

Turning Karma into Destiny

A Telecourse with Sally Kempton
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Karma: (from the Sanskrit root *Kr*, meaning action)

1) Any action you are performing

2) The stored results and effects of past actions and thoughts, and their present and future effects.

The root of Karma is

Basic ignorance (*avidya*) of our true nature
which leads 1) to the belief that we are separate individuals living in a world of separate beings and objects, and from there to 2) the belief that we are the doers of action.

When we perform activities under the assumption that we are individuals performing actions we create *samskaras*, latent impressions in the subtle body and mind, which are stored in our subtle system and give rise to karmic fruits that are experienced in present and future lives.

The Karmic Process

The tree of Karma is rooted in
Samskara
(Latent mental impressions)
which are of two kinds:

Klesha (afflicted): arising from ignorance of your true nature, and of desire, greed, delusion or anger

Aklesha (unafflicted) (arising from true knowledge and spiritual practice)

From the **Afflicted** samskaras arise:

Karmashaya (your karmic storehouse, or accumulated latent impressions)

And

Vasana (your subconscious implicit memories, based on the **feelings** that arise as the result of karmic experiences. These **feeling-based memories** are necessary in order for the karmashaya to manifest.)

These can be **positive** (the result of positively motivated thoughts and actions, which produce happy consequences either in the present or a future life), **negative** (the result of harmfully motivated thoughts and actions, which produce unhappy consequences either in present or future), or **mixed** (the result of actions arising from mixed motives, which result in experiences that combine both pleasure and pain)

The nature of these stored karmas and vasanas results in:

- The **type of birth** you have (parents, life circumstances etc)
- Your **span of life**
- Your **experience of pleasure and pain**

Your **positive karmic imprints** produce two kinds of positive fruits:

- An inclination towards living a righteous worldly life, (**pravritti dharma**) and worldly success
- and
- An inclination towards **spiritual practices** and/or **nivritti dharma** (renunciation)

Spiritual practices and acts of kindness, generosity, etcetera produce positive samskaras, which bear fruit most quickly when practice is done with strong motivation, longing, love, or devotion.

Your **negative karmic imprints** produce two kinds of negative fruits:

- An antagonism towards righteous living or a tendency towards worldly difficulties
- An antagonism towards spiritual practice, or difficulties in spiritual practice

Negative actions produce especially quick results when they are performed with intense hatred, greed, desire, etcetera towards beings who are frightened, diseased, dependent on you, or who are engaged in spiritual activity.

Types of Karma

Prarabdha (destined) Karma: The karmic situation that you are destined to live out in this lifetime. These may be modified by your attitudes and actions, but must bear fruit in some way.

Sanchita (stored) Karma: The residual karmas remaining in your subtle body, which unless dissolved, will bear fruit in future lifetimes.

Kriyaman (acting) Karma: The actions you are performing now. This is your area of choice.

Other Dimensions of Karma

(Not everything that happens to us is the result of our own actions.)

- 1) **Adhibhautika Karma:** Actions of others that impact the life of a group or collective, especially arising from such events as war, stock market manipulations, government actions, movements in culture, discoveries in science and technology, laws, environmental factors etc. The collective karma of the country or region you live in will affect you simply because you happen to live there.
 - 2) **Adhidaivika Karma:** Acts of nature, such as floods, hurricanes, tsunamis, earthquakes, drought, and other natural phenomena, as well as natural internal processes like aging.
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How do we dissolve our karmic imprints?

Essentially, through practices of detachment and letting go.

The more we can identify with Awareness itself, and act in the world without attachment to results, the more our karmic imprints are dissolved.

Reading:

The basic teachings on Karma are found in the Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras*, Book II, sutras 12-16. There are a number of editions of the *Yoga Sutras*. The most complete from the traditional point of view is the SUNY Press edition, *The Yoga Sutra of Patanjali*, with commentary by Vyasa, translated by Swami Hariharananda. Shambhala Press publishes a contemporary translation by Chip Hartranft, also with the title *The Yoga Sutra of Patanjali*.