

October Discussion Topic – Changing karma into mission

Buddhism teaches that karma is the effect or result of all our causes that we have made in past lives and in this life. Because these effects can be both positive and negative, many people tend to blame their suffering to “bad karma” as a result of the bad causes they have made in the past. Although Nichiren Buddhism recognizes that there is a causal relationship between our karma and the causes we have made, we are encouraged not to dwell on or be hindered by the past, but to focus on the present moment. We can bring forth our boundless potential - our Buddha Nature - at any time.

Changing karma into mission is a modern-day expression of a principle illustrated in the Lotus Sutra known as “Voluntarily Assuming the Appropriate Karma.” The sutra tells of bodhisattvas who, though having made the causes to attain enlightenment, voluntarily delay doing so. They vow instead to be born into this world filled with suffering and evil, with all sorts of karma - illness, financial hardship, family discord, loneliness, low self-esteem, and the list goes on. They do so out of compassion: to show, through their own example, the way for people to overcome suffering and become happy. Rather than lament our karma or regret our past causes, this principle suggests that we can consider our problems as something that we voluntarily take on in order to bring forth our potential and fulfill our mission. By courageously taking on our difficulties and changing our karma, we prove the power of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo.

President Ikeda says: “It is important to have the attitude: ‘These are sufferings I took on for the sake of my mission. I vowed to overcome these problems through faith.’ When we understand this principle of “Voluntarily Assuming the Appropriate Karma”, our frame of mind is transformed; what we previously viewed as destiny, we come to see as mission. There is absolutely no way we cannot overcome sufferings that are the result of a vow that we ourselves made.”¹ Therefore, if we dedicate our lives to kosen-rufu, there is no karma we cannot change.

President Ikeda encourages us in the following way: “Once we awaken to our mission for kosen-rufu, the life state of the Bodhisattva’s of the Earth and the great life state of the Buddha well up powerfully from the depths of our lives. Buddhas are never defeated by misfortune or problems. They transform all their sufferings into joy, expand their life state and do their human revolution. And it is through this process that they change their karma.”²

* Do you have an experience changing your karma into your mission and were you able to encourage others to do the same?

* What does ‘Voluntarily Assuming the Appropriate Karma’ mean to you?

¹ Daisaku Ikeda, *The Wisdom of the Lotus Sutra*, part 2, 208- 209.

² Daisaku Ikeda, *The New Human Revolution*, part 19, 272.