

**KARMA.** Our karma ensures that we reap what we sow; we must bear the consequences of our earlier deeds. However, the idea of karma is a concept that works in a large time frame, over many lifetimes - our current life is partly decided by actions we committed in past lives. **S**o we may have to accept that our destiny is set - it is ruled by our karma. The mind has no access to destiny, it is limited in that it only functions in the here and now. But if destiny and karma determine our life, do we make any real decisions? Seemingly - since mind sees itself as decision-maker. **I**magine you inserted your hand into the path of a slowly swinging pendulum. As your hand follows it, you may say: "Look how easily this pendulum is pushed - I hardly touch it." Yet, your hand is simply following its path - just like our mind, while claiming to make decisions, simply follows our destiny. **H**ow then does karma affect us? When something of consequence happens to us that we did not initiate, it is a reaction to earlier actions - probably from a previous life. However, when we perform actions that have an impact - especially on others - we create karma that we have to deal with later. **H**ow do we know what type of karma we create? The key to this question is: Attitude! Negative attitude - indifference and hostility - creates bad karma. Only actions carried out with a positive attitude, compassion and good intentions create good karma, balance the bad and advance us toward our goals. **B**ut we must note that observing concepts like destiny and karma are mind-constructs, aids to coming to terms with the twists and turns of our existence; they help with understanding life. The observance of karma is a tool we use to put us at ease with why things happen that otherwise would be inexplicable.

*Thus karma can answer the indelible question 'Why me?'*

*We may be burdened with life-circumstances that are near-impossible to cope with; like our child suffering a disease with the predicted outcome being disability and/or early death.*

*Where does one find the strength to carry on, and - more importantly - come to terms with what so impacts our lives? Maybe only the concept of karma can help us accept such an unfortunate fate.*

*Then it becomes clear the child is suffering due to karma carried over from a previous life - their suffering now is their chance to repay old karma; a blessing in a torturous disguise.*

*A child suffering thus indeed is blessed; they pay back karma and cleanse themselves for a new life - and the services carers provide are even more of a blessing, as they accumulate good karma.*

*Karma as a life-stance is closely linked to the concept of acceptance.*

*see also* ACCEPTANCE, JUSTICE

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**KOAN.** A koan is a paradoxical statement; or a riddle without a solution. In Zen Buddhism koans demonstrate the limitations of logical reasoning. In Zen practice koans evoke the 'great doubt'. Koans induce enlightenment.

*When you can do nothing, what can you do?  
What was your face before you were born?  
What is the sound of one hand clapping?  
Q: "What can you do about the world?"  
A: "What do you mean by 'the world'?"*

*see also* ZEN