

BACK TO THE BASICS
KARMA
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Karma has a funny way of creeping up on you. When something unexplainable happens in your life, and you just cannot seem to figure it out, it is very easy to say, “This is my karma.” While this statement can be true, it is important to realize that all your karma is based on the principle of cause and effect. And that what you have just experienced, whether good or bad, was an effect of something you did in the past. Buddhism teaches that “if you want to understand the causes that existed in the past, look at the results as they are manifested in the present. And if you want to understand what results will be manifested in the future, look at the causes that exist in the present” (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 279). Your karma does not descend on you from above—it comes out from your life based on what you have done.

Karma is like a checking account—you put money in, you take money out. But in this case, your deposits and withdrawals are all the thoughts, words and actions that you have created in the past and will create in the future. You certainly cannot withdraw what you have not deposited!

Karma is actually neither good nor bad. It is simply a collection of causes and their corresponding effects. However, as most of us have realized, there are many causes that we have made that we do not necessarily want to feel the effects of again. Also, there are many causes for the future that we would not particularly like to carry out. By practicing Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism, we have the ability to change poison into medicine; by basing our lives on faith, we can change all those nasty causes that we have made (and might still make) into good fortune for our lives. Plus, we can develop the wisdom to control what kinds of causes we make from now on.

In “Lessening One’s Karmic Retribution,” the Daishonin states, “If one’s heavy karma from the past is not expiated within this lifetime, one must undergo the sufferings of hell in the future, but if one experiences extreme hardship in this life [because of the Lotus Sutra], the sufferings of hell will vanish instantly” (WND, p. 199). By exercising true faith in the Lotus Sutra and continually striving to advance in our daily practice, we come to see our problems as opportunities to change our negative karma. The Daishonin’s Buddhism is so wonderful—it gives us the ability to take charge of our karma and lead value-creating lives.