

What is Karma?

Karma is a Sanskrit word that means action, and encompasses the results of the action. If one hurts another, the action vanishes when the event is over, but the physical and emotional consequences remain.

Karma is action that creates an influence over future events in one's life. Karma is created by three categories of action: thoughts, words, and deeds, which include all the activities in life.

From this, we can understand the relationship of cause and effect in the present. Those in sports and music will get good results if they exercise and practice. This is a simple example of cause and effect in one's present life. The principle of karma in Buddhism goes beyond one's present life. In Buddhism, results that manifest in one's present life can be due to behavior in past lives. This principle also extends into the future.

The Sutra of the Foundation in Observing the Mind (*Shinjikan-gyo*) states:

If you wish to know the causes you have accumulated in the past [in your past existences], look at the effects that are manifested in the present. And if you wish to know the effects that will be manifested in the future, look at the causes you are accumulating in the present..."

(*Gosho*, p. 571)

The life into which one was born is a current result brought about by karma created in past lives. One's actions in the present will show in one's future. Causes accumulated in the past are called past karma, and the causes currently created are called present karma. .

The way to change Karma

Nichiren Daishonin's teaching is not fatalism. It is the teaching that allows us to truly change our karma, as he demonstrated in his own life. The Daishonin states in "Letter from Sado":

My present exile is not because of any crime. It is solely so that I may expiate in this lifetime my past heavy slanders and be freed from the three evil paths in the next.

(*Gosho*, p. 580; MW-1, p. 38)

The Daishonin said he eradicated his past karma by enduring the persecution of the Sado exile. Moreover, he said that he could open a way for the future that would be free from the three evil paths.

If we believe in the true Buddhism of Nichiren Daishonin and chant Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo, we can observe our lives, change our karma, and build a strong life force that will enable us to overcome any difficulty and establish a truly happy life.