

THE UNDERSTANDING OF GABA AND ITS
RELATION TO THE DOCTRINE
OF KARMA

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MASTER OF ARTS IN PHILOSOPHY

by

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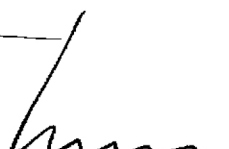

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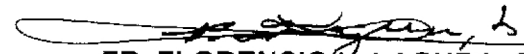

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*To Nanay Aida, Aldwin, Geraldine
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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to determine the relationship between the Filipino concept of *gaba* and the Indian doctrine *karma*, in order to clarify their points of convergence and divergence

The study utilized the methods of interpretative analysis and comparison. As it focused on the analysis of the essence of the aforementioned concepts, verbatim quotations from texts dealing with the said perspectives were used. The analytic method was informed by hermeneutics such as that employed by Gadamer who said that "the correct way of approaching the text is to question it and in the ensuing dialogue of question and answer, one lets the text reveal its true meaning for the grasping and understanding by an interpreter. In addition, J. Maritain's idea to confront the things in comparison in the same light was also utilized, as it enabled the mind to move from one light to another and thereby discover unity in the very midst of non-coincidence.

The two perspectives were seen to have these points of convergence: the causality principle, preoccupation with ethics, operation of justice, collective effects, and functions. Their points of divergence, on the other hand, were discern relative to their causes, directions, time of reckoning, reincarnation/transmigration views, reception of retribution, view on revenge, and the role of God.

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CHAPTER I THE PROBLEM AND ITS SCOPE

Rationale of the Study

References to *gaba* in Philippine literature are few and brief. They center on the concepts of curse and divine retribution¹. Their recurring theme is that certain people seem to always have the fear of being inflicted with *gaba*. In the patterning of reality, they appraise or do things in consonance with what is generally known about *gaba*, that is, punishment which comes as a natural consequence of some transgressions, especially moral². This belief considerably influences the values, conceptions of realities, behavior and motivation of people in a given cultural milieu³.

Among native Cebuano speakers, for instance, who often substitute the word *karma* for *gaba*, one often hears the statement, "*Ayaw na'g buhata kay tingali og ma karma ka*" (Don't do that otherwise you will be inflicted with *karma*). This suggests that Cebuanos tend to equate *gaba* with *karma*, if not think that there is only a thin demarcation line between the two concepts. However, *gaba* and *karma* are two different concepts. One difference, among other things, is that while *gaba* is a notion or an understanding exclusive to the people who are using the Cebuano language as their medium of communication, *karma* is a doctrine the origin of which is traceable to the philosophical and religious thoughts of ancient India.

One other difference that may be cited here is the absence of the notion of punishment in *karma*. According to the doctrine of *karma*, everyone is conditioned or determined by his or her conduct. This is to say that every deed one performs has its effects in the world, and forms a tendency within the doer that may have something to do with, if not serve as basis for, his or her future deeds. *Karma*, thus, is not punishment

but the law which sets forth the relation that obtains between one's action and one's state of being ⁴

Closer than *gaba* to the concept of *karma* is the Cebuano term *palad* or fate ⁵ Its affinity with *karma* lies in the sense that both may be viewed either positively or negatively That is, there can be both good *karma* and *palad*, or bad *karma* and *palad* *Gaba*, however, right away suggests a negative connotation. punishment

While, of course, *gaba* and *karma* are not the same, they have some similarities Among their common features, for instance, is that both deal with the law of cause and effect Thus, while differences of opinion may surface between what people believe about *gaba* and *karma* respectively, it is possible to consider their areas of sameness When viewed within the context of philosophy, these concepts will lead the researcher to point out facts that are significant enough to posit a credible ground for the critical assessment of the two perspectives being studied Oriented towards philosophical analysis, interpretation, and comparison, this thesis writer will moreover come up with a clear and distinct presentation of the convergence and divergence of *gaba* and *karma* Thus, readers of this work can fully understand both notions in their proper context.

Theoretical Background

This study originates from the researcher's observation that people who believe in *gaba* seem to think that it is similar to the doctrine of *karma* This is discernible in the Cebuano who says "*Gaba-an ka unta*" or "*Ma-karma unta ka*" These utterances point as well to the fact that the speaker, having noted something undesirable (in word or deed) on the part of the person spoken to, wishes that punishment befall on the latter Though also uttered in jest at times, these expressions, which are often heard from television, radio, and movies, have caught the fancy of many present day Filipinos