

The Law of Causality

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Second Law: Cause and Effect Runs Through Three Time Periods

Since scientists have confirmed the existence of reincarnation, it should be easy for us to understand that these three periods refer to the past, present, and future lifetimes. Buddha-Dharma states that, if we want to know our past, look into our present conditions; if we want to know our future, look into our present deeds. Cause and effect are correlated to each other. If we suffer with poverty and illness in this lifetime, in past lives we must have committed the karma of killing and miserliness.

Going by the same theory, the actions of this life will also become the causes of our future lives. So if we want to know what retributions we will receive in our future lives, we only need to ask what karma we have been creating in this life. If in this life, we create the karma of wealth-dāna — using money to help people, Dharma-dāna — imparting our own knowledge and skills to others, and fearlessness-dāna — enabling people to rid themselves of disease, fear, and sorrow, then in the future we will receive the effects of wealth, wisdom, health, and longevity.

According to what time the retribution appears, the effect can be divided into three types:

1. Current Life Retribution — if we commit extremely good or evil karma, or do enough good or evil deeds, we may receive its retribution in this life. Under this truth, we believe that destiny can be changed. In *Liao Fan's Four Lessons*, the author demonstrated a great example of how he changed his own destiny, and offered ample examples to prove that this life's destiny truly can be changed.

2. Next Life Retribution — The karmic seeds planted in this lifetime will receive retribution in the following life. This is the most common phenomenon.

3. Later Lives Retribution — After creating the karma in this life, the retribution is not received in the same lifetime, nor does it receive in the next lifetime. The retribution will be received at any lifetime when the conditions are in place.

An important note is that the current life's effect is just a flower-retribution, the real karmic effect is fruit-retribution, which is waiting in future lifetimes and will be much more serious than the flower-retribution.

Relying on Buddha-Power Piously Due to Having a Righteous View

There was a historical example echoing this second law. During a very turbulent era in the Qing Dynasty, Cheng Bolin — a very devout businessman — worshiped Avalokitêśvara Bodhisattva. He knew that bandits would come, so he went to implore Avalokitêśvara Bodhisattva to bless his family of seventeen to be safe.

Since he was very pious, the Bodhisattva manifested in his dream but did not give him a solution. The Bodhisattva told him, "Sixteen members of your family do not have this karma, they can be free from this calamity. Only you have this karma and would not be able to escape." People who have not learned about causality may say, "Bodhisattva, I pray to you, but you don't tell me how to solve it, just tell me that I can't escape this trouble, do you want me to wait for death?"

Luckily, he was very pious and had a righteous mind, so he recited Bodhisattva's name earnestly after waking up and went to implore again, "Since I have this karma and there is no escape, how do I deal with it?" This Bodhisattva was very merciful and manifested in his dream again. Bodhisattva Avalokitêśvara told him that among the people who came, there was a man named Wang Mazi. "In your last life, you chopped him twenty six times with a knife, so in this life, he is coming to take your life. Sixteen members of your family do not have this karma, let them stay in the room of the east wing. You wait for him in the main hall, do not involve others in your trouble."

Five days later, the bandits came and knocked on the door. He was very calm and said to the bandits, "No need to knock. Come, which one is Wang Mazi?" Wang Mazi stepped out, and due to his eighth consciousness having seeds of being chopped by him twenty-six times in the past life, his eyes flamed with resentment. Even though his sixth consciousness in this life did not know, his eighth consciousness is very clear that "You are the one who chopped me twenty-six times to death." So he naturally showed hostility towards the enemy and thought, "I must kill you." Wang Mazi stared at him fiercely and said, "I am Wang Mazi, how do you know my name?" He said, "I worship Avalokitêśvara Bodhisattva who told me in a dream that I chopped you twenty-six times with a knife in my previous life, so I owe you a life. Now it is the time. I can pay back these twenty-six chops. I won't have regrets. Kill me now." Then he sat there and waited for death.

Taking Revenge Excessively Makes Karma Even More Intricate

Did the Bodhisattva tell Cheng Bolin the solution? No, the Bodhisattva only told him that this is the karma from his past life, he should undertake it, he should not involve his family. Well, one must have good roots to deal with this situation. Foolish people are likely to say, "Bodhisattva, are you telling me to wait for death?" But this devout man deeply believed in Buddha-power, he did exactly as the Bodhisattva instructed.

Allow me to ask, how can one succumb to his conscience under this fixed karma? If there is no intervention of the Buddha-power, can one succumb to his conscience? It was truly the blessing of Avalokitêśvara Bodhisattva at this time, Wang Mazi succumbed to his conscience and thought, "Look, you chopped me twenty-six times in my previous life, won't you chop me twenty-six times in the next life if I chop you twenty-six times now?"

How could Wang Mazi succumb to his conscience, suddenly becoming so wise? Do you think it was possible if there was no Buddha-power to intervene? A person as a bandit, who killed without blinking an eye and was coming to kill, suddenly became so wise, it is only possible under the blessing of Buddha-power, isn't it?

This case was very well-known. Wang Mazi then chopped him twenty-six times with the back of the knife as the compensation of being chopped twenty-six times in his past life to close this case. Not only that, there is often more than our expectation under the blessing of Buddha-power. This rebel who was originally coming to kill helped his family of seventeen escape to a safe place in Jinling City.

Suppose there was no intervention of the Buddha-power, and if he did not recite Namô Avalokitêśvara Bodhisattva, then there would be no prior notice and his family would not hide in the east wing room. Do you think that Wang Mazi would kill him only? Would Wang kill the sixteen of the family? The more one kills, the more he gets vicious; he would kill them all, right? But didn't the Bodhisattva say that the sixteen people of his family did not have this karma at all? If that was the case, hadn't Wang Mazi overdone it by also killing sixteen more people of this family? Would he need to pay it back in his next life? Would there be endless tanglements?

Yes, there would be, it is difficult to calculate. The reason we say that karma is intricate is because of situations like this; we often take revenge excessively. So, we must comprehend deeply the intricate causality of the three periods' lifetimes to

establish a righteous mind by learning the truth of life and the universe. See you soon on the third law of causality.