. The Buddha goes on to cite the cases of two persons who may suffer vastly different punishments for an identical offence. He says: “We may have...the case of one who is cast into prison for a halfpenny, for a penny, or for a hundred pence or...we may have the case of one who is not cast into prison for a halfpenny, for a penny, or for a hundred pence”. The Buddha explains: “Whenever...anyone is poor, needy, and indigent, he...is cast into prison for a halfpenny, for a penny, or for a hundred pence”. “Whenever...anyone is rich, wealthy and affluent, he is not cast into prison for a halfpenny, for a penny, or for a hundred pence”. The Buddha concludes “...if any one were to say that a man must reap according to his deeds, in that case...there is no religious life, nor is any opportunity afforded for the entire extinction of misery. But if...the reward a man reaps accords with his deeds, in that case...there is a religious life and opportunity is afforded for the entire extinction of misery”.

Again as regards the relative strength of Kuśala (good) and akuśala (evil) deeds, the Buddhists hold that the former are more powerful than the latter. Milinda pañha 3.7.7 says that Kuśala is the greater, demerit is a trifle. It is explained that a man who does a wrong feels remorse later and so demerit does not increase whereas merit increases gladness, joy etc and hence it increases merit. Again Milinda 4.8.24-29 explains that evil Karma has limited potentiality and therefore matures quickly whereas good Karma is vast (vipula) and matures in a long period of time: “Vice by its meanness dies quickly away. But virtue by reason of its grandeur, takes long time to die”. Consequently whereas, generally speaking, both good and evil deeds fructify in subsequent lives of an individual, evil deeds may fructify in this life itself.

The belief of Buddhists in the transference of merit, punya parinamnā, that is, the benefit of good deeds done by an individual can be donated to or transferred to another, was another factor which could seriously interfere with the vipāka process and distort the fruit to be realised for specific acts.
It would be evident from the foregoing evidence that there were inner contradictions as to the manner in which *Karma* fulfils itself; on the one hand, each deed works out its own fulfilment, and good and bad deeds cannot be balanced; on the other hand, the texts maintain that good or evil acts can be neutralised by the mass of evil or good deeds. More significantly the *Anguttaranikāya* makes a laboured effort to explain the disparity in the consequences faced by different individuals for the same deed. Again it is manifestly unfair that the gravity of an offence should be dependent upon the doer’s capacity and resources. A poor man may be driven by sheer necessity to commit theft but it is evidently preposterous that he should go to hell for the offence whereas a rich man, who may have had no economic compulsions to commit theft, be let off lightly.

The fluid nature of the doctrine of *Karma Vipāka* in Buddhism becomes clear from its analysis of the time for fruition of *Karmas* and the nature of the energy, productive or destructive, generated by them.

*Majjhima nikaya* 1.373, we have noticed earlier, makes an indefinite statement: “The fruit of a deed is threefold, it may arise here and now, or later or in a succession of lives”.

As Harivarman in the *Satyasiddhiśāstra* (AD 2nd-3rd Century) 100 elaborates: *Kiñcitkarma niyatavipākam, Kiñcidaniyata vipākam, kiñcidauttamam madhyamamadhamam dyātadhamnavipākamupapadhyā vipākam taduttara vipākam*: Certain action definitely matures, the maturing of others is uncertain or indeterminate; certain actions bear excellent fruit, other middling and low fruits; certain *Karmas* fruitify in this very world (in which they are done), certain in the next world and others in distant future.

The *Visuddhimagga* XIX and the *Dhammamatthasangaha* (AD: 12th Century) V.8 distinguish respectively 12 and 16 different kinds of *Karmas* and their fruits. Of these, 8 types of *Karmas* and their fruition have relevance for us. These are:

(a) those which fructify with elapse of time;
(b) productive or positive and destructive or negative *Karmas*.

The following *Karmas* belong to the first category:

(i) *Karmas* which bear fruit in the present life;
(ii) *Karmas* which bear fruit in rebirth or next life;
(iii) *Karmas* which bear fruit at no fixed time;
(iv) Bygone Karmas or Karma which has been, ahosi Kamman.
This Karma does not bear fruit.

The texts do not specify the Karmas which will bear fruit in this life or in the life hereafter or at an unascertainable time in future.
The same Karmas are also classified according to their nature:
(i) productive or reproductive Karmas (Janaka Karma);
(ii) supportive or maintaining Karma (utthanbhaka). This Karma does not fructify by itself; it helps to make productive Karmas more effective;
(iii) counteractive or unfavourable Karma (upapādaka). This Karma obstructs or nullifies or neutralises productive or destructive Karmas;
(iv) destructive Karma (upaghātaka); it destroys or suppresses or inhibits the fruition of other Karmas.

Here again, the texts do not indicate the criteria for classifying the various Karmas as productive, supportive, destructive or counteractive. In fact as Sthiramati in para 159 of his Bhāṣya on Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi 19 observes: na hi karma vidyamāṇapi kleśeṣu prahīnēṣu sahakārikāraṇābhāvāt punarbhavamabhinīrvarayaṇitum samartham: Even if the Karma is present, it is not able to lead to rebirth due to the absence of related or associated factors.

The doctrine of Karma Vipāka in Jainism also suffers from same impreciseness and confusion as in the sister philosophical and religious schools. The Jainas believe that the Karmas of the same kind such as Jñānāvarṇīya or vedāniya or nāma or gotra Karman combine with their own kind but not with another. This is what Pujiyapāda in the commentary Sarvārthasiddhi on Tattvārthasūtra 8.22 and 23 says: prasamkhyaōapunbhūvata (22) sa yathā nāma (23): (A person) experiences the sum total (of his Karmas) and this adding up takes place in accordance with their classes or kinds.28 This is consistent with their view that different kinds of Karmas are of different durations including the period in which they remain dormant. Further Pujiyapāda in his commentary on the Sūtra 9.36 says; Karmas fructify and are exhausted provided the place, time, environment etc are appropriate.

Again in Jainism good and evil Karmas are distinct and separate. As Sthānānāga sūtra (an early canonical text) 11 & 12 says: ege puṇe ege pāke; puṇya (good action) is one, pāpa (evil action) is another. There is no off-setting of good and evil Karmas.
Again at the time of a new Karma bandha (bondage), the Karma particles binding the soul affect the duration (sthiti) and intensity (anubhāga) of the earlier Karma bonds.

An important factor that has had a powerful bearing on the Karma-vipāka in Jaina thought is tapas, austerities. The Jainas maintain that Karmas can be consciously and prematurely matured and thus shed (nirjarā) through physical mortification and mental repentance. Through tapas, the dormant Karmas are made to arise (udaya) and eventually fructify (udirāna). In the result the time and intensity of Karma Vipāka is indeterminate. Again some Karmas are dhruvodaya, whose fruition after elapse of time is certain and automatic, while others are adhruvodaya, whose time of fruition is uncertain.

The Brahmanical texts also confess that the time for the fruition of Karmas is uncertain and allude to neutralisation of evil Karmas by the dominant good Karmas and vice versa. The Bhagavadgītā (BC 500-200) XVIII 12 says that the fruit or result of good (iṣṭa), bad (aniṣṭa) and mixed (miṣra) Karmas is reaped in the life hereafter.

The Yogaśāstra (BC 100-AD 300) classifies Karmas into two groups with reference to the time when they mature and the period of time after which they mature. Firstly those which bear fruit in this life-time: drṣṭajnanvedaniya—determinate, and those whose maturation takes place in life or lives hereafter at a point of time which cannot be determined or predicted beforehand, adṛṣṭajnanvedaniya—(inderterminate). To quote Yogasūtra ii. 12: “The latent deposit of Karmas (Karmāśaya) has its root in the hindrances (Kleṣas)—avidyā (ignorance) ahaṃkāra (egoism), rāga (passion or attachment), dveṣa (aversion, dislike, ill will) and abhinivesa (will to live), and may fructify and be felt in a birth seen (drṣṭajnma-vedaniya) or in a birth unseen (adṛṣṭajnma-vedaniya)”. Veda Vyāsa (AD 400) in his bhāṣya explains that Karmāśayas ripen or become vipāka in this life itself due to intense austerities (tapas), concentration (dhyāna) or devotion to the lord (Īśvara). Again Karmāśayas ripen quickly in respect of evil results if a person treats another person with contempt, when he is terrorised, sick and wretched or is undergoing penance (tapas). Secondly Yogasūtra iii. 22 refers to upakrama (advancing, quickly maturing) and nirūpakrama (non-advancing, slowly
maturing) Karmas. There is no actual identification of Karmas conforming to these classes.

Udyotakara (AD 7th Century) in Nyāyavārttika 3.2.61 describes vipāka as pūrvakṛtam vipākakāla aniyamat iḥāmūrtā jātanyatre, indeterminate regarding the time of fruition of previous actions in this existence, in the next life or world or in future births. The previous Karmas give fruit only when the time is appropriate and give fruit when the remaining related factors are present and there are no adverse factors.

Jayanta in Nyāyamaṇḍījī (AD 880) maintains that the time for the fruition of vihita (prescribed) Karmas cannot be settled: they mature at different times: (i) some fructify immediately e.g. yajñas for rain, (ii) some fructify after the elapse of time e.g. putreṣṭi yajña, sacrifice for the birth of a son, and (iii) some fructify in heaven e.g. jyotistoma. According to Jayanta niśiddha or prohibited Karmas fructify in the next world.

Manu (B.C. 200-AD 100) in his Smṛti XII 20-21 introduces the concept of balancing of good and evil, credit and debit. He says: “If he had done greater good than evil in life, he should enjoy the pleasures of paradise” and “If he had done greater evil than good in his life, he should suffer pangs of yama”—yamayātanā.

The Yogasūtra bhaṣya ii. 13 says that the Karmaśayas (latent deposits of different Karmas, both Kuśala, meritorious, and akuśala, demeritorious) get amalgamated into the single impulse (ekapraghṛtakena) or rolled together into one lump (saṃmūrchita) and thereafter it fructifies. This single impulse manifests itself in two phases, in this life with the three fruits or results viz. type of birth (jāti), length of life (āyuh) and experience (bhoga, pleasure and pain) and in rebirth hereafter. The former which manifests itself within a determinate time is the dominant Karma impulse, whereas the Karma which ripens in an indeterminate time is called subordinate: the dominant Karma fructifies immediately, the subordinate Karmas give result after some delay. Veda Vyāsa specifically avers that “A single mass (samūhin) made of merit destroys evil (mass)”. Udyotakara maintains that the fruition of Karmas can be arrested through the intensity of maturing Karmas. Vācaspāti Misra (AD 9th Century) states that a single mass made of merit (śukla Karma) is more powerful than dark (Kṛṣṇa) and dark-bright (Kṛṣṇa śukla)
latent deposits, hence destroys the latter. The subordinate \textit{Karma} is exhausted through maturation over a period of time, or by being ‘cast’ into dominant \textit{Karma}.

Samkara\textsuperscript{30} in his \textit{bhāṣya} on \textit{Brahmasūtra} III.2.38 while maintaining that the lord of all (\textit{sarvādhyakṣaḥ}) causes the fruition of \textit{Karmas} (\textit{Karmānurūpamphalam}), yet has to take into account the difference of place and time (\textit{deśa} and \textit{kāla}).

The role of \textit{Kāla} (Time) and of \textit{puruṣāratha} (human effort) as set out in the \textit{Mahābhārata} (\textit{Mbh}) (BC 5th-AD 4th Century) reveals the doubts and reservations in the minds of Brahmanical scholars about the precise manner in which \textit{Karmas} fructify. The relevant \textit{parvas} XII & XIII are later additions to the original epic.

The \textit{Mbh} XII 224.32.33.45 & 54 poses the question: a good man born in a good family is seen to suffer, while a bad man born in a low family is seen to lead a life of happiness. This is attributed to \textit{Kāla} (Time) which brings about ups and downs in life. \textit{Mbh.} XII 33.19 says that \textit{Kāla} is the witness, that is proof, of the good and evil deeds of beings: \textit{Karma sūtrātmakam vidhi sākṣīnām śubhapāpayo.}

\textit{Mbh.} XII 3.22 makes \textit{Kāla} and not \textit{Karma} as the causative force. ‘Just as an instrument is under the control of the blacksmith, likewise \textit{Karmas} through the agency of \textit{Kāla}, Time, endow universe with life’. \textit{Karmanā Kālayuktena tathen ceṣṭate jagat.}

The \textit{Mahābhārata} also identifies \textit{daiva} or destiny with previously accumulated \textit{Karmas} and discusses the relative role of \textit{daiva} and \textit{puruṣāratha}. \textit{Mbh.} XIII 6.7 says: ‘Just as seeds remain barren unless sown in a field, likewise destiny or fate or past \textit{Karmas} cannot achieve anything without human effort’. \textit{Mbh} XIII 6.22 says: \textit{Kṛtah puruṣkārastu daivamavanuwartate na daivamkṛte Kiṃcit kasyacid:} Human effort follows destiny or fate (\textit{daiva}), that is, destiny is moulded by human effort. Without effort, \textit{daiva} or destiny cannot give anything to anyone). \textit{Mbh}. XIII 6.4.7 observes: \textit{na ca phalati vikrama jīva loke na daivam}. \textit{Vyapanyati vimārgam nāsti daiva prabhuitvam:} In this human world, those who do not make effort cannot succeed or prosper: \textit{daiva} or destiny is not powerful that it can make a person give up the wrong path. In the same verse it is said: \textit{nayati puruṣkārah saṃcitastra tatra:} it is accumulated human effort that takes a human being here and there.
Karma Vipāka

The *Vaiṣṇavadharmaparva* of the *Mbh* XIII 6.28, XIV 92 also emphasises that any actions done previously may be rendered ineffective by

(i) intense human effort *Mbh* XIII 6.28;
(ii) by *sandhyā* prayers *Mbh*. XIII;
(iii) by *tapas* (austerities), *yajña karma* (sacrifices) and *dāna* charity (*Mbh*. XII 35.1 & XII 35.41);
(iv) by *bhakti* (devotion) *Mbh* XIV 92). It is also averred *Mbh* XIII that an excellent good action or a serious evil deed can destroy quickly a minor evil or a minor good deed.

*Caraka Samhita* (AD 4th Century) III (Vimānasthāna) 333 avers: Weak *daiva* (destiny) is subdued by human effort (*puruṣkṛāra*); likewise human effort (*karma*) is subdued by powerful *daiva*.

It would be evident from the above that *Karma vipāka* is dependent upon *Kāla* and *puruṣārtha*; it is not automatic either in this life or in the life hereafter. Does it mean that in the absence of *puruṣārtha*, human effort, a person will not experience the results of his good & evil deeds of previous lives?

To sum up (a) The Buddhists held (i) that each *Karma* fructifies independently, (ii) that an identical *Karma* may yield different fruits to different individuals depending upon the respective stocks of *Karmas* and the intensity of repentance for any misdeed, (iii) that good deeds are more powerful and longer lasting than evil deeds but they take long time to mature whereas evil deeds fructify quickly, (iv) some *Karmas* have greater energy potential, being productive or destructive, while others are only supportive or counteractive, (v) good *Karmas* are transferable, (vi) the time of fruition of *Karmas* is really indeterminable as the *Karmas* which bear fruit in this life or next life were left unspecified.

(b) The Jaina viewpoint is materially similar. They hold that only the basic or fundamental *Karma* types or their derivatives are amalgamated producing a resultant *Karma* of particular type or class though the scope for conversion of a derived *Karma* into another derived *Karma* of the same basic class is limited; that good and evil do not cancel or neutralise each other consistent with their belief in the inescapable and inexorable nature of *Karmas*. Jainism is also distinguished by the belief that *tapas* or bodily mortification can
prematurely and consciously exhaust the accumulated *Karmas* and thereby alter the normal operation of *Karma vipāka*.

(c) The Brahmanical texts postulate that (i) evil *Karmas* fructify quicker than good *Karmas*, (ii) the maturing of *Karmas* can be hastened through special practices, (iii) the good and evil *Karmas* are amalgamated and only the resultant *Karma*, depending upon the relative ‘mass’ of good and evil *Karma*, bears fruit. This implies mutual neutralisation and reinforcement of the potential of *Karmas*. (iv) The dominant *Karmas* are experienced in the life in which they are committed whereas the ‘subordinate’ *Karmas*, whose fructification is indeterminate, mature slowly. The dominant *Karmas* determine the type of birth and length of life and may also produce happiness or unhappiness. The subordinate *Karmas*, however, bring about states of happiness or unhappiness only. (v) *Karmas* ripen only when other related factors like time (*Kāla*), place etc are suitable or congenial. (vi) *Karmas* do not fructify by themselves; for making them bear fruit, *purusāratha*, human effort is required. In other words mere good *Karma* is not enough, human effort is essential for obtaining the fruit of one’s past *Karmas*.

It would be abundantly clear that *Karma vipāka* was a very fluid, nay nebulous, concept. The doctrine of *Karma* at the macro level was a very lofty concept providing a most rational explanation of inequality and suffering in life and a most powerful *raison d’être* for ethical discipline. But at the micro level, the doctrine of *Karma vipāka* exposed its serious limitations: when and how do *Karmas* mature, do they mature severally or collectively and do good and evil *Karmas* react on one another? Is human effort an essential condition for maturing of past *Karmas*? Are *Karmas* matured prematurely through *tapas*? It reduced the doctrine of *Karma* from a law of moral causation to a theorem, an *ipse dixit*.

No wonder that the *Bhagavadgītā* IV.17 proclaimed: *gahanā karmaṇo gatiḥ*: the working of *Karma* is mysterious; Nyāyavaiśeṣikas called *Karma* as *adrṣṭa*. *Veda Vyāsa* in *Yogabhāṣya* ii,13 says that *Karma* is mysterious and not easily discernible; Udyotakara *ibid* 3.261 admits that the operation of *Karmas* is incomprehensible and cannot be determined by human beings in advance. Vācaspati Miśra in *Tattvavaiśeṣiki* emphasises: “even a very clever man could not determine the order of results”. *Milindapañha* 4.4.1 calls *Karma*
vipāka as acintyā unthinkable. Haribhadrasūri in Śāstravārtāsamuccaya 91 & 107 considers, inter alia, adṛśta and Karma as synonyms.

The Vasantarāja Śākunam (AD 12th Century) 17 sums up succinctly: “Here there is no rule by which people’s previous Karma produces particular effects under the influence of place and time. What indeed is the relation between those two things which are not immediately connected’’?

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1 Monier Williams: Sanskrit English Dictionary.
2 Tattvārthasūtra of Vācaka Umāsvatī (tr) K. K. Dixit, Ahmedabad 1974, and Sarvārathasādādhīri or Pūjyapāda (ed. & tr) by Phool Chandra Jain, Bharatiya Jnanapeeth. An earlier Śūtra 2.45 uses the word upabhoga in the sense of experiencing the consequences of accumulated Karmas.
3 Rahula Sankrītayana (ed) Abhidharma Kosā of Vasubandhu, Varanasi 1931.
5 P. Maung Tin: The Path of Purity, P.T.S. 1931.
8 Prasātpādabhāṣya with commentary Nyāyakandāli of Śrīdharabhaṭṭa, Varanasi 1963, p. 676.
11 N. Dutt: ibid, p. 72.
12 Ramshankar Tripathi and Thubten Chogdup (ed & tr) Trīṣṇikā Vījñānapīṭārattatāsthī, with the Bhāṣya of Sthirmati, Varanasi 1972.
14 Gyan Chand: Vipāka sūtram (Śrutam), Ludhiana 1952.
15 Each of these types of Karmas is further subdivided. Again some karmas fructify in the process of transmigration (vīgrahagati), some fructify in this life and others in various existences (bhavas).
16 Vaiśisṭha (B.C. 500-300) XX 43-44; Manu (B.C. 200-AD 100) XI 48-53, XII 32-72; Yājñavalkya (AD 100-300) III 131, III 206-21; Viṣṇu XLIII 23-45; XLIV 1-45 and XLV 1-33.
17 R. C. Hazra: Puranic Record on Hindu Rites and Customs, Dacca 1940.
18 Regarding the Purāṇas dealing with the subject, see Vaiśy 101.115-145, 175-192; Brahmāndā Pt. III 4.2 145-191; Mārkaṇḍeya XI 22-25, XII, XIV 16-18 XIV 23-31, 37-95, XV; Viṣṇupurāṇa II 6-1-10, 32; Bhāgavat 3.30. 4.5, 20-27, 32; 3.31, 43, 3.32, 3-4; 5.26. 3 & 37; 7.13-23-241; Agni 352. Among the late purāṇas Garuḍa I.32.72-80, 125-126; Brahmavaivarta XXVI 11-31, XXIX 1-6; Vāmana 12.
19 G. Thibaut: ibid.


23 See also Warren: *ibid*, pp. 218-221.


27 Other classifications of *Karmas* are: (x) Weighthy *Karma*, proximate *Karma*, chronic *Karma* & outstanding *Karma*; (y) Bad *Karma*, Good *Karma* in Kamaloka. Good *Karma* in Rūpaloka and Good *Karma* in Arūpaloka. The latter are enumerated by Dhammamattaheragaha.

28 As Sukhlalji in his commentary on the *Tattvārthasūtra* points out that an *anubhava* yields fruit in conformity to the nature of that very *Karma* in which it itself resides—not in conformity to the nature of any other *Karmas*. For example, the *anubhava* residing in jñānavārṇīya *Karma* yields a more or less intense fruit in conformity to the nature of this *Karma* type, that it performs the task of concealing jñāna; on the other hand it does not yield fruit in conformity to the nature of other *Karma*-types like dārāṇāvārṇīya, vedāṇīya etc.; the rule of *anubhāvabandha*, according to which fruit is yielded in conformity to the nature of the *Karma* concerned applied only to the derivate ones. It is possible to convert a derivate *Karma* type belonging to same basic *Karma* type by mental exertion. For example *matijñānavārṇa* may be converted into a collateral derivate *srutijñānavārṇa*. Even among the derivative *Karma*-types, there are such as do not get converted into one another. For example *dārāṇāmohavārṇa* does not get converted into *caritravārṇa* or vice-versa; similarly *nārakāyus* does not get converted into *tiryak-āyus* or any other type of *āyus*.


30 G. Thibaut (tr) *Vedānta Śūtras* with *Samkarabhāṣya*, S.B.E. XLII, New Delhi 1965.