

The Cause and Effect of One's Appearance

IBDSCL, Oct. 6, 7, 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, Condition and Effect. We have talked about many stories about Cause, Condition and Effect, and by now, you should know that everything has its cause, condition and effect. The living beings in the universe are all different from each other. There are so many kinds of them and even in the same kind, we are all different. All these are determined by our good and evil karma.

Today, first I would like to share a story about **Cause and Effect** of a princess's appearance. This story is from *the Sutra of Miscellaneous Treasure*. The title of the story is *the Ugly Daughter of Pasenada*. In *the sutra of the Buddha Speaking of the Difference of Karma Retribution*, it mentioned that there are ten evil actions that would make one born ugly. Out of the ten, one is "not respecting the saints" and another is "belittling ugly people." The princess, Lai Ti, was one of the best example. Because she slandered the sage ones in previous life, she was very ugly, and everybody was afraid of her.

(The ten evil actions that would make people ugly: 1. anger; 2. hatred; 3. slandering; 4. annoying others; 5. not respecting parents; 6. not respecting saints; 7. robbing others; 8. extinguishing lamps in temples; 9. judging ugly people's appearance; 10. doing evil deeds)

When the Buddha lived in the world, King Pasenada had a daughter, Lai Ti, who was very ugly. It's said that she had 18 ugly characters and she even did not look like a human. Those who saw her were often scared.

It was time for Lai Ti to get married. The King sent people to look for somebody and he especially looked for somebody who was from a noble family but was poor now. The envoys looked for a long time and finally they found one at the corner of a market. The envoys brought the man to the King.

The King took the man to the garden and told him, "I have a daughter. She was very ugly and could not see people. Now, I want you to marry her. Is it O.K.?"

The poor man answered, "Your Majesty, this is your order. Even if it was a dog, I would not dare to say No, let alone a princess. I have no objection."

So, the princess married the poor man. The King built a palace for them and told his son-in-law, "My daughter is ugly. Don't let anybody see her. From now on, lock the door when you go out and close the door after you come back. Make sure nobody sees her."

Young men of noble families at that time often had parties, drinking and playing together. Every time, the young people would bring their wives to the party except the King's son-in-law. So, people made an agreement that everyone should bring their wife. If someone did not, this person would be punished. At the next party, like before, the King's son-in-law still did not bring the princess. According to the agreement, the King's son-in-law was fined a sum of money. Then again and again, the King's son-in-law was fined many times, but he still would not bring his wife to the parties.

One time, the King's son-in-law returned home and said to his wife, "I was fined many times because of you." His wife asked, "Why?" The husband explained, "We have an agreement. Every time to the party we need to bring our wives. But the King had an order that nobody could see you. So, I was fined many times."

Hearing this, the wife was deeply ashamed. So, she was mindful of the Buddha days and nights. The next time, when her husband went to the party alone, she repented more sincerely and vowed, "The Buddha came to the world to benefit people. However, I am a person with deep karma, so I cannot receive his blessings! "Because of Lai Ti's sincere heart, the Buddha arose from the ground. First Lai Ti saw the Buddha's hair, and she was very happy and respectful. Right away, her hair became very beautiful. Then she saw the Buddha's forehead, then the Buddha's eyebrows, eyes, ears, nose, mouth and the whole body. Lai Ti gradually saw the Buddha's full appearance and she was more and more respectful and at the same time, her body was also changing. All her ugliness disappeared and now she was upright and beautiful like a heavenly being.

In the party, the noble young men were discussing stealthily. They thought that the reason the King's daughter did not come might be one of the two: either she was extraordinarily beautiful or too ugly to see people. They decided to drink down the King's son-in-law, steal his keys and go to his home to take a look. So, they did. They went to the King's son-in-law's home. They opened the door and saw that the beauty of the King's daughter was unparalleled. They closed the door and returned to the party. At that time the King's son-in-law was not awake yet. They returned his key.

When the King's son-in-law woke up and went back home, he opened the door and saw a beautiful woman. He felt strange and asked, "Who are you? Why are you here?" His wife answered, "I am your wife, Lai Ti!" The King's son-in-law was puzzled and asked his wife why

she became so beautiful. His wife answered, “When I heard that every time you were fined in the party because of me, I felt ashamed and so I pleaded the Buddha sincerely. Later the Buddha arose from the ground. Seeing the Buddha’s appearance, I was very happy, so my appearance changed, and I am not ugly anymore.”

The King’s son-in-law was happy too and he went to see the King and told the King what happened. The king so called in Lai Ti and seeing her, the King also felt amazed. The King went to see the Buddha, “World Honored One, why my daughter was born in the palace but ugly and people were scared to see her? And why suddenly she became dignified and beautiful?”

The Buddha then told the King, “In the past, there was a Pratyekabuddha. Every day he went out to beg for food. One day, he came to an elder’s door. The elder’s daughter offered food to the Pratyekabuddha, but when she saw the Pratyekabuddha’s coarse and ugly body, she uttered, “The man is so ugly. His skin is like fish scales and his hair is like the horse tail.” The elder’s daughter at that time was your daughter in this life. Because she offered food to the Pratyekabuddha, she was born in the palace. But because she scolded the Pratyekabuddha, she was very ugly. Later, due to her repentance and sincerity, she was able to see me. Because of her happiness, her appearance changed.”

In the sutra, we often heard the Buddha had thirty-two characters and eighty minor marks. ‘Characters’ mean clear-cut features and ‘minor marks’ mean fine and difficult to discern characters that can bring people joy and happiness.

The Buddha had a perfect appearance, completely dignified. Of course, the Buddha’s thirty-two characters and eighty minor marks came from his countless kalpas’ of cultivation. Now, let’s look at the Buddha’s thirty-two characters and the reasons behind.

1. The soles of the Buddha’s feet are smooth, soft and level. They are always in close contact with the ground, not even a needle or a hair can stay in between. This mirrors the Buddha’s diligent cultivation of the six Paramitas in the causal ground when he was practicing the Bodhisattva’s Way. This character indicates the Buddha’s merit of instructing and benefiting the sentient beings.
2. On the sole of each of the Buddha’s feet is the impression of a clear and perfect thousand-spoked wheel. This reason is when the Buddha was in the causal ground, he always made offerings to his parents, teachers, kind friends and even animals. This character indicates that the Buddha is sympathetic to all living beings, helping them to extinguish their anger, hatred and greed, and to break through their ignorance.

3. The Buddha's fingers and toes are long. This is because when the Buddha was in the causal ground, he respected and greeted all the teachers, masters without any pride. It indicates that the Buddha has a long life and take care of the sentient beings.

4. The Buddha's heels jut out roundly. This is because when he was in the causal ground, the Buddha held precepts, listened to the Dharma and cultivated diligently.

5. The fingers and toes of the Buddha are connected with a web of golden light, like the web of a wild goose king. The lines are like silk. This is because when the Buddha was in the causal ground, he practiced the four ways to gather living beings under his positive influences, being generous, speaking kindly, giving encouragement and setting oneself as an example.

6. The hands and feet of the Buddha are extremely soft, like the tula cotton, and they are red color. This is because when Buddha was in the causal ground, he offered wonderful clothing, food, beds to masters, and when his parents or masters were sick, he himself cleaned and bathed them. It indicates that the Buddha, with his compassionate and soft hands, gather all living beings.

7. The Buddha's insteps are tall, round and soft, like the turtle's back. When he walks, lines appear. This is because when Buddha was in the causal ground, he cultivated blessings diligently.

8. His calves are round and strong, like those of a Deer King. This is a wondrous character resulted from Buddha's concentration on listening to the Dharma and giving Dharma talks when he was in the causal ground.

9. The Buddha's arms are extremely long. When he stands and straightens his arms down, his two hands reach two knees. This is because when the Buddha was in the causal ground, he rided himself of arrogance, he loved giving, and he was not greedy. It indicates that the Buddha has subdued all demons and has pity on living beings and compassionately caresses their crowns.

10. His private organ is recessed and remains concealed, like that of a Horse King. This is because the Buddha has completely cut off sexual mis-conduct and rescues the scared living beings.

11. The Buddha's height is equal to the width of his body (the length when two arms stretch to each side). This is because when the Buddha was practicing Samadhi in the causal ground, he was fearless.

12. All the Buddha's bodily hair, from head to toes, curls clockwise. The hair is prune purple color, soft and moist. This is because when the Buddha was in the causal ground, he practiced all the good dharma methods in countless lives. Those who look up to the Buddha happily will benefit greatly.

13. One hair grows from one pore. On the Buddha's body, never more than one hair grows from one pore. Delicate aroma permeates from each pore. This is because when the Buddha was in the causal ground, he respected and made offerings to all sentient beings. He was never tired of instructing people. He liked to learn from wise people. He liked to bring up questions, and discuss with people. He enjoyed cultivating, renovating road and removing thorns.

14. The Buddha's body is golden in color. This is because when the Buddha was in the causal ground, he often offered living places, beds, food and lamps to sentient beings. He was free of anger and hatred, and he had sympathy on living beings.

15. The Buddha's light, in all four directions, is ten feet high. This is because when the Buddha was in the causal ground, he brought out great resolves for Bodhi and cultivated countless practices and vows. He broke through all the blockages and realized all the vows.

16. The Buddha's skin was smooth and moist, not stained by even one dust. This is also because when the Buddha was in the causal ground, he offered clean clothing, beds, living places, and so on, to sentient beings. He liked to stay close to the wise people, and away from evil men. It indicates that the Buddha treats all living beings equally and compassionately transforms living beings.

17. Seven places of the Buddha are round, soft and slightly raised. These are the palms of the hands, the soles of the feet, two shoulders and the back of the neck. This is because when the Buddha was in the causal ground, he offered living beings what he loved.

18. The Buddha's underarms are rounded, fleshy and full, without any hollow depression. This is because when the Buddha was in the causal ground, he offered sentient beings medicines and food, and, he was also the doctor of himself.

19. The Buddha's body is like that of a lion. The upper torso of the Buddha is broad. He is dignified and strict when walking, sitting and sleeping, like the Lion King. This is because when the Buddha was in the causal ground, in countless lives, he was not double-tongued. He taught people good dharma methods, to be kindhearted and harmonious, and away from arrogance. This wonderful character indicates majesty, nobility and compassion.

20. The Buddha's body is straight. Among all the people, the Buddha's body is the tallest and straightest. This is because when the Buddha was in the causal ground, he provided medicines, cured people, held precepts, and he was away from arrogance. Those who saw him could stop suffering, hold right mindfulness and cultivate the ten good deeds.

21. The Buddha's shoulders are rounded, superior and subtle. This is because when the Buddha was in the causal ground, he put up statues, built towers, encouraged sentient beings to be fearless, and he often felt ashamed of himself.

22. The Buddha has forty teeth, each at the same height, full and white like snow. This is because in countless lives, the Buddha has been away from two tongues, bad mouth and aversion. He continued cultivating equanimity and compassion, and he often sent out peaceful and wondrous fragrance to stop sentient beings from saying evil words. He helped them extinguish evil karma and receive countless bliss.

23. The Buddha's teeth are perfectly straight and aligned. The Buddha's teeth are not too thick nor too thin. There are no gaps between teeth. This is because when the Buddha was in the causal ground, he was good at transforming sentient beings with the ten good dharma methods. And, he often praised other's merits. This character indicates the merit of peace and compliance.

24. Beside the forty teeth, the Buddha also has two more teeth at the top and two more at the bottom. These four teeth are bright in color, sharp as the blade and strong as the diamond. This is because the Buddha, in countless lives, has been contemplating on good dharma, cultivating compassion. It indicates that the Buddha can break through the three poisons of sentient beings, the greed, the anger and the ignorance.

25. The Buddha's two cheeks are round and full like those of a Lion King. This is also because the Buddha having rid himself completely of idle chatter and senseless speech. Whoever saw the Buddha, would eradicate birth and death of hundreds of kalpas.

26. The Buddha always gets the supreme taste. The supreme taste has two meanings: first, it means the best taste in the whole Three-Thousand World; second, it means no matter what food the Buddha eats, once the food is taken into the Buddha's mouth, the taste will change to be the best. This is because that in countless lives, the Buddha made offerings to living beings without even being asked to do that. It indicates that the Buddha's wonderful dharma can make the sentient beings satisfied.

27. A Buddha's tongue is extremely long and can reach his hairline. This comes from his practicing the ten good dharma methods, rejoicing and praising when seeing others practicing, bringing out great vows out of compassion toward sentient beings, teaching proper dharma and dedicating his compassion to the whole Dharma Realm.

28. The Buddha has a voice of Brahma. The Buddha's voice is loud and clear like the heavenly drum, subtle and extraordinary like the kalavinka birds. Whoever hears the

Buddha's voice, will be limitlessly benefited. This is because when the Buddha was in the causal ground, in countless lives, he never said evil words, only honest and kind words. Also, he was capable of stopping others from saying bad words. He instructed people to say kind words and not to slander proper dharma.

29. The Buddha's eyes are prune purple color, like the color of lotus. This is because the Buddha, in every life, has been compliant to the beggars' intention. He made offerings to the beggars with compassionate heart, compassionate eyes and a happy heart.

30. The Buddha's eyelashes are beautiful and long like those of a bull, with each hair distinct. This comes from his treating every sentient being as his parents, caring and having pity on them. Those who behold the Buddha's eyes, will have pure and clean eyes of their own and will have their karma of seven kalpas eradicated.

31. The top of the Buddha's head is a fleshy crown-protrusion. This is because when the Buddha was in the causal ground, he himself held the ten good precepts, also he instructed others to hold the ten good precepts too.

32. The Buddha has a white curl of hair on his mid-brow, soft as the tula cotton, white as the snow, radiating light and clean. It's about 15 feet long, and it recoils clockwise. This comes from the Buddha praising others when seeing them cultivating the Precept, Samadhi and Wisdom. He never slandered them, and he stopped others from slandering them too. Those who see this character can erase their karma of birth and death of as many kalpas as the sands in the Ganges River.

Amitabha! The Buddha manifested in the world with thirty-two characters and eighty minor marks, which is from the merits and virtues he accumulated through countless kalpas. It's also for transforming people. Many people were transformed when seeing the Buddha's dignified appearance. The Buddha's perfect appearance was based on the aesthetic standards of the society at that time. In different worlds, Buddhas show up in different appearances. All is for transforming people. All forms are results of causes and effects and all forms are illusory. Everything in the universe is manifestation of energy. Everything has its energy, information and code. Our energy, information and code changes with our rising thoughts, every word and every action. When we came here, we were energy, information and code; when we leave here, we will still be energy, information and code. Beside this, nothing else. Thank you! See you next week!