

[Karma: Youth Speak Out](#)

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## Karma: Youth Speak Out

USA interviews by Smita Patel

With no idea what to expect, we interviewed youth in three countries about karma. Surprise! Far from being intimidated by the slippery concept, many articulated karma with cogent insight. Virender Shaw, 22: Karma is every type of action we take. We throw energy into the universe. Some of it is positive and some of it is negative. All the energy we put into the universe eventually comes back to us. If we throw out negative energy we get back negative energy. If we throw out positive energy, we are going to get back love. All our actions have great consequence for our future well-being. Whenever I'm putting a lot of love into an activity, I usually get rewarded for it. If you take a longer-term perspective, you can see how activities rebound. Urvashi Patel, 22: We aren't born with a clean slate. We have whatever we had in a previous life written there and that influences our lot in the next life. Every decision that we make or do is affected by the outcome of our past actions and decisions. I think karma is more between lifetimes, so I can't think back to a specific example. When I get something that I would not really expect I deserve, I think it must be that I deserve it because of something I did in a previous lifetime. Monica Bansal, 16: Karma is when your life is kind of figured out for you before you lead it. I think karma exists in whatever life you are in. I cannot imagine another life. I always have the feeling that whatever actions I may have

taken have affected my future. Rupal Patel, 25: Karma is cause and effect. What you do now will effect you in the future and what you are now is a result of what you did in the past. I want to become a reputed dancer, so the effort I make for that is my karma. I will get the benefit of that in the future. South Africa

interviews by Rajesh Jantilal Eddie Bodha, 26: Whatever actions one engages in this life will affect one's next life. By doing good deeds, I am setting an example to others and bettering my chances for the next life. Since joining the Hindu Youth Federation and through interactions, I have learned a lot about Hinduism and karma. We all have a duty to perform according to our karmas. We are running clinics for the disadvantaged and the elderly. Such actions make life worth living, and I am always mindful of the blessings one gets from these people.

Shanthine Sivananda, 19: We, the oppressed, have been exploited by the white minority all these years, paying off this bad karma. The time has now come for those responsible for these evil discriminatory practices. They will have to accept the responsibilities and be satisfied with whatever is given to them. So there is good and bad karma. A close friend, Kumaren, died in a freaky car accident-a humble and good human being. Why did Kumaren have to die? Where does one draw the line? Is it because of his past karma?

Sometimes it is complex and complicating. Dinesh Naidoo, 22: Karma for me means law. Whatever good you do permeates to all. It's worked for me most definitely. Do not do any bad actions that might result in one being hurt in thought, word and deed. Many times people let me down and there are those who I can relate to and work with. So karma is both good and bad. Meena Pillay, 25: It's fate. If you do an evil deed or act, you will reap the negative effects in this or the next life. When I married my husband Kumeran, a Tamil-I am Hindi-the problem was with my family. We went through a lot, paying off

our bad karmas in not having the support of my family. But since our first baby Sariksha, the two families have become much closer. This, I believe, is the other principle where we are reaping good karma. The hardships and sufferings have finally paid off at last. Through this experience I have built up more faith in the principle of karma. I am constantly reminded of doing good and being positive in whatever challenges we may face. Mahendra Jeawon, 21: Whatever ye sow so shall ye reap. Every action as far as possible must be righteous, so that we prepare for our next life. Thus we are helping to carry out God's work. From a renegade to a vegetarian, karma has really worked for me. It has changed my life completely. After some research as to its operations I realized that life must not be feared but taken as a challenge. One should be positive in whatever actions or karma one may engage in. Manimerkalai Naidoo, 26: Karma is punishment for our evil doings. Karma must be a guide. People should use it in their lives constructively by helping others in need. When I do good, I will be blessed by the Almighty. People carry karma from their past lives. It is a diverse concept. I always have the habit of giving somebody a lift in my car. I can count on someone else in that when I am stranded the good karma will be returned to me in that or any other form. It should not be done with a motive. It is karma working in the reverse. Through good karma we can change for the better. We must live our lives by the basic principles of Hinduism and be better examples not to our children only but to the society as a whole. India

Interviews by Anandhi Ramachandran While the youth of South Africa and the US responded extemporaneously, India's youth did not. It appears some studied or were coached before responding. Our interviewer-pictured here with her grandson-made this comment: "Our youngsters shy away from a question like this, unable to think and answer something not in their curriculum. It was a revelation to me. I had to

pressurize them into writing what they had to say." S. Anitha, 19: My very birth into a comfortable household and the talents that I possess can be accounted for with no other reason except karma. Otherwise, I simply cannot explain why some people are better or worse than me. Another example of karma: we had a dance competition in our college, and I had choreographed a dance which was acclaimed by many as a prize-winning entry. But on that day, the audio cassette got stuck and as a result we had to start from the middle of the song, which caused us to lose points and finish second. Later I realised that I hadn't prayed before the dance as I usually do. There was no other reason why the tape should get stuck. The recorder was in excellent condition. I believe that it was an experience God wanted me to have to help cure me of my ego, my pride. Chandramouli, 22: The word 'karma' carries a lot of mystique and rings ominously. Ominous because the word is used when something of great distaste happens and the person envisions some misdeed committed in a previous birth. Some people will not lift a finger, asserting that what is going to happen will happen anyway, regardless of what we do. But hiding behind this concept of 'karma' is just escapist. Karma is an excuse for not doing one's duty. It merely urges one not to expect reward. Hari Krishnan, 25: Karma, very bluntly, would refer to "past deeds-present problems." One has to undergo what one does as a part of "going up" through an era. Coming from a family of a high, culturally-oriented background, perhaps it may sound out of place that I am a hotelier. Yet, values and traditions based on past experiences play a governing role. These governing ideas come from within. Again, there is an external environment which causes fluctuations within us. Monisha Nanjapa, 21: The good or bad karma of actions is determined by the motive rather than the act itself. Every action produces a subtle counterpart depending on the motive. Those subtle counterparts produced

due to good actions are called punya, and those produced due to bad actions are called papa. There have been times when I have been in trouble and almost from nowhere, most unexpectedly, somebody or thing brings me out of it. On the other hand, there are times when, for absolutely nothing done on my part, there is sudden sorrow. Some would explain these things as either coincidence or one's bad fortune. But nothing is inexplicable. Everything has a karmic reason. One really cannot blame anyone for your sorrow or happiness. As you are the doer, you alone reap the consequences, good or bad.

Mahesh Pande, 21: The karmic laws: thought makes character, desire, activity, opportunity, achievement. Thoughts combine good and evil, so too karma encompasses good and bad.

Karma is always in the making. It is as if it is being recorded. Surely it has to be replayed sometime or other. I am studying Bharata Natyam. It is said that art is close to divinity, so surely I must have some good karma from my previous birth to be closely related to the divine arts. Priyasri Rao, 21:

Karma-whatever we are undergoing now is the result of our actions in the past, in this birth or previous births. But karma can also mean duty-moral duty, social duty, religious duty or duty towards our country. Yet another interpretation of karma is the actions of daily life in eating, bathing, etc. which are classified as nithyakarma, and paying respect to our elders pithrukarma. I feel I am what I am today because of the karma of my ancestors-the good fortune of having been born in India, having loving parents, studying dance at Kalakshetra under the guidance of great gurus. Even being asked to share ideas on karma is a good karma, since it has inspired me to delve deeper into this subject. P. Shrimathi, 19: All actions leave impressions on the soul or mind, called apurva or adrsta. They determine the nature of man's life and subsequent lives. Nothing is left to chance, accident or luck. This however does not mean that one should despair. Man has the chance to

improve upon his life. These karmic laws however have no influence on the spiritual world. Here only the grace of God and the power of love exist. Abhinav Vasanth, 10: (pictured above with his grandmother) Uncle Peter said that if you are a non-vegetarian you accumulate karma. Many animals are killed because we eat meat. That is bad karma. What was I in a previous life? I'm not so sure. Perhaps a peacock, an elephant? I might have even been a girl. Ha! Ha! Uma Sundaram, 16: If a person believes in karma, he may see to it that he does things that are worthwhile doing and will not do anything that he will repent for later. S. Karunakaran, 17: Thoughts influence karma whether we like it or not. There is no clear cut line between good and bad karma. Feelings and emotions affect the actions which in turn affect our karma. After this interview, I was asked to provide a photo. I had my photograph taken, but due to some malfunction, the photograph was half-exposed. It was too late to take another. I could not help wondering whether it was not my dushkarma which prevented my photo from being published in a prestigious magazine!