

Karma Management



A Step-by-Step Guide to Help You
Effectively Deal with Your Karma



Karma is Self-Generated: A man's actions create his future karmas to be experienced, just as if he carved himself out of a stone with his own hands—as the man in the painting is doing. In the background, Lord Ganesha, the Lord of Karma, confers blessings with His raised right hand.

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BY SATGURU BODHINATHA VEYLANSWAMI

THE CONCEPT OF KARMA HAS SPREAD BEYOND THE CONFINES OF THE ASIAN RELIGIONS that conceived it to become a core concept of today's yoga and New Age movements. It is now mentioned regularly on American mainstream television programs and in the movies. Last year in discussing the concept with a junior college class in Hawaii, a student expressed contemporary culture's astute definition of karma as "What goes around comes around." Unfortunately, most individuals' understanding of karma is at best limited to thinking about it as an abstract principle without applying it to their own life. This is equivalent to a student's learning and understanding all the laws of nutrition, being able to get an "A" on any test on the subject, but following a personal diet of junk food three times a day. What he learned is not influencing how he lives. The study of karma is effectively approached in a three-step process: 1) dispelling common misconceptions about karma; 2) acquiring a correct intellectual understanding of karma's key concepts; 3) managing your own karma by utilizing the correct understanding of karma to refine your actions and reactions in life.

Two Misconceptions

1 You have no doubt heard the most common false concept about karma on a number of occasions. It goes something like this: "Nothing but bad things happen to me. It's my karma, and even when I strive to do better, my striving has no effect upon it. So why should I even try to make my life amount to anything? It's truly hopeless."

This misconception must be rejected for two important reasons. The first is that you can actually change your karma through the principles of effective karma management. The second is that how you live in this life creates the karma you will face in your future lives. So, why not consciously use the law of karma to create a future that is filled with pleasant experiences rather than painful ones?

2 A second common false concept about karma, which you have probably also heard, goes like this: "My life is in a state of chaos. Everything is going wrong, and it all started three months ago when Saturn entered Taurus and my karma changed. I have been advised that if I can successfully appease Saturn through having a priest do regular Sani puja, my problems will go away.

Therefore, that has become the entire focus of my religious life at this time." The fallacy of this attitude is that, yes, karmic difficulties indicated by your astrology can be mitigated, but not simply by paying a priest to do Sani puja. If that is all you are doing to work with your situation, that's not enough. In working through the trying times of life, your primary powers are willpower, devotion and understanding. Such karma can be mitigated through specific actions performed by the individual, such as those outlined below, but not merely by giving over such duties to others.

A second reason this misconception must be rejected is that it attributes the cause of our problems to the planet Saturn rather than to our own actions in the past. It is like pleading with the jailer to release you from your cell simply because being incarcerated is an unpleasant experience, having forgotten about the crime you committed that put you in prison in the first place. Planets don't determine your karma, and neither do the actions of others. It is self-created, and you are the source of it all—good, bad and mixed.

Ten Correct Concepts

ONE: Karma means act or deed.

Let's begin with the word karma itself. What does it mean? Karma means "action" or "deed," such as in the common phrase karma yoga, "union through action."

TWO: The law of karma is the law of cause and effect.

When we say "the law of karma," we refer to the law of action and reaction, also called the law of cause and effect. This law states that what we sow we shall reap in this or future lives. Benevolent actions (*punyakarma* or *sukarma*) will bring loving reactions. Selfish, hateful acts (*papakarma* or *kukarma*) will bring suffering. Every action that we perform in life, every word we speak, even every thought that we think, has its reaction.

THREE: Karma is just and self-governing.

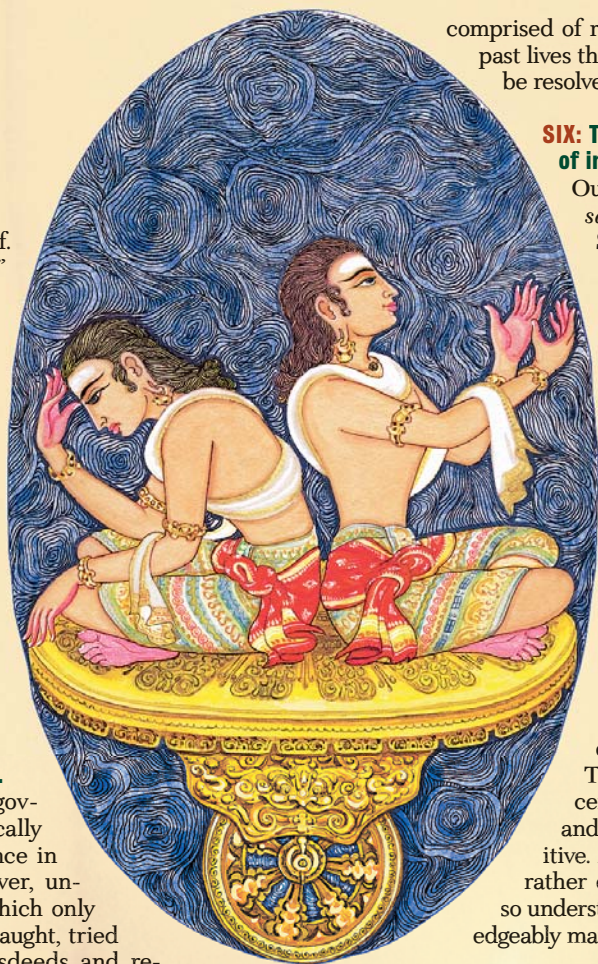
The law of karma is a divine, self-governing system of justice that automatically creates the appropriate future experience in response to the current action. However, unlike the justice systems of a country, which only punish the misdeeds of those who are caught, tried and found guilty, karma punishes misdeeds and rewards good deeds whether they are known or not. For example, if a man robs a bank and is never caught, no punishment is received through man's law. However, he will inevitably face the consequences of his crime through the law of karma. Similarly, the good deed of giving money regularly but anonymously to a charity will be rewarded, even though no one knows the giver's name.

FOUR: Karma is our teacher.

Through understanding the consequences of their actions, individuals sooner or later learn to refrain from committing a particular misdeed. Any good system of justice does not want repeat offenders. It wants individuals to understand the error of their ways and reform their behavior. You've heard Alexander Pope's famous phrase that to err is human, to forgive is divine. Well, we can adapt his adage and say to err is human but to err only once is divine, meaning those who are striving to live a religious life are self-reflective and learn quickly from their mistakes. This is what we mean by saying "Karma is our teacher." It teaches us to refine our behavior—hopefully sooner rather than later. One way to tell a young soul from an old soul is to observe how quickly he learns karma's lessons in life.

FIVE: We each have our individual karma.

Karma also refers to our individual karma that we carry from life to life, both the karma to be resolved in this life, and the karma to be resolved in a future life. To understand this better, let us reflect again on the criminal justice system. Justice is known for moving slowly. It can take a number of years before a convicted criminal receives his punishment. The law of karma is even slower. The consequences, or fruits of actions, known as *karmaphala*, may not come for a number of lifetimes. Thus, the karma we are born with is



comprised of rewards and punishments from many past lives that have yet to manifest, and are yet to be resolved.

SIX: There are three types of individual karma.

Our individual karma is of three types: *sanchita*, *prarabdha* and *kriyamana*. *Sanchita* is the sum total of past karmas yet to be resolved. *Prarabdha* is that portion of *sanchita* karma scheduled to be experienced in the present life, shaping its events and conditions, including the nature of our bodies, personal tendencies and associations. *Kriyamana* is karma you are presently creating. While some *kriyamana* karmas bear fruit in the current life, others are stored for future births.

SEVEN: Astrology indicates the patterns of karma.

Prarabdha karma determines one's time of birth, which dictates one's astrology, which in turn delineates the individual life pattern by influencing the release of these karmas. Thus, an individual will experience certain astrological periods as difficult and other periods as auspicious and positive. Astrology does not dictate our karma, rather our karma determines our astrology, so understanding our horoscope helps us knowledgeably manage our karma as it arises to be faced.

EIGHT: Karmas are either active or inactive.

Sanchita, *prarabdha* and *kriyamana* karmas can each be divided into two categories: *arabdha*, "begun" or "undertaken" karma that is sprouting; and *anarabdha*, "not commenced," "dormant," or seed karma. An analogy can be drawn to a garden in which a variety of seeds have been planted. Some types of plants will sprout in a few days, others will take weeks and still others lie dormant for months. Similarly, some of our karmas will manifest in the next few years, some toward life's end and others in a future life.

NINE: We create our own future.

Our actions in the present are creating what we will experience in the future, even in future lives. The point here is that when we think of karma, we tend to think of the past. We reflect upon the rewards and punishments from the past that are now manifesting and what we must have done to create them. However, we must also think about our future in this life and lives to come. Our actions in the present are influencing that future, making it pleasant or unpleasant. Therefore, before acting, a wise person reflects on that action's karmic consequences and thereby consciously molds his future.

TEN: Life is all about resolving karma.

The ultimate future to consider is liberation from the cycle of birth and death, *samsara*. As long as we have karmas to resolve, we will be reborn on Earth. Thus, individuals who are intent upon spiritual progress take the creation and resolution of karma quite seriously. Not only do they strive to act wisely in the present, they perform extra religious practices to rid themselves in this life of karmas that would normally only manifest in future lives. This is a profound practice performed by sagacious sannyasins especially.

Ten Principles for Effective Karma Management

BY SATGURU BODHINATHA VEYLANSWAMI

A FEW YEARS AGO, I WAS ONE OF TWO speakers at a lecture in Perth, Australia. I spoke on enlightenment, stressing that it is a gradual process, a deepening of the ability to experience God, starting with seeing God as the light in the eyes of everyone you look at. The second speaker, a prominent Malaysian Hindu leader, made the point that a modern trend of Hindus is to consider the traditional wisdom given by swamis as old-fashioned and not lend it much weight. Instead, many Hindus are fascinated with the modern, secular self-improvement-seminar approach, which quite often takes its principles from Hindu thinking but gives them a modern packaging. So, today we are taking that modern approach to karma. You've heard of stress management workshops? Well, this is a karma management program, designed for workshops, in which we will learn the ten principles for effective karma management, drawn from the teachings of Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami (Gurudeva). This fulfills the third step of learning about karma, which is to apply our understanding of karma to our own life and thus refine the way we act in and react to life. Gurudeva taught: "It is easy to study the law of karma and to appreciate it philosophically, but to realize it, to apply it to everything that happens to you, to understand the workings of it as the day goes by, requires an ability to which you must awaken."

FIRST PRINCIPLE

Forego Retaliation

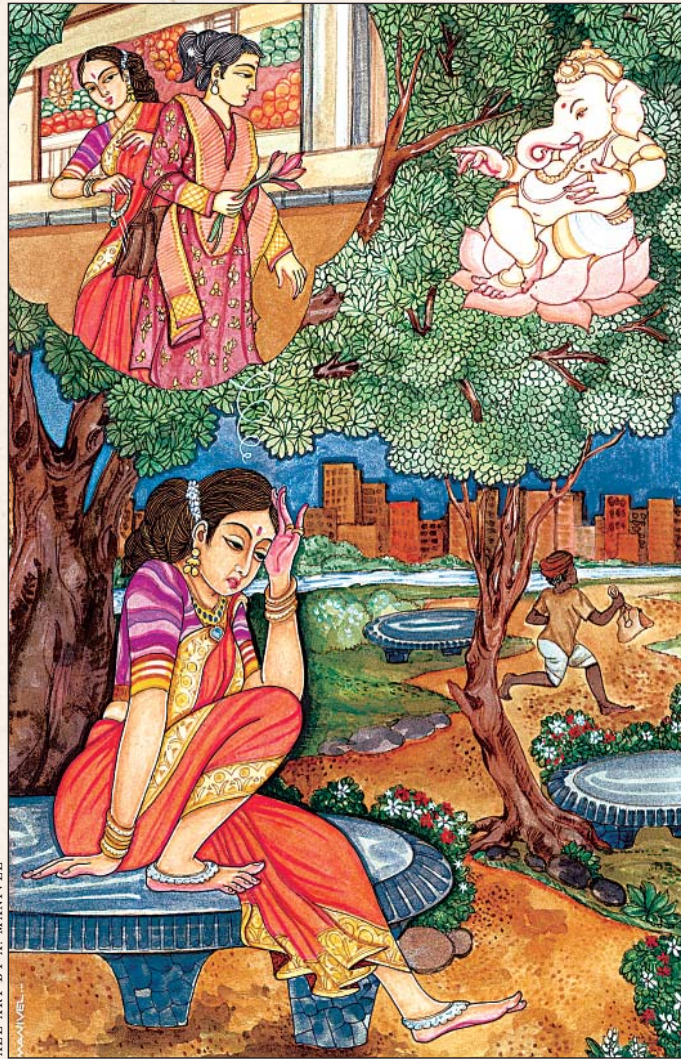
1 There is no need for you to be the instrument to return a karmic reaction to someone else. For example, an individual is really nasty to you, so you feel the impulse to retaliate and be nasty to him. If you follow that tack, you will create a new unseemly karma to face in the future. Better to let the law of karma take its own course without your intervention, which will generally happen through some other person with less self-control who does not understand this law of life.

Let us take another example: a classic cowboy movie plot. Someone shoots and kills the hero's brother during a robbery, and the rest of the film is devoted to his chasing down the outlaw and shooting him in revenge. What, then, happens in the next life, the sequel? There is definitely a karma to be faced for killing in revenge. Perhaps another robbery will take place and the hero will be killed. Wisdom tells us that it is better to let the



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1 FOREGO RETALIATION: The protest march led by Gandhi on May 21, 1930, is attacked by police as they approach Dharasana Salt Factory. The protestors did not retaliate or defend themselves, but allowed the injustice of the attack to recoil on the British administration that ordered it. In each of the paintings commissioned for this article, Lord Ganesha, who governs karma, looks on.



ALL ART BY A. MANIVEL

2 ACCEPT RESPONSIBILITY: *The lady is recovering from having her purse stolen by the fleeing robber. She is remembering a time when she stole a valuable necklace from another lady's purse, realizing that the karma of that theft has now caught up with her.*

sheriff apprehend the outlaw and bring him to justice. The sheriff has taken an oath and is authorized to uphold the law and therefore creates no negative karma in capturing the outlaw, even if he has no choice but to kill him in the process.

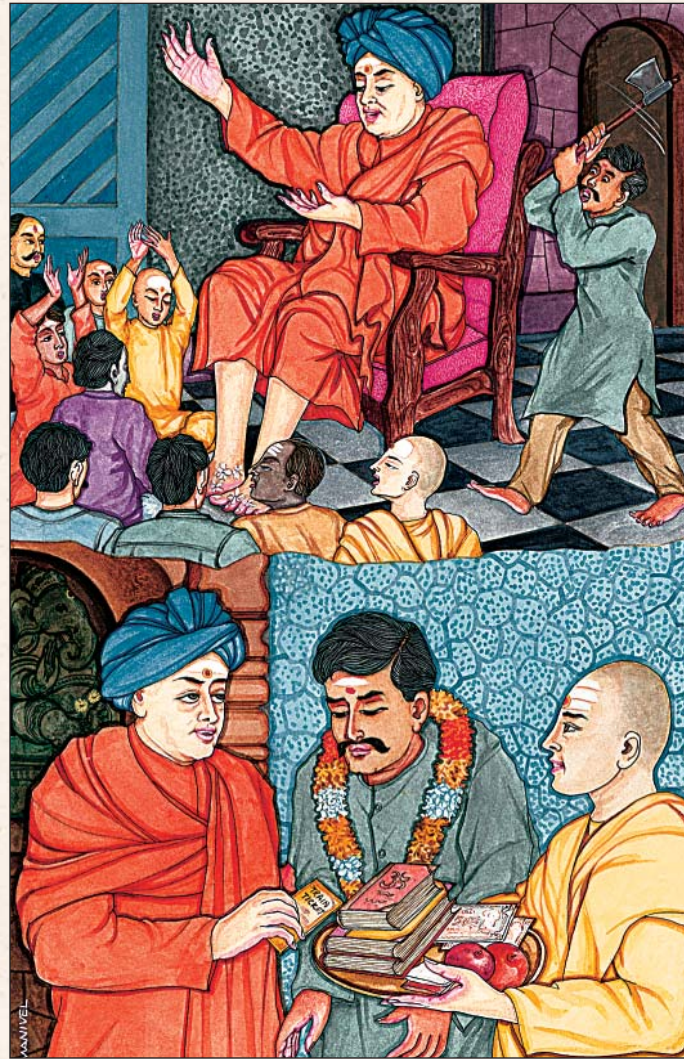
Gurudeva said, "Retaliation is a terrible, negative force. When we retaliate against others, we build up a bank account of negative karma that will come back on us full force when we least expect it."

Tirukural: "Forget anger toward all who have offended you, for it gives rise to teeming troubles."

SECOND PRINCIPLE

Accept Responsibility

2 Karma generally manifests through other people, and thus it is easy to see the other person as totally responsible for what happens to us. For example, you are attacked by a mugger who strikes you and steals your valuables. You are quite upset with the malicious thief. However, the mystical perspective is to see yourself as responsible for whatever happens to you. You are, through your actions in the past, the creator of all that you experience in the present. You caused your loss; the thief is just the instrument for returning your karma to you.



3 FORGIVE THE OFFENDER: *Swami Sivananda was once attacked by a man wielding an axe. Devotees restrained the man and locked him in an ashram room. Sivananda came to the man, forgave him for the attack and let him go.*

Of course, it is easy to apply this principle when the effect is an enjoyable one (we know intuitively when we get good things that we deserve them) and not so easy to apply it when it is not enjoyable, but in both cases we are equally responsible. In the end, you have no one to praise but yourself when your life is filled with successes and no one to blame but yourself when your life is filled with difficulties.

Gurudeva said, "As long as we externalize the source of our successes and failures, we perpetuate the cycles of karma, good or bad. There is no one out there making it all happen. Our actions, thoughts and attitudes make it all happen. We must accept and bear our karma cheerfully."

Tirukural: "Why should those who rejoice when destiny brings them good moan when that same destiny decrees misfortune?"

THIRD PRINCIPLE

Forgive the Offender

3 Take as an example a teenage boy on the way home from school. One day a gang of boys teases him for being different in some way and beats him up. A common response is for the teenager to feel angry at the boys and harbor ill feelings toward

them for years. This is problematic, however, as it keeps the lower emotions of anger constantly churning in his subconscious mind. Unless he forgives them, he perpetuates the event in his own mind, long after it is over.

Gurudeva often told the story of when a man attacked Swami Sivananda, hitting him forcefully in the head with an axe during evening satsang at his Rishikesh ashram. Swamiji's followers were outraged and angrily subdued the man. But Swami Sivananda responded with the opposite sentiment. He asked that the man not be punished or turned over to the police. The next day he met with his attacker and gave him a train ticket home, several spiritual books and money. Swami said, "Thank you so much for being the instrument to bring this karma back to me. Now I am free of it." He felt no anger toward the man whatsoever.

Tirukural: "If you return kindness for injuries received and forget both, those who harmed you will be punished by their own shame."

FOURTH PRINCIPLE

Consider the Consequences

4 Quite often our actions are based upon an emotional reaction to what someone has done or said to us. The consequences of such actions are often not clearly and carefully thought about. For example, someone insults you, so you insult them back. If you did reflect, you would see that the consequence of harming someone else with your words in the present is for you to be harmed again in the future by someone else's words. This behavior creates an endless cycle of being harmed and harming others, which is only stopped by considering the consequences before acting and not harming back. Mahatma Gandhi once said, "An eye for an eye makes the whole world blind." So, too, instinctive retaliation ultimately makes the whole world angry. The principle of considering the karmic consequences pertains equally to positive actions. The wisest approach is to not simply react to things that happen to us, but to take time to consider the karmic repercussions of all actions before we take them.

The habit of considering the consequences before acting can be developed at an early age when parents and teachers utilize positive discipline methods to help children face the natural and logical consequences of their actions. An insightful letter from Lord Ganesha on consequences in Gurudeva's book *Loving Ganesha* reminds us: "Keep track of your paces, for your walk makes marks. Each mark is a reward or a stumbling block. Learn to look at the step you have made and the step you have not made yet. This brings you close to Me."

Gurudeva elucidates our fourth principle: "It is our reaction to karmas through lack of understanding that creates most karmas we shall experience at a future time."

Tirukural: "All suffering recoils on the wrongdoer himself. Thus, those desiring not to suffer refrain from causing others pain."

FIFTH PRINCIPLE

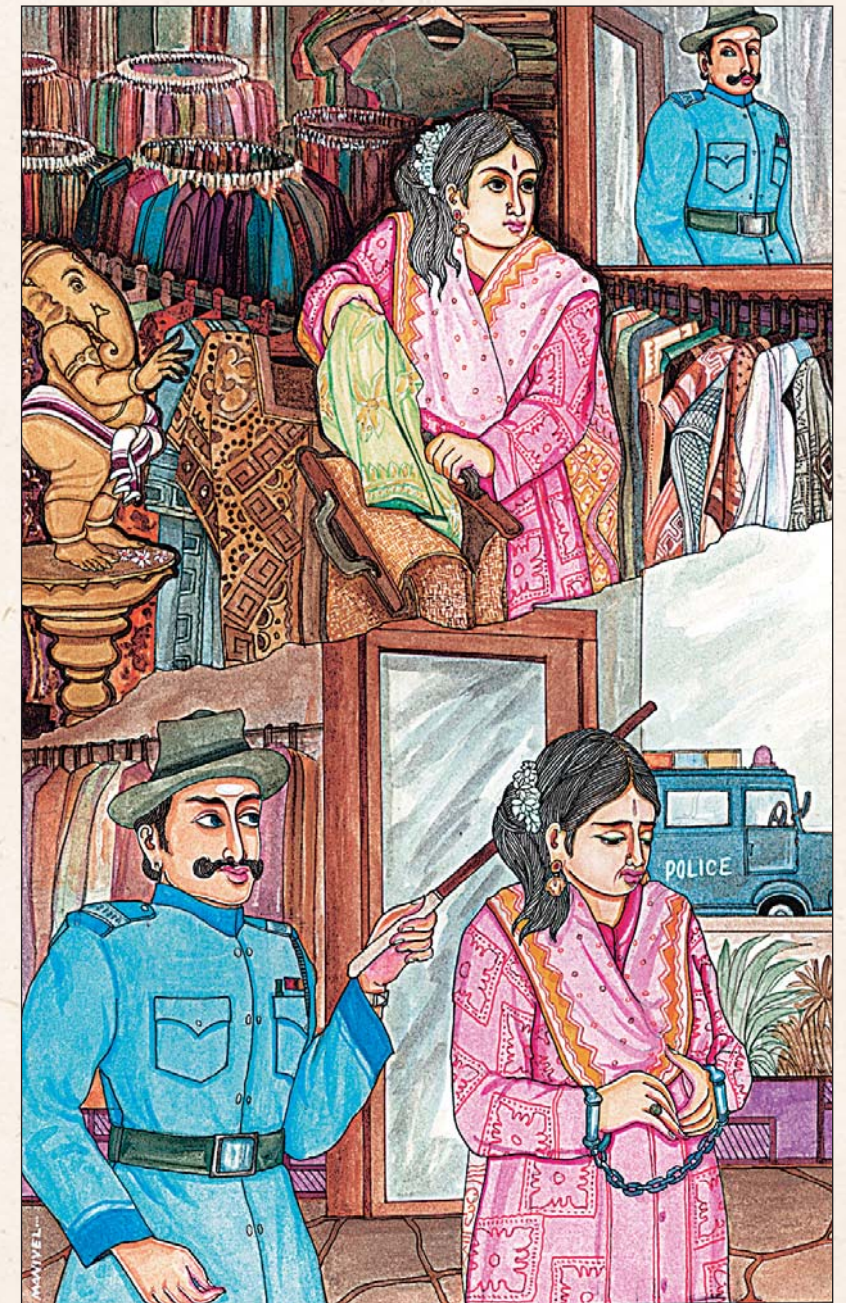
Create No Negative Karmas

5 Now that we have a good grasp of the karmic consequences of various kinds of actions, what is needed next to progress even further in the management of karma is a firm commitment to refrain from actions that create new negative karma. Perhaps we should all take a pledge, such as "I promise henceforth to refrain from all actions that create negative karmas."

This is actually not as difficult as it sounds. How do we know if a specific action will create negative karma or not? Scriptures such as the *Tirukural* may make mention of it. We can ask a Hindu religious leader his or her opinion. We can ask our parents or elders. And once we get the knack of it, our own conscience will be able to provide the answer most of the time.

Gurudeva advises us: "Wise handling of karma begins with the decision to carry the karma we now have cheerfully, and not add to it. A firm decision to live in such a way as to create no new negative karmas is a sound basis for living a religious life, for following the precepts of dharma and avoiding that which is adharmic."

Tirukural: "What good is a man's knowledge unless it prompts him to prevent the pain of others as if it were his own pain?"



4 CONSIDER THE CONSEQUENCES: *This well-to-do lady didn't restrain herself from stealing a nice outfit in a department store, even though she could have afforded to buy it. Spotting her in the act, a security guard arrests her and leads her out in handcuffs to the waiting police van and a day in court.*

SIXTH PRINCIPLE

Seek Divine Guidance

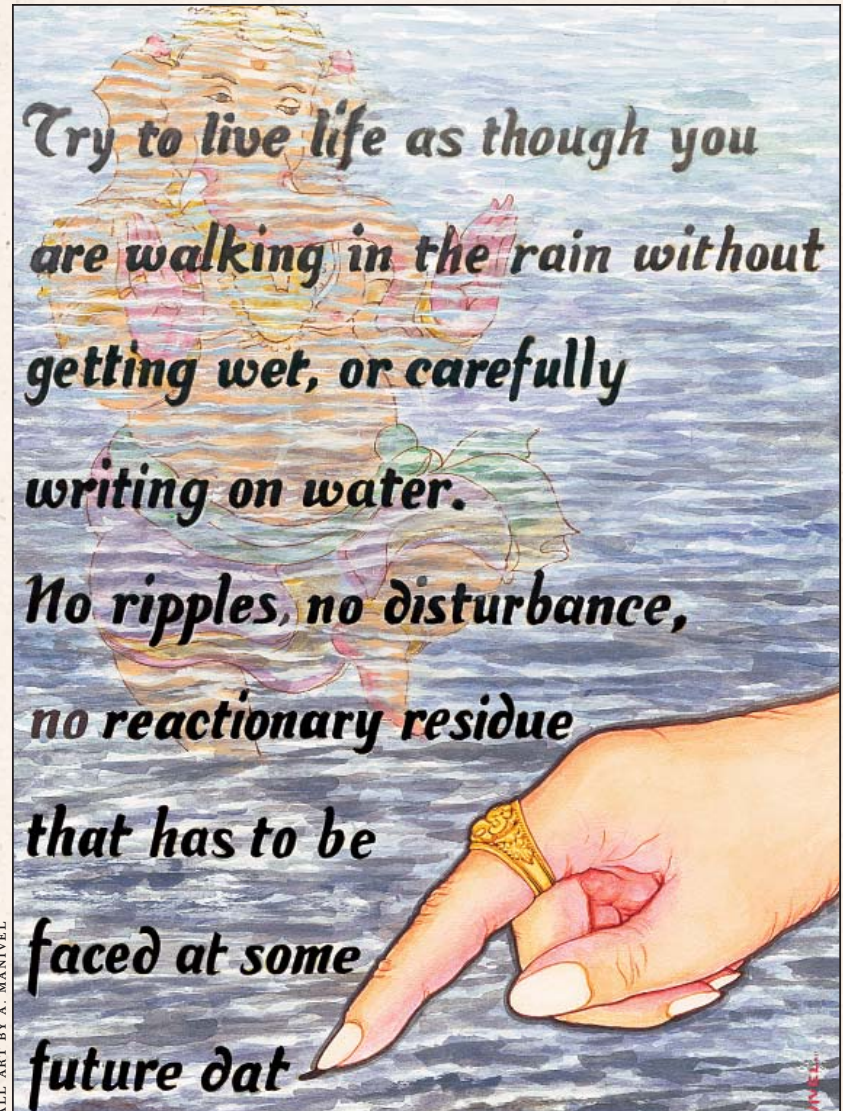
6 We don't have to manage our karma totally on our own. Help is available, divine help, in fact. Such help comes from none other than Lord Ganesha, who has the duty of helping sincere devotees manage their karma in the best way possible.

Once, through sincere worship, an individual develops a personal relationship with Ganesha, he naturally drops off any remaining adharmic patterns of behavior and becomes fully established in a dharmic life. Lord Ganesha helps you not only become established in dharma, but in the best personal dharmic pattern for this life, known as *svadharm*, your natural occupation and duties to family, friends, relatives, deceased relatives, community, guru and temple.

When we seek His permission and blessings before every undertaking, Ganesha, as the Lord of Obstacles, guides our karmas through creating and removing obstacles from our path, similar to a mother's watching over her young children at play. He also has an extraordinary knack for unweaving complicated situations and making them simple. He can unweave His devotees from their karma, clarifying and purifying their lives. How can we invoke this divine guidance when we encounter karmic difficulties? Simply by chanting His name or a simple mantra, or placing a flower at His feet, visiting His temples for puja, meditating on Him or just visualizing His holy form and inviting Him mentally to help in our time of need. He will respond.

Gurudeva comments on *svadharm*, "Such a life is the fulfillment of all previous efforts and thus erases the uncomplimentary deeds and adds beneficial ones, so a next birth can be most rewardingly great and useful to the whole of mankind."

Tirukural: "Draw near the Feet of Him who is free of desire and aversion, and live forever free of suffering."



5 CREATE NO NEW NEGATIVE KARMA: *Satguru Subramuniyaswami* often said we should "live like writing on water." He meant that our actions should be so considered that we pass through life without making ripples of bad karma that return to us in the future.

SEVENTH PRINCIPLE

Mitigate Past Karma

7 Once we have stopped acting in ways that create new negative karma, our life will be sublime enough to focus on ridding ourselves of karmas of the past, mitigating them, meaning to make less harsh, painful or severe.

To better understand mitigation, let's make another comparison to the judicial system. A man commits armed robbery and receives a ten- to twenty-year sentence. But due to good behavior in prison, he is paroled after only five years. He has mitigated his sentence, made it less severe, through his good behavior.

Let's now take an example of karma that is mitigated. You are destined to lose a leg in this life because you caused someone to lose his in a past life. If you are living a selfish, low-minded kind of life, the karma would come full force and you would lose your leg. However, if you are a kindly person who regularly helps others, the karma would be mitigated and you might read in the morning paper about someone losing a leg and take on the emotion of that experience as if it had happened to you. Later on when hiking you stumble and your leg is injured, but not severely. The full force of the karma was softened by your kind and helpful actions.

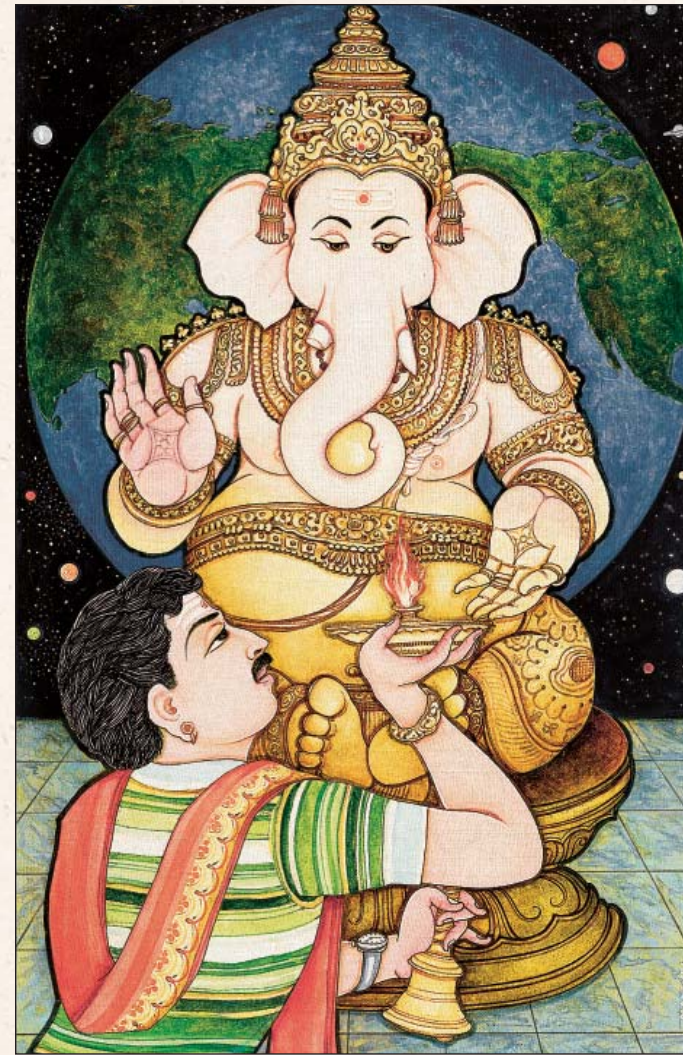
There are several methods by which we can mitigate our karma: **Following dharma:** Living virtuously, in itself, helps modulate the release of karmic seeds, evening out the ebb and flow of karma and minimizing "karmic explosions" that might otherwise occur. Thus

negative karmas in one's individual pattern are naturally avoided or mollified and positive karmas accentuated and brought into fruition.

Karma yoga: Helping others—karma yoga, performing good deeds—and thus acquiring merit which registers as a new and positive karma is one way of alleviating the heaviness of some of our past karma.

Bhakti yoga: Worship, bhakti yoga, that is intense enough to cause us to receive the grace of the Gods can change the patterns of karma dating back many past lives, clearing and clarifying conditions that were created hundreds of years ago and are but seeds now, waiting to manifest in the future. The key concept here is intensity. Dropping by the temple for fifteen minutes on the way home from work is unlikely to accomplish such a transformation.

Pilgrimage: Pilgrimage is an excellent way to generate an intensity of worship. Over the years, Gurudeva's devotees have pilgrimaged to India, visiting major temples such as Chidambaram, Rameshvaram and Palani Hills. Many have come back transformed. They physically look a little different, behave differently and fit back into life in a more positive way than before. Their karma was changed by the grace of the Gods.



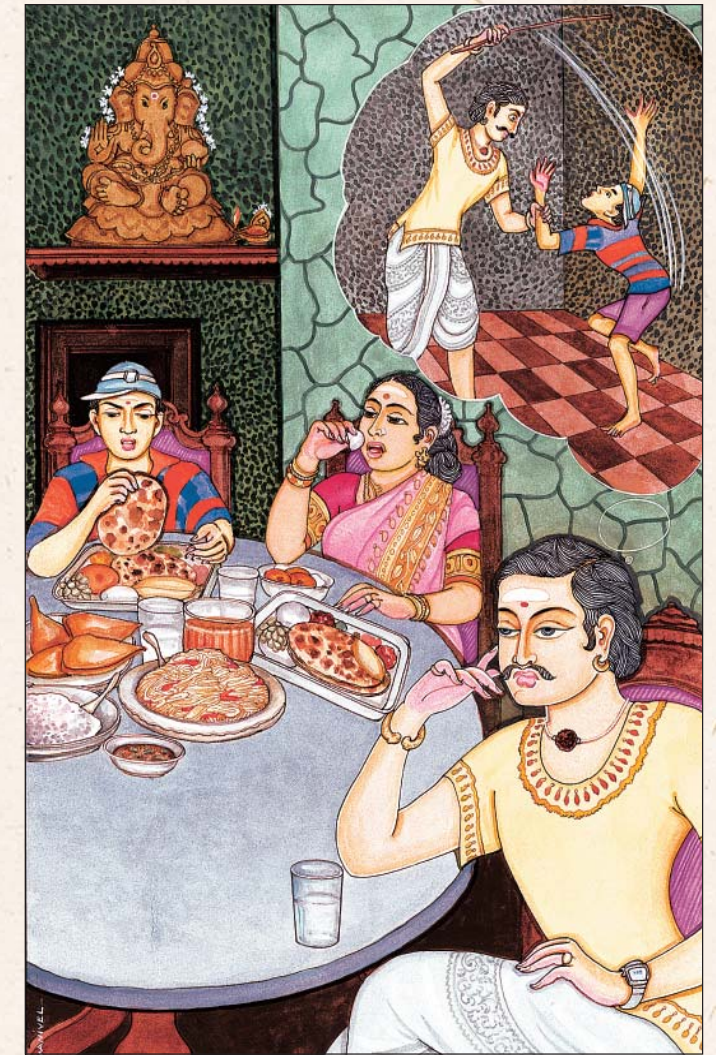
6 SEEK DIVINE GUIDANCE: *Seeking to clarify some difficult karmas he is facing, this devotee invokes Lord Ganesha. The Lord of Obstacles is able to bring simplicity to complex situations. After worshipping Him, our duty becomes clear, and the right course of action to resolve our situation unfolds to our inner intelligence.*

Vows: A *vrata*, or vow, can also generate an intensity of worship, such as fasting during the day and attending the temple on each of the six days of Skanda Shashthi or the 21 days of Vinayaga Viratam.

Penance: Penance, *prayashchitta*, is a sixth way to mitigate karma. This is like punishing yourself now and getting it over with instead of waiting for your karma to manifest a punishment in the future. A typical form of penance is to perform walking prostrations, such as around a sacred lake or mountain, up a sacred path or around a temple.

Often it is advised to perform penance that is directly related to a misdeed. Let's take the example of a teacher who frequently used corporal punishment to discipline students but now strongly feels hitting children for any reason, even for discipline, is wrong. An appropriate penance would be to print and distribute to teachers literature on alternatives to corporal punishment. This type of penance should only be undertaken after a certain degree of remorse is shown and the urgency is felt by the devotee to rid his mind of the plaguing matter.

Gurudeva said, "When pre-dawn morning pujas, scriptural reading, devotionals to the guru and meditation are performed without fail, the deeper side of ourselves is cultivated, and that in itself softens our karmas and prolongs life."



7 MITIGATE PAST KARMA: *In a fit of anger, this man beat his son earlier in the day, even though he vowed to his guru that he would never again strike his child. As he fasts in a self-imposed penance for his misdeed, he feels regretful and renews his resolve to raise the boy without violence.*

Tirukural: "Be unremitting in the doing of good deeds; do them with all your might and by every possible means."

EIGHTH PRINCIPLE

Accelerate Karma

8 Why wait twenty more births to achieve spiritual maturity when you could achieve it in two births? That is the idea behind accelerating karma. When we begin meditating and performing regular daily *sadhana*, preferably at the same time each day, our individual karma is intensified. In our first four or five years of striving on the path we face the karmic patterns that we would never have faced in this life had we not consciously intensified our spiritual practices. Those on the spiritual path resolve much more karma in a lifetime than others. They could be called professional karma managers.

Of course, family duties in the *grihastha ashrama* don't allow much time for *sadhana*. Thus, the principle of karma acceleration is best fulfilled in the stage called *sannyasa*, both by those following the path of the monk and by everyone after age seventy-two. Retirement can be more than playing golf. It is an opportunity to intensify

our spiritual practices and thus accelerate our karma.

Gurudeva said, “By this conscious process of purification, of inner striving, of refining and maturing, the karmas come more swiftly, evolution speeds up and things can and usually do get more intense. Don’t worry though. That is natural and necessary. That intensity is the way the mind experiences the added cosmic energies that begin to flow through the nervous system.”

Tirukural: “Not allowing a day to pass without doing some good is a boulder that will block your passage on the path to rebirth.”



8 ACCELERATE KARMA: By intensifying our spiritual practices, we can accelerate our spiritual progress. The difference in rate of resolution of karma is as great as the difference in speed between a flying carpet and the ponderous bullock cart.

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NINTH PRINCIPLE

Resolve Dream Karma

9 Though some of our dreams are only the result of thoughts occurring in our own mind, other dreams are astral experiences, of being conscious in our astral body and interacting with others in their astral body. These astral-plane actions create karma, just as do our physical-plane actions. This is the basis of the Hindu ideal that one would not steal or injure even in a dream.

Why? Because such transgressions create negative karma that will come back to you. These are real karmas that may eventually manifest on the physical plane. However, this can be avoided if you happen to have further dream experiences in which appropriate actions are taken to dissolve the karma. More commonly, though, we can resolve dream or astral-plane karmas in the same way we would physical-world experiences, by performing penance for them in our waking state, while remembering the high standards of virtue and good conduct that should always be maintained, even during sleep. For instance, if in an emotional dream you injured someone intentionally, you could perform a simple penance the next day to atone, such as fasting one meal.

Gurudeva said, “These kinds of dreams—when a person is in his astral body and can feel what he touches, emote to his experiences, think and talk—are not what is known as the dream state. This is an astral experience, similar to the death experience, but the astral body is still connected to the physical body.”

Tirukural: “The highest principle is this: never knowingly harm anyone at any time in any way.”

TENTH PRINCIPLE

Incinerate Karma

10 In the practice of yoga, we can burn up negative seed karmas without ever having to live through them. What we have to do is find the seed and dissolve it in intense inner light. Let’s take the analogy of growing alfalfa spouts. You place the seeds in a jar and keep them moist until they sprout. But if you heat the seeds in a frying pan before putting them into the jar, they will no longer sprout. Similarly, karmas exposed to intense inner light are destroyed.

A meditation adept, having pinpointed an unmanifested karmic seed, can either dissolve it in intense light or inwardly live through the reaction of his past action. If his meditation is successful, he will be able to throw out the vibrating experiences or desires which are consuming the mind. In doing this, in traveling past the world of desire, he breaks the wheel of karma which binds him to the specific reaction which must follow every action. That experience will never have to happen on the physical plane, for its vibrating power has already been absorbed in his nerve system. This incineration of karmic seeds can also happen during sleep.

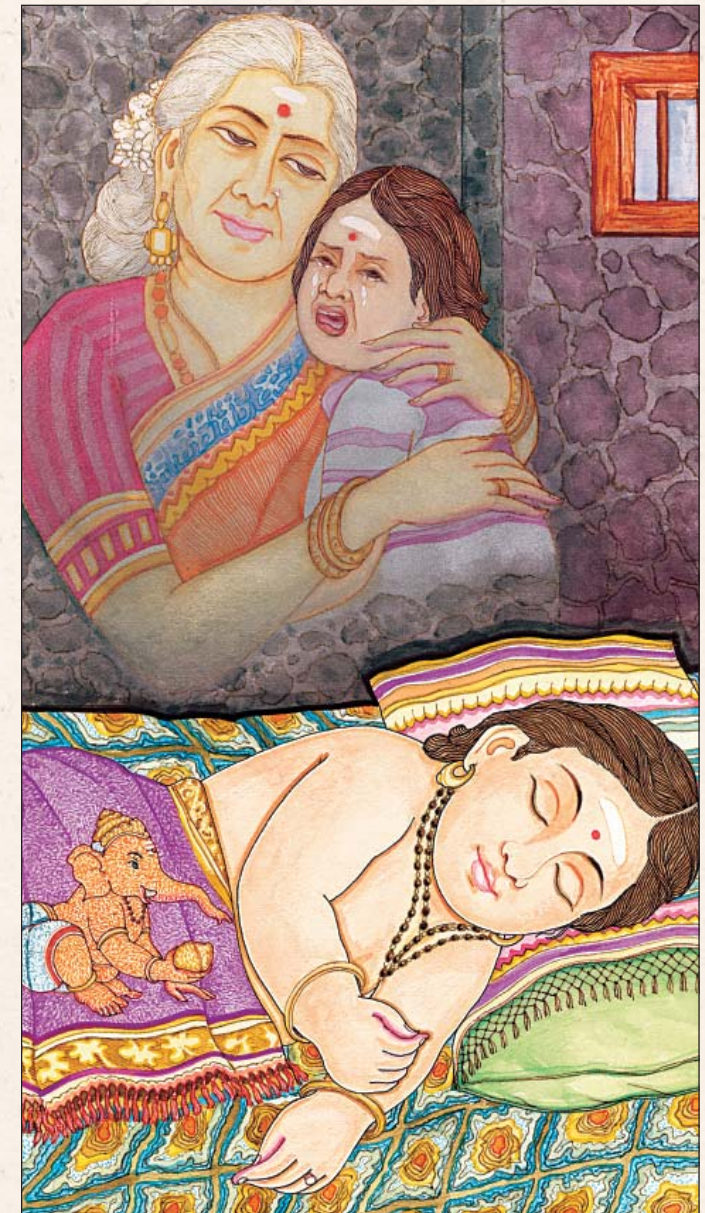
Gurudeva explains it in this way, “It is the held-back force of *sanchita* karma that the yogi

seeks to burn out with his kundalini flame, to disempower it within the karmic reservoir of *anandamaya kosha*, the soul body.”

Tirukural: “As the intense fire of the furnace refines gold to brilliance, so does the burning suffering of austerity purify the soul to resplendence.”

Conclusion

No matter how deep our understanding of karma may be, actually applying our understanding of karma to the events in our daily life can still be a challenge. Why is this? Our humanness gets in the way; our ego is challenged and we react to preserve our self image; our emotions are stirred and we respond impulsively, without intellectual reflection; our attitudes are prejudicial against certain religious or ethnic groups and we feel justified

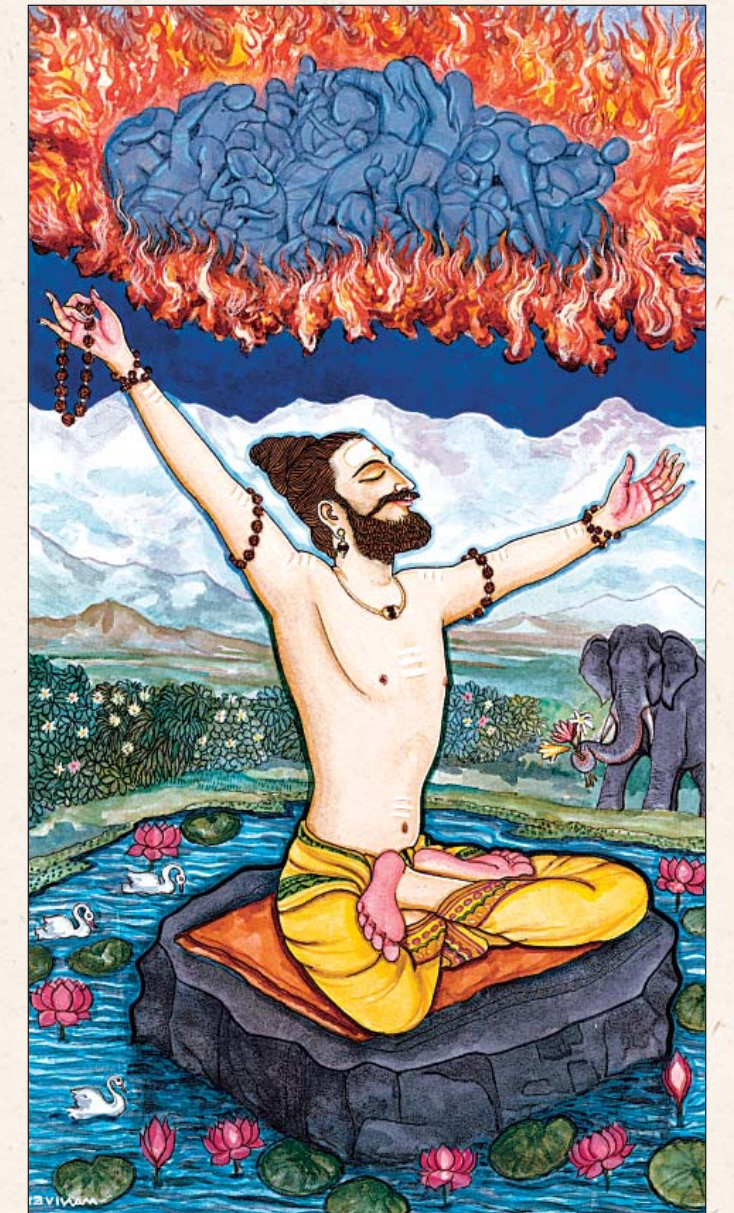


9 RESOLVE KARMA IN DEEP SLEEP OR MEDITATION: In her dream, a child is going through a traumatic experience and her deceased grandmother is comforting her. Karma can be experienced and resolved in such dream states.

in striking out at them, because they are not “our people.”

How can such human weaknesses be overcome? It is by perfecting our character, which Gurudeva defined as “the ability to act with care.” This is done through mastering Hinduism’s Code of Conduct, the ten *yamas*, restraints, and the ten *niyamas*, observances. (See Chapter 42, “Hinduism’s Code of Ethics.”) With a strong character in place, the mastery of karma becomes natural to us. Gurudeva mystically summarizes this process as follows:

“Bhakti brings grace, and the sustaining grace melts and blends the karmas in the heart. In the heart chakra karmas are in a molten state. The throat chakra molds the karmas through *sadhana*, regular religious practices. The third eye chakra sees the karmas past, present and future as a singular oneness. And the crown chakra absorbs, burns clean, enough of the karmas to open the gate, the door of Brahman, revealing the straight path to merging with Siva.”



10 INCINERATE KARMA: This yogi is joyously coming out of a deep meditation in which he has uncovered and “fried” the seeds of future karma, depicted as the human forms in the flames above him. He faced this karma on the subtle plane, before there would be a physical manifestation.