What is the first thing that comes to mind when you hear the word “KARMA?”
Karma: the cumulative “effects” or results of all our actions or causes, good or bad, over countless lifetimes until now.
The Buddhist View

It is impossible to fathom one’s karma. Iron, when heated in the flames and pounded, becomes a fine sword. Worthies and sages are tested by abuse.

- Nichiren Daishonin, “Letter from Sado,” The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin, vol. 1, p. 303
“We all have negative karma that has accumulated over countless eons from the infinite past. Our life is therefore like a garden hose that is clogged with debris. In the beginning, even if we bring the pure water of the world of Buddhahood to flow in our life by means of faith, it is the dirt in our life that will initially be forced out. This is why we have to struggle with our karma. However, if we continue with our Buddhist practice, then eventually pure benefit will pour forth without fail. We will definitely be able to transform our karma, or destiny, in this life—that is, we will actualize the principle of ‘attaining Buddhahood in this lifetime.’ The Gohonzon is the great beneficial medicine with the tremendous power that enables us to do this. It is a supremely noble device for producing happiness.”

- Josei Toda, July 2019 *Living Buddhism*, p. 55
Brief Experience in Faith
We Can Change the Future

“Nichiren Buddhism enables each of us to establish a solid self in the present so that we can transform past sorrows and misery into inexhaustible hope for the future. The heart of Nichiren’s teaching is that no matter what difficulties we may now face, we should earnestly challenge the present with unflagging optimism and the belief that we can change the future.”

- Daisaku Ikeda, The Heritage of the Ultimate Law of Life: Lecture Series, p. 64
Voluntarily Assuming Our Karma

“People who have not experienced painful struggles or suffering cannot understand the hearts of others. Only if one has tasted life’s bitterness can one lead people to happiness. To simply view your sufferings as ‘karma’ is backward-looking. We should 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 . . . our frame of mind is transformed; what we had 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.”

Chanting With an Open Heart

“When you’re suffering, when you’re sad, when you’re hurting, just chant Nam-myoho-rengi-kyo with an open heart. Keep chanting just as you are, as if sharing your feelings with a caring parent. In this way, you transform your problems into prayers . . . When you look back, you’ll find that the difficulty that was causing you so much heartache became an opportunity to dynamically expand your life state. Your prayers to the Gohonzon will cause the joyous sun of your mission to rise in your heart and enable you to make your life in this existence shine with supreme brilliance.”

- Daisaku Ikeda, July 2019 Living Buddhism, pp. 56–57
Discussion Questions

1. How can this perspective of karma change the way we live our lives?

2. Can you share an experience of how you transformed negative aspects or tendencies in your life through your Buddhist practice?