

Cause, Condition and Effect

IBDSCL, Sep 29, 30, 2018, by Nancy Yu

Good morning! Welcome to the International Buddha Dharma Society for Cosmic Law to listen to today's Dharma talk. This week, we will start a new subject, **Cause, Condition and Effect**. '**Cause**' means the reason for a certain thing to happen; '**Condition**' means the condition under which a certain thing could happen; '**Effect**' means a certain thing happens. Everything and every phenomenon in the universe are dominated by the **Law of Cause, Condition and Effect**, which is a very important law of the **Cosmic Law**. When there is a cause, and when the condition is available, there will be an effect. When there is a cause, and when the condition is not available yet, there will not be an effect. There is a saying: *Good causes lead to good effects; evil causes lead to evil effects*. If the results have not come yet, it means that the conditions are not ripe yet. The **Law of Cause, Condition and Effect** often is briefly said to be the **Law of Cause and Effect**.

Like a seed growing to a tree, the seed is the cause, the tree is the effect, the condition would be the soil, the water, the sunlight...

"Everything has a cause; everything has its condition; and everything has its effect."

"From effect to know the cause, you will see through many things."

Cause, Effect and Condition was explained directly or indirectly in many sutras. Today, I would like to share with you four stories. From these stories, we will come to understand better the **Law of Cause and Effect**. The first story is from **the Collected Sutra of the Six Paramitas**, and the name of the story is **the Buddha laughing at Three Things**.

One day, the Buddha, passing by a market with his disciples, saw an old man who was selling fish. While weighing and selling fish, this old man sighed, "Heavenly god, what have I done wrong? My son died so early. If he is still alive, he could have been helping me selling fish and I wouldn't be so busy and tired now."

The Buddha compassionately looked at the old man, then he gently smiled. Right away, five-colored golden light radiated around the Buddha's teeth and lightened up the old man and the whole market. Shortly after, a big smelly pig, with feces on its body, came wobbling across the market. All the people quickly covered their mouths and noses. Seeing this, the Buddha again smiled compassionately.

Ananda saw the Buddha's behavior and felt that the Buddha was different today, so he respectfully asked the Buddha, "Compassionate World Honored One, when you saw the old man sighing, you smiled pitifully, and when you saw the wobbling pig, you again smiled pitifully. Are there any reasons here? Please be compassionate and clear up our confusions."

The Buddha then told the disciples the three reasons behind:

The first reason was the ignorance of the old man. When he was catching fish by the river, countless lives were killed in his net. Families of those fish and shrimps were broken into pieces and the old man did not rise any sympathy. Now, when his son died, he was complaining the heaven and the earth and felt that it was not fair for him. Because of this, I laughed.

Secondly, this old man once had unsurpassed past. He could summon wind and call for rain. He could come and go freely. He was a fulfilled flying king. But now, he could only manage to live as a fisher. Previously when he was a heavenly being, he focused on cultivating emptiness and then

got attached to emptiness and could not return to the original heart. Though he lived eight billion and forty million kalpas long, he could not eradicate his evil karma. When his life of meritorious rewards was consumed, his Samadhi power also disappeared. He then continued the suffering of samsara.

Ananda was puzzled and asked, "A flying king like the King of Tavatimsa, the merits he accumulated should be vast. Why could he still not be able to avoid the karma retribution?" The Buddha answered, "Weal and woe are both temporary and they don't live long. If someone is rich and does not know to continue to accumulate merits and cultivate wisdom, on the contrary, he liked violent activities, then his blessings will be quickly consumed, and he will incur countless disasters and evil retributions. **Cause and effect** is like shadow and echo, it won't differentiate between the rich and the poor."

Thirdly, I recalled when practicing the Bodhisattva Way one life in the past, I was one disciple of the Three Jewels. On every fasting day, I would go to the temple to listen to the Dharma. I was diligent and never dared to slack off. Because I believed in the Three Jewels, practiced the Buddha Dharma, was never tired on doing good deeds, hold the five precepts, so I was able to be born when the Buddha lived in the world. Listening to the Buddha giving Dharma talks, I left my family and cultivated diligently. From then on, in every life, I persevered in doing this and because of this, my merits and wisdom gradually expanded and ultimately in this life, I became the World Honored One. At that time, my neighbor never believed that evil deeds led to evil retributions and good deeds led to good retributions. He was reluctant to learn. He did many evil deeds. He worshiped ghosts and gods and he cast demonic charm to harm people. Whenever he had time, he would indulge in eating, drinking, gambling and frequenting the brothels. After that life, every time I would be born in a clean place and was able to listen to Dharma talks and cultivate until becoming a Buddha. While this neighbor, he liked women and was incontinent, and he also did not respect his parents, so till today, he is still cycling in the three evil realms and cannot get out. And in this life, he is this filthy big pig.

Ignorant people, like the old fisher man, did not know **Cause and Effect** and thought that life was not fair; cultivators without right view and right thought, like those heavenly beings with longevity, took the wrong road and after they consumed their blessings, they would still fall into the animal realm to suffer; those who were strong headed, lived a rotten life, liked good wine and women and did not know to control themselves, would obtain a filthy pig body! All these three kinds of people will live in the three evil realms one life after another. In the suffering sea of birth and death, they would not be able to get out.

Cause and Effect is one of the cosmic laws. In front of the **Cosmic Law**, every being is equal. Cultivation is also a process to continuously perceive the **Cosmic Law** and comply with **Cosmic Law**. Now listen to the second story.

When the Buddha lived in the world, there was a girl who was not married but pregnant. She went to the Vihara to look for the Buddha. The Buddha was giving teachings to his disciples. This girl walked directly up to the Buddha and said to him, "Sramana, I am having a miserable life because of you. You got me pregnant and then maliciously abandoned me. I was looking for you everywhere and finally found you here. Now, how are you going to lodge me?"

This girl actually was sent here by the heretics and she was lying about her being pregnant. She wrapped a washbasin onto her belly and pretended to be pregnant. She did this way to try to destroy the Buddha's fame. But later, she tripped herself and the washbasin fell off her belly.

The disciples felt relieved when they saw that the girl was not really pregnant, but they still had questions in their mind: Why the sacred Buddha would receive this kind of retribution? So Shariputra asked the Buddha this question: what causes and conditions made this girl come and slander the Buddha?

The Buddha told his disciples:

Long time ago, in a city, there was a woman who was very kind and people called her "Shan Huan Nv". She was very respectful to cultivators and often made offerings to them. There were two masters who she frequently made offerings, one named "Wu Sheng" and the other named "Chang Guan". Master Wu Sheng cultivated diligently and showed high moral conduct. He was respected by people. While Master Chang Guan, though he was also a cultivator, he still carried heavy worldly habits.

Every day, Shan Huan Nv made the same offerings to these two masters, but she showed different attitude to them. She was more respectful to Wu Sheng Master.

Chang Guan Master felt that, so he was jealous of Wu Sheng Master. Out of anger, he said to people that Shan Huan Nv had an affair with Wu Sheng Master and that Master Wu Sheng must be getting more offerings beneath the surface.

The Buddha stopped for a while and asked his disciples, "Do you know who is the Master Chang Guan? He was me. Because of my malicious slandering of a virtuous cultivator, I fell into the hell for thousands of years, suffered from burning by blazing fire. And even in this life, I am still receiving malicious slandering because of that."

So, you know, a small good deed can lead to great good retribution, and the same to an evil deed. Remember, one seed can grow to a big tree.

Now let's listen to two more stories happened to King Pasenadi.

When the Buddha lived in the world, King Pasenadi had a daughter whose name was Shan Guang. Shan Guang was an upright and clever girl. Her parents loved her and all people in the palace liked and respected her. One day, the King said to his daughter, "You are blessed. Because of me, you are loved by all the people in the palace."

Shan Guang answered, "I received the blessing out of my own karma. It's not because of your name." The King was not happy to hear this and he announced, "I will see what your karma will lead you to without me." Later, he secretly sent his servant out and found the poorest beggar. He then had Shan Guang married the beggar.

The King said to Shan Guang, "From now on, you will live without me. Time will tell us if what you said is true." Shan Guang still had not any regret and she left the palace with the beggar. On the road, she asked her husband, "Are your parents still alive?" The beggar said, "My parents were the highest elder in the city. They both died. I was the only one left in the world, begging to live." Shan Guang asked again, "Do you still remember their house?" "The house was destroyed, and nothing left, but I still remember the address." So, the couple returned to the old house. Strange as it was, no matter where they went, treasure would appear naturally from underground. With these treasure, the couple hired people to build a house, and less than a month, it was finished.

One day, the King recalled Shan Guang and he asked his subordinates, "How is the princess now?" Somebody reported to him, "Your Majesty, the princess is living a life just like yours." Shan Guang invited the King to her place. The King was greatly surprised when he saw Shan

Guang's place. He went to ask the Buddha, "What good karma did my daughter do before, so she could be born in the palace with light around her?"

The Buddha told the King, "Ninety-one kalpas ago, during Vipassi Buddha's time, after the Buddha entered Nirvana, one King built a tower with seven jewels and offered it to the Buddha's Relics. When his wife saw it, she put her crown decoration to the top of the tower and hang the jewels on her crown to the tower. At the same time, she vowed, "May my body carry light in the future. May my body appear in purple golden color. May honor and glory be with me. May I away from the three evil realms and the eight difficult situations forever." The Queen at that time is Shan Guang in this life. Later, when Kassapa Buddha lived in the world, one woman wanted to offer the Buddha and his disciples fine food. Her husband tried to stop her. The woman said to her husband, "Since I already invited the Buddha and his disciples here to have dinner, please allow me to do this." Her husband listened to her and the woman at that time is Shan Guang in this life. Her husband at that time is the beggar in this life. Because he tried to stop his wife from making the offering, in many lives, he often was poor. And because he listened to his wife and allowed her making the offering, so he is rich when he is with Shan Guang."

If Shan Guang's happiness was because of her father's blessing, then after she was expelled out of the palace, she would be poor. But because her happiness was from her own good karma, so the King could drive her out of the palace, but he could not take away her happiness.

One day, before the King fell asleep, he heard two servants arguing. One said, "I depend on our King to live." The other argued, "No, our karma determines our life, not the King." The King thought, "The one who said 'I depend on our King to live.' should be rewarded." So, he sent someone to tell the Queen, "The King will send a servant here and you may substantially reward him." Then the King called in the one who said 'I depend on our King to live' and told him to send some tasty wine to the Queen. However, when this person just stepped outside of the door, his nose bled, and he could not go anymore. So, he asked the one who said 'our karma determines our life, not the King' to send the wine to the Queen. There, the Queen gave him money, clothes and necklaces of jade and pearls. When this person came back, and the King saw that this was not the person he sent. He was surprised and called in the one who said 'I depend on the King to live' and asked, "I sent you to the Queen and why didn't you go?" The man told the King what happened, and the King sighed, "What the Buddha said is true! We receive the karma we did, not from anybody else!"

The King originally wanted to reward the first person, but the first person did not have the blessing to receive that, while the second person obtained the reward because of his own good karma. So good and bad retributions are both incurred by our own karma, not by anything or anybody else.

Amitabha! Our karma determines what we receive. One word, one action, one thought are all causes. "The Bodhisattvas are afraid of causes and sentient beings are afraid of effects." Continuously correct ourselves. Continuously plant right causes. Right causes, right fruits. Observe the mind. Keep a righteous, honest, kind and pure heart. No killing, no stealing, no misconduct, no wine drinking, no false speech, no loose speech, no evil speech, no greed, no arrogance, no ignorance, no anger and no suspicion. Everything we are doing is doing to ourselves. Cultivate well on our own road and perfect ourselves. Thank you! See you next week!