If you could raise your consciousness to the fourth dimension, you would observe in the astral plane that all minds are interconnected in intricate jumbles of karmic chains. From this perspective you would wisely see that each one receives according to what they have done.

I think I understand the law of karma fairly well but I still can't comprehend why small children should suffer. Is such suffering earned through the law of karma or have they chosen to suffer for special reasons?

The law of karma is inextricably linked with reincarnation. The child’s suffering can only be explained through reincarnation; in a previous birth they have done something for which they have not paid the price. There are many things we do for which we do not receive the reward or penalty in that same birth. Whatever we fail to suffer or enjoy from actions in our previous birth or births somehow catches up with us in future.
births. This could be when we are children or adults; it depends on when the opportunity or circumstances are optimum for that particular karmic seed to sprout. Karma is a product of desire. We can liken karma to the seed of a plant, which sprouts under certain conditions and at its own timing. Karmas that are done in a certain birth or decade or year will bear fruit in their own time. If this occurs in childhood, even though the child does not see it, we reap the results.

I am not implying that children should suffer. We should be loving and compassionate and help them in any way we can. I would like to see society improving in such a way that these things never happen. To put it more clearly: if the law of karma is misunderstood even slightly, it can create havoc. One could jump to the conclusion that in whatever way children are suffering, it is their karma. Let it happen, because they did wrong in previous births. That is a "twisting" of the law of karma. Karma does not overrule the opportunity for you or I to help, regardless of what a person has done. We can forgive, we can help so that suffering does not continue. The door is always left open in the law of karma, to improve or correct ourselves and learn from our mistakes.

Often the results of karmas are inexplicable and leave us baffled, how can such things happen? There is no use dragging God in and making Him responsible. We act and reap the consequences. The law of karma is like a chain of links joined together by cause and effect: a, b, c, d, e. There are no breaks in the chain of karma. It is true that those who are instrumental in doing harm will have to pay the price. That is how the whole creation carries on, actually. Not that it has to carry on that way—it could be better—but that is the method by which the reincarnation process is perpetuated. In a similar vein, it has been said that war does not solve problems. For the time being it seems to offer a solution—one side is defeated and one wins, as if the matter is over. But war only breeds further wars. It is the same with the law of karma; it creates a chain reaction. Knowingly or unknowingly, each one creates their own bondage, led by desire and ignorance. Imagine the whole cosmos as one great computer. Within this intricate machinery, all minds are linked together, each soul connected to every other soul. If you could raise your consciousness to the fourth dimension or see through the third eye, you would observe in the astral plane minds interconnected in intricate jumbles of karmic chains. From this perspective you would wisely see that each receives according to what they have done. Therefore we should be kind to others because their karma will take care of their wrongs. Why should we put ourselves in the position to punish others? Karma reaches everyone—it is very scientific.

This continuous chain of karma carries on endlessly until the advent of a Liberated Soul. Then suddenly the chain is broken. Liberated ones do not react. All others are so bound by their karmas, by their nature, so that they instinctively react. Perfected Ones stand apart, without reaction. If one person breaks a link, it liberates many. That is why we stress virtues such as forgiveness, patience, kindness, tolerance and letting go, so that you will break free from the endless linking of karmas.

If one person breaks a link, it liberates many. That is why we stress virtues so much, such as forgiveness, patience, kindness, tolerance and letting go, so that you will break free from the endless linking of karmas.

Karma does not create our sufferings. What we do comes back to us, whether we are aware of it or not, whether as children or adults. Even as adults we often do not remember or pay attention to what we do or understand the consequences, leave aside deliberately denying our thoughts and actions when we are well aware of them.

Those who are instrumental in wrongs of any kind will pay the price, no doubt about it. Even should someone take it to the ridiculous extent of trying to justify their wrongdoing by saying that they were only being instrumental in paying back karmic justice, the answer to this is: unless one were party to it, they would stand aside and refuse to contribute to the karma. Those who continue the karmic chain reaction do so because of their own temperament and nature, their samskara or karmas. They are under the spell of their own maya or self-created illusions, and will have to pay the price, because that is their tendency too.

Someone has to stand aside and aspire for Liberation, to break the chains of karma. A story I read as a schoolboy illustrates this. Two friends were traveling from their village on pilgrimage. In those days there were no trains and planes, so they were going on horseback. At one place they halted at an inn for the night. During the night someone was murdered in another room. The news spread the next morning and the authorities came to search. In one of the pilgrim’s shoulder bags they found a blood-stained dagger. It was not like today, with a jury and court, fingerprints, etc. The pilgrim was arrested, taken before the king and given life in prison. He had not committed the murder and pleaded for himself but nobody listened to him. In those days they just hurled them into prison, shut the door and forgot about them. This pilgrim, a good and learned man, was kind to everyone. He taught the other prisoners reading, writing and the scriptures. In the course of time he became a very venerable old man, loved and respected by everyone. Even the guards respected him. They pitied him but there was no court at that time to review his case. One day one of those present asked him if he had committed the murder. He replied, “I didn’t murder, they just imprisoned me.” “But why,” asked the other, “are you suffering this way?” At last he replied, “Look, even I didn’t understand at the time. But while in prison, after years of meditating and praying, I saw a vision that in my last birth I had murdered someone and got away with it. This birth I’m paying the price.” Whether king or beggar, all are subject to the law of karma. It has no “mercy.” The law of karma is perfect
Mind is very interlinked with karmas; it exists only to lodge karmic action and reaction. The day all karmas are over, the mind will vanish. That is Liberation.

peak, saying, “You are safe here. Okay, I’m going,” but at that moment the bird suddenly died. Garuda then flew back to the gathering. When Yamaraj came out he asked Garuda where he had left the bird. “I took him far away from you, Lord, but he died there.” Yamaraj commented, “That’s where his death was written. Actually, when I saw the bird on the gate I was wondering how he could be sitting there when his Master was unaffected by stones and other harsh things, but this is not commonly done.

Often we do not know what we did to accrue a certain karma. On the other hand, some knowingly do the same wrongs again and again, deliberately. Those who do this and also plead innocence suffer more.

In a court of law, if we deny and are found guilty, the punishment is more. If we accept our wrongs, at least there may be a more reasonable punishment. Therefore we value humility; it makes us accept the responsibility and the results thereof. Ignorance is no excuse. The only difference is, if we did wrong knowingly we are worse culprits.

There was once a conference in heaven and all the Devas and Devis came on their vehicles. Hence Nandi the bull, Vishnu on the eagle Garuda, Ganesha on the mouse, and Saraswati on her swan. Yamaraj, the god of death, also arrived, his eyes flaming with fire, riding his dark bull. At the entrance to the conference arena was a large gateway. A bird was sitting there, and Yamaraj happened to look up at it. It is said if the god of death looks at someone, their days are over. Yamaraj continued on into the gathering but the bird began to tremble, thinking, “Yamaraj has looked at me, I’m not long for this world! Garuda, Vishnu’s mount, is the fastest bird in existence. He saw the small bird shaking with fear and asked why. The little bird said, “Yamaraj just looked at me, I’m not safe now.” “Don’t worry,” said Garuda, “I will take you far away to where Yamaraj will never find you.” The little bird was very thankful and off they went. Garuda flew far, far away and placed the bird on a remote mountain.
Those who come out of the karmic cycle, the *karma-chakra*, stand as witnesses in the arena of karmas. Under no provocation will they react. That is why they say the spiritual path is “only for the brave”—those who under any challenge or threat are not swayed.

The least beings in some other birth. Those whom we call great could have been high yogis; when they fall they can still become renowned. Such “history” is very difficult to know by ordinary understanding. Those who suffer today might in future be accepted into the highest kingdom.

Spiritual pursuit is not intellectual pursuit. It is a becoming process, transformation. Whether we are from east or west, the same infallible law of karma applies. We perpetuate it by our actions and desires. If you are paying the price now, so much the better. Just know that from now onward you do not add to it, creating further suffering. Untruths, whatever you are paying the price now, so much the better. Just know that from now onward you do not add to it, creating further suffering. Untruths, whatever

One level the mind can be heavenly and on the other it can be very evil. The bigger the ego, the greater the evil. Ordinarily we do not like to analyze our evil side, but whatever is evil is undivine, is it not? Whatever is wrong is not taking us toward God. Evil may be a strong word—call it a diversion from the Path. To heed the Word, the Truth and the Life is to learn to avoid doing the things that landed us into suffering in the first place. When you are about to say, “I’m sorry,” pause before you speak. Ask yourself: do you mean what you are about to say? If the answer is no, then do not say it. If you are truly sorry, then say it. See that you genuinely feel sorry before saying it. This is not slipping self-condemnation, it is self-analysis and auto-reflection, a part of self-realization.

Do not take any of your wrongs lightly, even small things. Often, avoiding self-condemnation goes to the other extreme; not doing anything about ourselves is not right either. Self-condemnation is not necessary but self-analysis, auto-reflection, repentance, opening the conscience and going deeper within ourselves to see what is hurting and what is wrong—these are needed. Still you may fail again. It does not matter as long as you continue sincerely. But if you are avoiding facing karmas, then you are in trouble, deep trouble. That boomerangs back on you.

Once you have learned a particular lesson you will see the way out. Generally there are about five options for a given situation: either you change and then the situation doesn’t exist; or you leave the situation; or the other person changes; or sometimes outside help may come. The fifth solution is to put it into God’s hands: await His grace and mercy. In no way does running away from the situation on its ego level solve the problem. If you think you have learned the lesson on your own but it still persists, then you can take any of these five options. Running away from the battlefield is no solution because you will do the same wrong elsewhere, due to your tendencies.

There is always a way out of the bondage of karma if we humbly see and take responsibility for our actions. Confess or repent before God. Genuine prayer and understanding is needed. If repentance is genuine, the conscience opens. Then, even if you repeat the same wrongs a few more times, it is like the last punches in boxing: a few punches and it is done, finished. Before that, you get up again and again. If it is a hard blow you may lie down a few more days, and again get up and continue doing it—endless repetition. After a genuine repentance the last blow by God’s hand will finish you.

The whole world is a school for learning and we are all here as students. Except the Perfected Ones who are here to help others, each of us has taken birth to learn spiritual lessons. In each birth we are given different situations in which to perfect ourselves. And as long as we have lessons to learn, we will continue to be reborn on this earth.

Notes

1. The term karma applies to all action, including thoughts, as well as all reactions or results of actions. Karma includes both cause and effect, and thus destiny as well.

2. The accumulated tendencies born of our thoughts and actions.