

## June Discussion Topic – Karma

Karma is the accumulation of the causes we make and the effects they produce. It shapes our future and permeates the very depth of our lives. The original meaning of the Sanskrit word *karma* was “deed” or “action”. In Buddhism, it means that every action we undertake – everything we think, say or do – produces a latent effect within our lives. This effect, or karma, becomes manifest once it is activated by some external factor. Our past actions determine our present circumstances, as, in turn, our actions in the present determine our future.

In Nichiren Buddhism, it is the principle of changing karma that enables us to overcome our problems. It gives us hope, courage and confidence. Every person possesses the inherent power to change his or her negative karma for the better. Nichiren Buddhism teaches us that we can change our karma by manifesting our innate Buddhahood. Just as the myriad stars in the sky vanish as soon as the sun rises, the unfathomable amount of negative karma present in our lives is transformed as soon as we manifest the life state of Buddhahood.

Changing karma simply means to change the negative tendencies within our lives and build a happy existence. Nichiren Daishonin explained this by means of a quote from one of Shakyamuni’s sutras: “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” (WND-I, 279).

This is why our attitude, our inner determination at every moment, is important. Through what we are thinking, saying and doing at any given moment, we are creating our future.

Karma does not disappear at death; we take it with us into our next life. Our present sufferings, too, continue into our following existence. That is why we should not give up on our faith when, in the course of our practice, we face problems or persecution. Our difficulties are actually an opportunity for us to change our karma and grow. With our practice of Nichiren Buddhism, we are striving for our own fundamental, eternal happiness, and that of others.

\* Why are problems a chance to change our karma?

\* What does it mean to change your karma into mission, and do you have an experience with that?