

Introduction to The Law of Causality

In our last series of “To Awakening,” we have learned that all beings innately possess Buddha nature, but it is impeded by delusions and attachments. Most encouragingly, we learned that we can recover our Buddha nature by repenting our wrongdoings, cultivating a pure heart, and purifying our souls. Simply put, good looks, good luck, happiness, wealth, health, and power can all be obtained from inward.

Treasures Emerge from the Earth for All Beings to Enjoy

There is a story recorded in *Ten Continents in the Inner Seas*. A king dispatched an envoy to send four taels of magical incense to Emperor Wu of the Han Dynasty. Four taels is only about 62.5 grams. Despite the small amount, according to the messenger, it not only can spread the scent for hundreds of miles when burned, but can also bring people back from the verge of death. So, it is called “the fragrance of reviving souls.” But, Emperor Wu did not take it seriously, until one day when a plague broke out in Chang An City, he then asked his minister to burn it. Amazingly, the fragrance, as told by the messenger, revived many people on the verge of death. And the aroma lingered in the entire Chang An City for three months.

The Infinite Life Sutra states that the treasured fragrance in the “World of Ultimate Bliss”* (*Skt. Sukhavati) pervades the entire cosmos. Many practitioners, when practicing to a high concentration, have smelled this unique aroma and described it as never having smelled it in their life. How would this be possible? According to Buddha-Dharma, when people's hearts lean toward self-nature, not only will the so-called natural disasters be resolved, but good treasures will also emerge from the earth for its beings to enjoy. Shakyamuni Buddha told us that Sukhavati is a place where supreme good people gather, its land is full of all kinds of treasures; the unique fragrance permeating in ten directions of the cosmos is only one of them.

However, this theory is so profound that it is not easy for mortals to comprehend. So the Thirteenth Patriarch of Pure Land Buddhism, Master Yin Guang, spared no effort to promote the education of causality throughout his life. He claimed that the fastest and most immediate way to save people from creating karma is to promote the education of causality. Only when people understand how severe their conduct could

impact their life and after life, would they spontaneously restrain themselves in their speech and action.

Understanding the Laws to Avoid Misfortune, Create Fortune, and Save the World

The Buddhist view of causality originates from the principle of "All phenomena arise from conditions yet their nature is illusory." Everything in the universe depends on cause and condition to produce an effect, and this effect becomes a cause and produces effect again when conditions are in place. Cause and effect invigorate each other, which forms a majestic and myriad phenomena of the universe. So, as big as a world, as small as a speck of dust, there is no real substance; only the intricate causes and conditions lead us to different effects.

Imagine when everyone in the world practices their mind inwardly to eliminate evil thoughts within, allowing power, happiness, and fortune to naturally arise, would the world have any conflicts and wars? Conversely, when people in a society engage to seek external power, fortune, and self-interests, the society will be full of competition. Master Chin Kung often warned us, "When competition escalates, it becomes fighting. When fighting escalates, it becomes war." Thousands of years ago, Mencius, who is second to Confucius, said, "When superiors and inferiors all seek self-interest, the nation will be in danger."

The vibe of fighting for all sorts of rights and the heedless speeches and actions of people nowadays is completely opposite from the courteous concession in societies of the past, leading our planet to be scarred and battered. We hope this series with regard to causality by Master Chin Kung can help people give rise to respect and alarm, further restrain themselves from speeches and actions. Life is only a brief existence after all. What can we bring with us after the decades of life ends? Deeply pondering, it is as the ancient sages stated, "We can take nothing from our life after we die, only the karma we have created will follow us." Look! We cannot even take our own bodies with us! How would our life be when we pursue external objects? It is like drawing water with a bamboo woven basket, we will end up empty-handed!

How to Plant the Cause of Happiness, Status, Wealth, and Good Looks

In the Buddhist view, being rich or poor, longevity or short-lived, beautiful or ugly, all have their cause and effect. They do not come from luck or being manipulated by someone, they are actually the result of our own creations.

The following verses offered us some answers, "The righteous man is forged by enduring humiliation, while the poor man comes from being greedy. The superior person is caused by being humble and respectful, while the lowly person is shaped from being arrogant." "What is the reason for people to have food and clothing? In their previous life, they offered tea and food to the poor. Why do some have no food and clothing? They did not offer half a penny to others in their past lives. Why do some wear silk and satin? In their previous life, they offered clothes to monastic practitioners. What is the reason for those who have a dignified appearance? They offered flowers to Buddhas in past lives."

The verses above offer us a sliver to understand the law of causality. By understanding cause and effect, we can certainly transform past misfortune into fortune by planting good seeds continuously. So, the view of causality is the affirmation of hard work and practice, it is a principle full of optimism and progress. "The realm of the Buddha is inconceivable, and the karmic retribution of all living beings is also inconceivable." Only when we dawn on the intricate causality, can we really comprehend the true meaning of Buddha-Dharma— this is a tip for us to tend toward fortune and to avoid misfortune.

The Phenomena in the Degenerate Dharma-Era

In *The Sutra on the Annihilation of the Dharma*, a paragraph precisely depicts the situation in our degenerate Dharma-era, "There will be extreme weather bringing drought and flood, followed by crops being ruined before they ripen. Plus the pandemic will be prevalent causing many people to die. Civilians suffer in toil while officials scheme to exploit them. People no longer observe principles but seek personal joys and create chaos."

This is the Buddha's prophecy regarding the condition of the degenerate Dharma-era. Isn't it exactly what we are experiencing now? We must understand that, due to the shared karma of all beings getting heavier and heavier, the later towards the end of the degenerate Dharma-era, the more greed, resentment, and ignorance human minds would be flamed with. People would become more and more stubborn, crabby, unruly and thus are unable to be educated.

Living in the Saha world—a world formed by the essential structure of creating karma, we must be clear about this: we are such karmic beings plus we live in such a deteriorated environment, it is extremely difficult for us to practice. So, as a spiritual practitioner, we urgently need the blessings of Buddha-power to save us from following the tide. We will be led by our noses forever otherwise.

We often say that everyone is equal before the law, nonetheless, the law has loopholes and is sometimes influenced by human factors, so the law may not be absolutely fair. Only before causality is everyone equal; cause and effect go hand in hand, no matter whether we believe it or not, no one can escape from it. So, to pursue a good life, we must understand the essence of causality. That is why we are going to introduce to you The Law of Causality by Master Chin Kung. See you soon on Part 1!

端正者忍辱中來，貧窮者慳貪中來；
高位者禮拜中來，下賤者驕慢中來；
瘡癩者誹謗中來，盲聾者不信中來；
長壽者慈悲中來，短命者殺生中來；
諸根不具者破戒中來，六根具足者持戒中來。

經上說：佛的境界不可思議，眾生的因果業報也是不可思議，了解因果的複雜關係，也就體證了佛法的真諦。

世間上雖說法律之前，人人平等，然而法律卻有漏洞，有時還會受到人情左右，因此法律未必能做到絕對的公平。唯有在因果之前，人人平等，因果業報如影隨形，誰也逃不了。

經上說：「有衣有食為何因？前世茶飯施貧人；無食無穿為何因？前世未施半分文。穿綢穿緞為何因？前世施衣濟僧人；相貌端嚴為何因？前世採花供佛前。」

從這些偈語中，可以知道，人間的貧富貴賤、生命的長壽夭亡、容貌的端正醜陋，都是有因有果，並非憑空碰運氣而來，也不是第三者所能操縱，而是取決於自己行為的結果。由於行為能決定自己的幸與不幸，因此

對於過去的不幸，也可以靠不斷的努力，使它轉變為幸福。所以，因果觀是肯定努力、上進、修行，是充滿樂觀進取的道理。

尤其現在是末法，

Especially in the degenerate Dharma-era,

法滅盡經就講到我們現在疫氣的流行，

it is recorded in *The Sutra on the Annihilation of the Dharma*, there will be the prevalence of pandemic which is what we encounter now.

它只有這四五句話，

There are only five sentences which depicts the situation in our degenerate Dharma-era,

他說水旱不調，現在有沒有水旱不調？

The first sentence talks about extreme weather bringing drought and flood.

今年剛開始沒有下雨對不對，

Look, at the beginning of this year, we did not have rain, did we?

你看我們前面跟旁邊的那個田地，他們的稻子，

The farmland in our neighborhood, their rice plants are all damaged,

我看了也是覺得好可惜，好浪費，就是沒有辦法收成，

it is really a pity, all wasted, no harvest.

就讓它長雜草。

They can only let it grow weeds.

前一段時間，那時候在乾旱的時候，他們都去申請補助。

At the time of drought, the farmers all went to apply for subsidies.

水旱不調，後來又下大雨，是不是，又不斷地下大雨，水旱不調，

Extreme weather causing heavy rain continuously came after the drought, right?

第一句，你們今年就應該有深刻的感受，第一句是水旱不調，

The first sentence of this passage, extreme weather, we have deeply experienced.

第二句五穀不熟，你水旱不調，五穀不熟，

The second sentence, the crops ruin before they ripe.

沒錯啊，你看，不能收成，你不能收成就是五穀不熟嘛。

Indeed, no harvest caused by the crops being unripe.

第三個，疫氣流行，死亡者眾，

The third sentence, the pandemic is prevalent and many people have died.

有沒有？現在這兩年是不是最明顯？

Isn't this exactly what we experienced in these few years?

疫氣流行，死亡者眾，

The pandemic is prevalent, many people have died.

你去看全世界的死亡人數，染疫的人數。

Look! The death toll and the number of infected people in the world can confirm the Buddha's prophecy.

好，再來講人民勤苦，很辛苦，縣官計剋。

Following the above situations is that people suffer with toils, while county officials scheme to restrain them.

你所在的地區國家，跟你講縣官，可以代表你的地區，你的國家，沒有辦法好好照顧你

The officials of your country, province, county have no way to take care of you.

最近這兩天的新聞是阿富汗的人民非常痛苦，是不是，

In the past two days, we have heard people in Afghanistan are in great suffering, right?

他們都在逃難，

They are all fleeing.

我也覺得他們承受這個業報很痛苦，就是這樣子，你遇到了這樣的一個政府，你怎麼辦

I feel deeply for their pain, but what can they do when encountering such a kind of government?

末法就是如此。

This is the way it is—the condition of the degenerate Dharma-era.

好，再來最後兩句，

Let us take a look at the last two sentences.

不順道理，皆思樂亂。

"People no longer observe principles, they all seek personal joys and create chaos."

現在的人講道理的多嗎？

Are many people today rational?

很多人不講道理，

Many people are unreasonable.

皆思樂亂，都是在造做一些很糟糕，很亂法紀的行為，是不是這樣子？

They think of only personal joys. They are not afraid of doing illegal conducts, are they?

所以這幾話有沒有準確地說明現在的狀況？

Does the passage of this sutra accurately describe our current situation?

這是法滅盡經講的，

This is stated in *The Sutra on the Annihilation of the Dharma*.

也就是現在娑婆世界的狀況，

It is exactly the current condition in our Saha world.

那你們要了解，越末法，就是越往後叫越末法，這種狀況不會改，只會更嚴重，

We must understand that the more we move into the degenerate Dharma-era, the situation will not get better, it will only get more serious.

因為眾生的共業的關係，會越來越嚴重，

Due to the shared karma of all beings, the situation will only get worse and worse,

那越來越嚴重，環境越來越差，

and our environment will deteriorate more and more.

人的心念越來越惡，然後貪瞋癡越來越熾盛，

People's minds are increasingly getting evil, flaming with greed, resentment, and ignorance.

越來越頑劣，沒有辦法教育，

People become more and more stubborn and unruly, being unable to be educated.

你們可以看下一代就是了，常常很多人感慨，對不對，

Many people deeply sigh with sentiment about our next generation, don't they?

我們在小的時候非常地規矩，非常地聽話，非常地老實，

When we were young, we were very disciplined, very obedient, and very honest.

對於老師，對於父母，畢恭畢敬，不像現在的小孩這麼地頑劣，為什麼？

We respected teachers and parents very much, unlike the children today, so crabby and unruly, why?

業力越來越重，整個環境，

The environment is deteriorating and our karma is getting heavier and heavier.

所以，這裡要告訴大家的是，我們生活在娑婆世界，

I am telling you here, we live in the Saha world

娑婆世界是一個造罪造惡的業力結構體，

—a world formed by the essential structure of creating karma.

我們生活在這個空間裡面，我們要認識清楚，

Living in this place, we must be clear about this.

也因為這樣，這個地方及需要三寶的加持，

We need the blessings from the Three Jewels of Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha.

急需要三寶給予的福報，

We urgently need the Three Jewels to bestow fortunes upon us,

因為這樣的一個地區，這樣眾生的業力太可憐，

because the karma of such sentient beings in such a region is too pitiful.

非常非常地需要。

We genuinely need it.

如果沒有佛力介入的時候，我們就永遠在裡面被拉著走，

If there is no Buddha-power to intervene, we will be led by our noses forever.

你舉目所見，你看我們在人間舉目所見，你看到廣告，你看到流行文化，你看到習俗，所有的一切都是讓你貪瞋癡，煽動你貪瞋癡，

Look! What we see in the world, such as advertisements, popular culture, customs, all of them incite our greed, resentment, and ignorance.

尤其是廣告，我真的非常地不贊成，

Especially advertisements, I really disapprove of it.

他為了賺錢，他煽動你的什麼？欲念，是不是這樣？貪念，追求，然後讓你一直往那個地方走，他拉你往那裡走，

In order to make money, they incites our desires, we then head towards that direction all the way.

我們很容易被拉，因為我們沒有定力，
Our desires are easily inflamed because our will-power is too weak,
就像說星星之火足以燎原，對不對，
just like a tiny spark, it is enough to start a prairie fire.
他根本不用怎麼煽，他這個廣告詞不用怎麼煽，
Actually, they do not need to incite much at all.
隨便給你丟一個火星子，你就自己燎原了，因為我們是這樣的業力，
They just need to throw a tiny spark, we will then start a prairie fire due to having such
karma ourselves.
為什麼要反覆講，
Why do I keep repeating?
我們是這樣的業力眾生，
Because we are such karmic beings.
又生活在這樣的環境，很困難，修行困不困難？非常的困難，
Plus we live in such a deteriorated environment, it is extremely difficult for us to practice.
所以急需要佛力的一個介入，急需要佛力的加持，
So there is an urgent need for the intervention of Buddha-power and blessings,
三寶的住持，
as well as the abiding and maintaining of the Three Jewels of Buddha, Dharma, and
Sangha.
好，這個是第三段告訴你們我們生活的環境。
This is the third part in regard to the environment in which we live.