

## Be Clear of Cause and Effect

IBDSCL, Oct. 13, 14, 2018, by Nancy Yu

Good morning! Welcome to the International Buddha Dharma Society for Cosmic Law to listen to today's Dharma talk! This month, our subject is Cause and Effect. Everything we see has its causes and conditions. Every sentient being should know Cause and Effect and revere the Law of Cause and Effect, so that they are conscious not to start evil causes and avoid receiving evil fruits later. There is a saying: Be Clear of Cause and Effect. We respect Cause and Effect and try not to do evil karma. What if our retributions come, how should we face that?

'Being Clear of Cause and Effect' came from a koan about Bai Zhang Master.

In Tang Dynasty, there was a master Bai Zhang. One time, when he was giving Dharma talk, an old man came to listen to his talk. After the talk was done, the old man left with other people. One day, after the talk, the old man did not leave. Bai Zhang Master asked him, "Who is standing there?" The old man said that in the past during the time of Kassapa Buddha, he lived in this Mountain. At that time one student asked him, "Is a great cultivator still in the Law of Cause and Effect?" He answered him, "A great cultivator is not in the Law of Cause and Effect." What does it mean "not in the Law of Cause and Effect"? He meant that the Law of Cause and Effect did not work for great cultivators. As you may know now his words are not right. His view is not the right view. All phenomena, the sun, the moon, the stars and the rivers, the mountains, the earth, are all in the Law of Cause and Effect. There is no exception. After that life, the old man fell to be a wild fox in five hundred lives just because of his words that great cultivators are not in the Law of Cause and Effect.

Maybe you will say five hundred lives of wild fox just because of one wrong view? Seriously? Yes. Because a person who gives dharma talks is very important for the dharma body of a listener. The dharma body is much more important than the flesh body. Wrong views, without wisdom are ignorance. An ignorant heart corresponds to animal realm. So, he suffered the bitterness of an animal.

While because of his kind root and his affinity, he met Bai Zhang Master after five hundred lives and again he had the chance to listen to the Dharma to correct his view. Bai Zhang Master said to him, "Be clear of Cause and Effect." After the old man heard about this, he suddenly saw the light. Then the old man bowed to Bai Zhang Master and said, "I am liberated from fox body. I live on the other side of the mountain. Please bury me in the ritual of a monk's death.

Bai Zhang Master told his disciples that after lunch they would hold a funeral. His disciples were surprised to hear that because there was nobody in the temple died. After lunch, Bai Zhang Master brought them to a cave behind the mountain and there they found a dead fox. Cremation was held.

This is the famous story “The Wild Fox Chan”. So, you know listening to Dharma talks is very important. Being able to listen to Proper Dharma is very difficult. Everyone should cherish the chance to listen to Dharma talks and make efforts to bring yourself there. Dharma is the door to liberation.

“Be clear of Cause and Effect.” Cultivators should be very clear of the Law of Cause and Effect. When Buddhas and Bodhisattvas come to the world to transform living beings, do they receive retribution? Of course they do. They receive retributions, but they are very clear of it. They know What is the cause and they know in which kalpa, which life the cause was created. Though they receive retribution, they don’t move their mind, or rise any thought. They stay in stillness. They will not complain, hate, sorrow or lament like common people. Their mind is always calm like water because they know that everything has its causes, everything has its conditions, and everything has its results. So, in stillness, they follow the conditions.

When Sakyamuni Buddha lived in the world, many times he manifested receiving retributions. Today, I would like to share three stories about the Buddha explaining his retributions.

#### 1. The Buddha’s retribution of “Three Months of Eating Horse Food”.

When the Buddha lived in the world, there was a son of an elder who invited the Buddha and his hundreds of disciples to his place for three months of summer retreat. The Buddha and his disciples came and settled down. This elder’s son was deluded by demons and he forgot to make offerings to the Buddha and his disciples. So, the Buddha let his disciples go out to beg for food. It’s a famine year and nobody could give them food. So Shariputra went to the heaven and all others followed the Buddha to look for food.

As that time, a horse man did not bear to see that, but he only had horse food, so he brought horse food to the Buddha and his disciples. Ananda who served the Buddha, seeing the Buddha eating horse food, he felt painful. The Buddha knew his mind and he gave a bowl of horse food to Ananda and let him try. Ananda tried and felt that the horse food was just as delicious as the food they ate before even though it looked like horse food.

After three months, the elder's son remembered the Buddha and he came to see the Buddha. The Buddha said, "Three months passed and it's time for us to go back." This is the Buddha's retribution of three months of eating horse food.

The disciples asked the Buddha the reason, the Buddha told them: many kalpas ago, when Vipassin Buddha was enlightened, he was ceremoniously served by the King and the people. At that time, Sakyamuni Buddha was a heretic and he and his five hundred disciples were begging for food. After he saw that he was jealous and said, "This sramana put up a bold front. He only deserves horse food!" All his disciples agreed with him, except Shariputra who felt that they should not slander the Vipassin Buddha.

Because of the words that Sakyamuni Buddha said in that life, he suffered endless bitter retributions. Later he cultivated diligently and took refuge in Buddha Dharma, and then enlightened and became a Buddha, but still he had the retribution of eating three months of horse food. Because Shariputra did not agree with his slandering, he went to the heaven to enjoy three months of heavenly food instead. So, even after hundreds or thousands of kalpas, the karma would not die.

## **2. The Buddha's Three Days of Headache**

One time, the Buddha's country, the kingdom of Gavilovi, was invaded by King Virudhaka of Kosala country. King Virudhaka vowed to kill all the people of King Suddhodana's family.

The Buddha sit on the road to stop King Virudhaka and his troops three times. Every time, when King Virudhaka saw the Buddha sitting on the road, he would just return. However, the hatred in his heart had never been extinguished. The Buddha knew that he should not block the retribution, so he let him go. The Buddha had all sorts of supernatural power, but he knew that he could not save the Suddhodana's family. He knew the reason behind, so he knew his family must bear this retribution.

Among the Buddha's disciples, venerable Maudgalyayana was No. 1 in supernatural power. He could not bear to see this to happen. He decided to rescue the King Suddhodana's family with his supernatural power. Venerable Maudgalyayana was an Arhat and he could not see the reason behind because he could only see reasons within eighty thousand kalpas. Out of this time range, he could not see. So, he said, "My master's family will be killed by this King. I will go and save them!" So, he chanted some mantras and put five hundred people of the King Suddhodana's family into his bowl and sent them to the heaven. When he took back his bowl, guess what, in his bowl was only pus and blood, no lives left.

So, what is the cause for this war to happen?

Many kalpas ago, King Virudhaka was a fish king and he lived in a river with his family dependents, fish, turtle, shrimp and crab. Village people by the river all liked to eat fish. They ate all the fish and then they caught the fish king to eat. At that time, there were five hundred people who ate the fish king, except a child. The child was only curious, and he knocked the head of the fish king three times. That child was the Buddha's previous life.

The fish king hated those people and he vowed to revenge. Because of what happened, King Virudhaka, with his dependents, vowed to pay the blood debt. The hatred in their heart drove them to kill all the people in King Suddhodana's family. People in King Suddhodana's family were those who ate the fish. The Buddha had three days of headache because he knocked the fish head three times.

Venerable Maudgalyayana asked the Buddha, "By my power, why couldn't I save the five hundred people?" The Buddha told him, "Cause and Effect cannot be avoided. If it could, I myself would have rescued them." Nobody can escape from Cause and Effect. When it is time, it for sure will happen.

### **3. The Buddha's Retribution of the Wood Chip Piercing Through his Foot**

One day, Sakayamuni Buddha was begging in Rajagrha. There was one person splitting wood by the road. Suddenly a piece of wood chip got off the ground and no matter how the Buddha tried to avoid, it still pierced through his foot. It was painful.

Seeing this, Ananda fainted. After he woke up, he asked the Buddha, "The Buddha has a body of diamond. Why it could be harmed by a little piece of wood? You have always been compassionate. What is the reason behind?"

So, the Buddha said to his disciple, "It's all because what I have done before."

The Buddha continued, "Countless kalpas ago, there were two businessmen, each leading five hundred people into the ocean. They both came to a rich island. The island was like a fairyland and it had beautiful environment, abundant clothing, food, living places, beautiful women, and all sorts of treasure. Soon, one heavenly girl came to tell them: Though it is rich here, but you cannot live long. After seven days, it will be flooded by the ocean water. Shortly after, a demon girl came to tell them: The girl was cheating you. It is a happy land here and this is what you have been looking for. If it really will be flooded by the ocean water, how come there are still so many beautiful girls, so much food and clothing?"

“The first merchant heard what they said, he went back to his ship to prepare for the flood. The second merchant thought the island would not be flooded and so he did not prepare. After seven days, the flood came. The second merchant did not prepare, so he went to fight for the ship with the first merchant. At the end, he was pierced by a spear and fell into the ocean. He died.”

“The first merchant is me and the five hundred people I led are the five hundred Arhats now. The second merchant was Devadatta. The heavenly girl at that time is Shariputra now and the demon girl at that time is Brahman disciple, Bhikhu Man Yue.”

“At that time, because I killed Devadatta, in many lives, I stayed in the hell, suffering the piercing of knives. Later, again in many lives, I was an animal and shot by people. And then, I was born as a ghost, suffering from climbing an iron cone tree. Now, though I became a Buddha, the retribution continues.”

Amitabha! We all should revere the Cause and Effect. When facing retributions, we all should learn from the Buddha. Keep the mind still. No rising thought, no complaints, no hatred. Because any rising thought is just another cause. Let it be. Live according to conditions. Thank you! Wish you all become a Buddha soon. See you next week!