

The Law of Causality Master Chin Kung

Fourth Law: Good and Evil Do Not Offset Each Other.

In our world, we often say “using the merits offset faults,” but this is not true with the law of causality. To do goodness is to plant good seeds in our hearts, and to do evilness is to plant evil seeds in our minds. Good seeds and evil seeds cannot offset each other. When conditions mature, each will have its own effect without getting mixed up. Nonetheless, good and evil cannot cancel each other out, they will affect each other.

Doing good deeds and planting good causes now is a helping condition to the previous good karma we had planted; it will increase its effect. It also works as a buffering condition to the previous bad karma and weakens its effect. So after doing good deeds, if we continue to do so, our previous good causes will receive more and more helping conditions and become more and more powerful, making the good effects we receive become better and stronger.

This is just like *The Book Of Changes (I Ching)*, *Xi Ci Chapter* states, "One's prestige will not be achieved if his goodness is not cumulative." Only by accumulating good deeds continuously, can a good reputation be achieved. In contrast, after doing evil deeds, if we repent and diligently do good deeds, the power of our bad seeds will be weakened little by little, and the evil retribution we shall receive will be lessened. This is “lightening the retribution for a grave sin.”

On the other hand, the current evil karma we are creating is a helping condition to the evil seeds of the past—it will strengthen their influences and further act as an obstacle to the good seeds planted in the past to weaken their effects. So after we create evil karma, if we continue to do bad deeds, our previous bad karma will receive more and more helping conditions; their power will become stronger and stronger until what we call “wickedness to the fullest,” and finally results in irreversible evil retribution in the future.

As *I Ching*, *Xi Ci Chapter* states, "One's perishment will not happen if his evilness is not accumulated." Only continuing to accumulate bad deeds will result in our self-destruction. Conversely, after doing good deeds, if we then do a lot of bad deeds, the strength of those good seeds will also be weakened, leading to the good effects that we receive becoming weaker.

Prefer Die to Go One Step West Than Live to Reverse One Step East

A historical example of Master Xuan Zang in history perfectly interprets this law of “good and evil do not offset each other.” Master Xuan Zang was smart and eager to learn when he was young. At the age of thirteen, he was able to give lectures in front of the public. When reading the classics of various Buddhist sects, he found that the sayings of each sect were different from each other, so he visited many temples to learn from senior monks with his elder brother but still did not clear up the doubts he had.

Xuan Zang then aspired to go to Tianzhu (now India) to seek the Dharma and bring back sutras to translate. He said, “Only by accurately translating the original scriptures to clear up doubts can Buddhism continue to spread in the East and benefit the world.” People said to him, “From ancient times to the present, few people have been able to cross the sinisterly changeable desert, quicksand, and snow-covered mountains! Not to mention that the emperor of the Tang Dynasty has issued an order to forbid people from going west. You must cherish your own life to promulgate Buddha-Dharma.” Master Xuan Zang certainly knew that this journey would be full of sinister travails, but for the sake of Buddhism and all beings, he was resolved to embark on this journey of the west to seek the Dharma.

The scorching sun in the desert was as hot as a branding iron with the wind blowing every so often, the heat made him and his horse so tired and wondered if they had been lost. In that endless sandy desert, piles of nameless bones were the only guideposts. Phantoms of mirages swayed in front of them from time to time, traveling each strenuous step, Master Xuan Zang recited *Heart Sutra* wholeheartedly , “Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva, when practicing the profound prajna paramita...”

Realizing all his water had gone, he thought of going back to get some more, yet at this moment he remembered his vow and told himself resolutely, “I would rather die to go one step west than live to reverse one step east.” After five days without a drop of water, Xuan Zang finally collapsed. In semi-conscious, Xuan Zang recited the holy name of Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva reverently and silently, praying that the Bodhisattva has mercy to all beings in the East and protects him to realize his wish of seeking Dharma on his westward journey....

Suddenly, a gust of cool wind blew over. The horse, as if knowing the way, galloped to a spring of green grass. If it was not the manifestation of the Bodhisattva’s compassion, how could it be possible that the water appeared in this vast desert? Finally, he arrived in a nation that believed in Buddhism.

Deeply moved by Xuan Zang's great aspiration, the king of Gao Chang, sparing no effort, sent a delegation to escort him through the customs one city after another. When Master Xuan Zang and the escort reached the all year round snow-capped towering mountains, fearing that the slightest sound would cause a violent avalanche, they clutched their bags and moved forward gently and quietly with bowing gestures one by one. Bridging ropes between the steep cliffs and crawling on the cliffs of the abyss, they proceeded with extreme caution, several monks and livestock who could not overcome the cold and starvation were still frozen to death on that high mountain.

A Significant Achievement of Translating Sutras and An Illness Shortly before Passing

Having gone through numerous ordeals and life-death dangers, Master Xuan Zang finally arrived in Tianzhu. He studied various scriptures and treaties in Nalanda Temple. Later he visited many masters in other areas and also sought out Sanskrit scriptures. Master Xuan Zang studied in India for twelve years, receiving respect and recognition from all kings and Buddhist leaders. After coming back to China, he translated a significant amount of scriptures from Sanskrit into Chinese, making him the most influential translator in history which prompted Mahayana Buddhism to be glorified in China. His contribution is incredibly tremendous and far-reaching in both India and China.

With such remarkable achievements, Master Xuan Zang still suffered from illness as death approached. He suspected and worried that it might have to do with mistakes in his translation of Buddhist sutras. That night, Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva appeared in his dream, assuring him that he had completed a perfect merit in translating Buddhist scriptures and comforting him, "Your retribution of this illness is caused by killing many people long kalpas ago when you were a king. Your great contribution cannot offset this karma but has mitigated much of your grave sin into this light retribution."

The above is just a simple explanation of the relationship between good and evil karmas not being able to offset each other. In fact, the rules of causality are extremely intricate, it is not something that can be explained in just a few words. Even bodhisattvas and arhats have no way to fully understand it, only Buddhas can. We hope that these laws of causality and their related stories can raise our vigilance. After all, it is very difficult to elevate our realms but to fall downward is very easy; this is the horror of the six realms' samsara!

Thanks for watching, see you soon on the last law: Causality Is Not Illusory and Karma Will Not Be Eroded.

玄奘大師幼年時就聰慧好學，而且家學淵源，少年出家後更是勤奮用功，十三歲就能登座於大眾前覆講經論。在博覽各家宗論典籍時，發現各宗所說，彼此不一，於是與兄長長捷法師參訪四方宿德耆臘，想要解開心中的疑惑；但是，終究未能於論辯當中釋疑。於是，玄奘發願西行天竺，以求法取經：「唯有將原典精確地譯出，以釋眾疑，佛法才能繼續在東土弘傳，利益世人！」

In a Classic named *The Historical Induction Statistics*, we can find that quite a few practitioners in their previous lives had achieved great success. Unfortunately, their achievement was not as good in the following life. So it is very difficult to elevate, but to fall downwards is very easy. This is the horror of the six realms' reincarnation

道友們不捨的道別：「從古至今，很少人能越過險惡多變的大漠、流沙和冰封雪埋的蔥嶺啊！您要珍惜自己的軀命，才能弘傳佛法。」

玄奘法師何嘗不知道此行路途艱難重重，但是為了佛法、為了眾生、為了道業，再大的困難也要克服，意志堅定的踏上往西天求法的路程。由於邊界戰事剛剛停止的緣故，關防嚴謹，不許百姓出境，幸好在每一次的困境上都有虔敬的佛弟子協助而順利西出玉門關。

一望無際的黃沙，隨著狂風不時的襲捲過來，沙漠中的烈陽像烙鐵一般炙熱，高溫酷熱的空氣蒸得人馬具疲；沙漠，彷彿沒有盡頭的天地，常常讓人懷疑自己是不是迷路了？一堆堆無名的白骨是沙漠中唯一的指路標。蜃樓魅影不時的在前方晃動，「觀自在菩薩行深般若……」玄奘一心虔誦《心經》，隨著誦經聲，鬼魅魔影頓時消散無蹤。在茫茫的沙漠中，因為水囊傾覆，人馬滴水未沾的行走五天四夜，饑

渴與熱的交煎，玄奘終至不支倒地。在極度的困頓中，玄奘始終虔敬的默念觀世音菩薩聖號不停，祈願菩薩慈愍東土眾生，護佑此次西行求法的願行能實現……。

忽然，一陣涼風吹拂，振奮了疲累的玄奘法師，人與馬再度起行，馬兒像是識得路途似的飛奔到一處綠草甘泉，泉水甘美，飲入口中疲憊盡消。這一切來得正是時候，真是菩薩的慈愍化現。於是，重新備妥水與草糧，滿懷著感恩與信心繼續西行。

不久終於到達篤信佛法的沙城諸國，王臣們深被玄奘的大願行感動，一城接一城的護送大師通關向前。

橫在眼前的是高聳入雲的蔥嶺，與終年積雪的皚皚山巔。玄奘法師及高昌王派賜護送的人馬，一個挨著一個抓緊著行囊，他們躬身無語、默默地前進，生怕絲微的音聲共鳴，會引發狂瀉的雪崩。嚴峻陡峭的崖壁，必須以繩為橋，一行人匍匐攀爬在萬丈深淵的峭壁上。一天，稜山大雪，幾位禁不住冰寒飢饉的徒侶及牲畜，活活地被凍死在高山上。玄奘看到這種情形，堅定地告訴自己：「我為求法，願捨軀命，若不到西天，誓不東回；縱然喪身在此，也絕不後悔！」

歷經重重的險難與困厄，終於到達了天竺國。玄奘在那爛陀寺鑽研諸經論疏，其後又往天竺其他國家參訪高賢，除了請益佛法也尋求到佛經梵本。玄奘大師遊學十二年，曾領受師命於那爛陀寺講「攝大乘論」、「唯識抉擇論」，又作「會宗論」、「破惡見論」駁斥當時佛教裡的邪知邪見者。由於玄奘大師入理精闢，甚得天竺各國國王及佛教界的敬重；在曲女城一場聞名教界的數千人辯論大會，更增勝大眾對玄奘大師的崇敬，有十八個國家的國王於這場辯論會後皈依於玄奘座下，並且為了表達對玄奘大師的敬意，特地啟建七十五日的無遮大法會。

唐朝貞觀十七年，玄奘大師辭別各國國王的懇切挽留與大眾追隨相送的不捨，東行返國。同樣的經過漫漫長路，所不同的是，行囊裡滿載著珍貴的法寶、六百五十七部梵文聖典。

當年，玄奘離開中土後，寺前的松樹枝幹也紛紛向西，既像相送也像在遙望。經過了十七年，這一天，寺院內的僧人發現挺拔的松樹像是被人重新栽植似的，松樹枝幹竟然全都向東轉向。「啊！難道是師父就要回來了嗎？十七年了，師父終於就要回來了！」

貞觀十九年的元月，長安城的街道上，兩旁擺滿了香案，百姓們誠敬的夾道歡迎，朝廷文武百官領皇帝的旨意，盛大的恭迎玄奘大師及遠至天竺請回的梵典、佛陀舍利、佛像；幢幡、寶蓋圍繞經像，香華與梵音莊嚴的流布著，絢麗的祥雲一路相迎。

大師的智慧、平等的胸懷甚得唐太宗的敬重，並於長安建譯經院，提供大師作為闡揚佛陀遺法的譯經場地。在譯經的十九年當中，玄奘大師先後於弘福寺、大慈恩寺、玉華寺，領導翻譯經論七十五部，一千三百三十五卷，為後世留下彌足珍貴、開啟大覺智慧之漢譯寶典。

典故摘自：《大唐大慈恩寺三藏法師傳》