

The Law of Causality

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Fifth Law: Causality Is Not Illusory and Karma Will Not Be Undermined

Buddhist sutras state, "Even after hundreds of thousands of kalpas, the karma created will not be gone; when the causes and conditions are in place, the effects will come back upon you." This is because the seeds of good and evil that we have planted will fall into the fields of alaya consciousness. Alaya consciousness is like a big warehouse, where the karmic seeds are stored. They will never be lost, and will never be undermined. How troublesome this is, they have become our karmic causes.

Even after hundreds of thousands of kalpas, once the appropriate conditions are in place, these karmic causes will still manifest into their effects, and the effects will certainly have to be received by us. We must wait for the effects to take fruit, and only then can this karma be resolved. As long as we are still in the six realms, we can never escape the cause and effect of our karma. That is why only the deluded and bewildered people dare to create bad karma, while awakened bodhisattvas will absolutely not dare to create bad karma.

The Buddha's Demonstration to Cause and Effect

The retribution of causality does not have the slightest inaccuracy. Even after we become a Buddha, we will still have to suffer the retribution of evil karma that we have created.

Shakyamuni Buddha, in His later years, had severe back pain. The pain came from his bad karma in a past life long ago, when he was a wrestler. Having been deceived by his opponent twice, he held grudges in his heart. In one match, he then broke the opponent's spine and caused his death. This extremely vicious deed also resulted in his own life span being shortened, so he died young.

Upon death, he fell into hell and suffered extreme torment. After he left hell, he went through the remainder-retribution of other evil paths for his terrible deed.

When he was back in the human realm, he still had the residual impact of back pain for lifetimes. Even eons later, during the lifetime when He became the Buddha, this

remainder-retribution was not yet completely resolved, and He still had to suffer the effect of back pain.

Other than this, the Buddha also demonstrated retribution from other bad causes. One time, His feet were stabbed by splinters from wood chips, which was the remainder-retribution from a previous life when he had used spears to stab other people's feet. On another occasion, during a three months' Summer Retreat, because the food supply had run dry, the Buddha could only eat the grains meant for feeding horses. That was because in a past life, during the era of Vipassī Buddha, he was a heretic leader. Being jealous of Vipassī Buddha receiving people's offerings, he criticized and said that the Buddha only deserved to eat horse food. The remainder-retribution of this verbal karma caused Shakyamuni Buddha to eat horse food for three months in this life.

Another demonstration from the Buddha is that, when King Virūḍhaka of Kośala tried to demolish Shakyamuni Buddha's race, three times the Buddha successfully stopped the king from his attacks but was still unable to change the doomed disastrous karma of His family. At that time, the Buddha had a headache for three days; this was because in a past life, he had used a stick to beat the head of a big fish three times.

All these tell us that the universal laws of cause and effect are not illusory; even a Buddha would not be able to avoid them.

Do We Still Repay Our Karmic Debt after Sukhavati Rebirth?

What about Pure Land practitioners who are reborn in Sukhāvātī? Does it mean that after being born in Sukhāvātī, even if you have previously killed someone, you no longer owe them your life? Does it mean that you can then avoid paying back your previous debt? No! The effects from a heavy sin may be lightened, but they would never remain unresolved!

Sukhāvātī is a very good environment for us to cultivate, so that we can have unlimited time to cultivate until we become a Buddha. Amitabha allows us to postpone receiving our bad retribution, but nowhere does the sutra say that our bad karma can be erased; it is just impossible!

In the future, even after we become a Buddha in Sukhāvātī, when we go to other worlds to liberate all beings, we will still have the bad effects to deal with when the evil

karma matures. But by that time, we would have realized the bodhi wisdom and would have a crystal clear insight into the retribution of causality; our heart would remain unmoved as thusness (Skt. tathātā). We would not feel suffered or afflicted by the retribution, we would feel liberated and at ease.

So, as Pure Land practitioners, we also have to eradicate evilness and practice goodness earnestly. Don't have the misconception to think that, since we have Sukhāvātī and Amitabha Buddha to rely on, we can have our own way and fear nothing. If we go idle and commit bad karma, in the future we will suffer a great loss!

In addition, it is worth mentioning that we must be extremely cautious with public property because it is owned by the public (ourselves), and the creditors will be the public. For example, if we intentionally damage or steal a chair or a book from a library, we will incur a debt to the taxpayers of a county, city, or a nation. The same principle applies to the taxes we are required to pay. The karmic debt we accumulate by taking advantage of or stealing public property, as well as by evading our fair share of taxes, will be staggering.

Establishing Righteous Views to Change Our Destiny

The law of causality is the universal truth; it is the law by which the universe runs. This truth is not far away, it happens right here in our daily lives. Nevertheless, people who do not believe in causality cannot see the causal phenomena happening around them. Once we understand the rules, we will then notice that everything is amazingly correlated with the law of cause and effect. So, the education of causality can save people from depravity.

Some people say: "The principle of cause and effect cannot be seen, even if we do good deeds in this life, who knows what will happen after death?" This lack of causal outlook on life can easily lead to biased thinking and behavior. When people live in poverty or encounter some misfortunes, they will complain about fate and others instead of themselves. They feel that they are wrongfully treated. With this kind of thinking, their outlook on life will become negative, indifferent, or even resentful. That is why to understand and believe in the truth of six realms reincarnation is the first and foremost basic foundation for life; we must first establish the concept of reincarnation!

Our first series of "To Awakening..." integrated the scientific cases of reincarnation and the Eastern philosophical wisdom, it can really help us to gain a

profound insight. If people around you still have questions about reincarnation, please help propagate this profound teaching. Your merits will be infinite.

Buddhism tells us to establish correct cognition and correct views, believing in "planting such a cause leads to such an effect". People with correct cognition will not complain or worry because they firmly believe in the law of causality. They know what they receive in this life is the retribution of their lack of planting good causes in past lives. So no matter how bad their luck or how difficult their journey is, they would proactively work hard to plant good causes from now on.

If we want to change our destiny, we must do things in a down-to-earth manner. For example, if we want to have a harmonious family, we must continue to plant seeds of love and care for our family members. We should practice all varieties of good deeds extensively to purify our minds. As long as we persist in cultivating virtues and merits, good karma will gradually materialize and our destiny will eventually transform.

The theory of causality is very deep and vast. The above is merely a fundamental introduction to help everybody establish a basic concept. If we wish to create a happy and fortunate life, we must delve deeply into this truth.

Thanks for watching, please stay tuned to learn together with us for the most profound cause and effect—the core of Shakyamuni Buddha's 49 years' teachings—Amitabha's Forty Eight Great Vows. See you later.