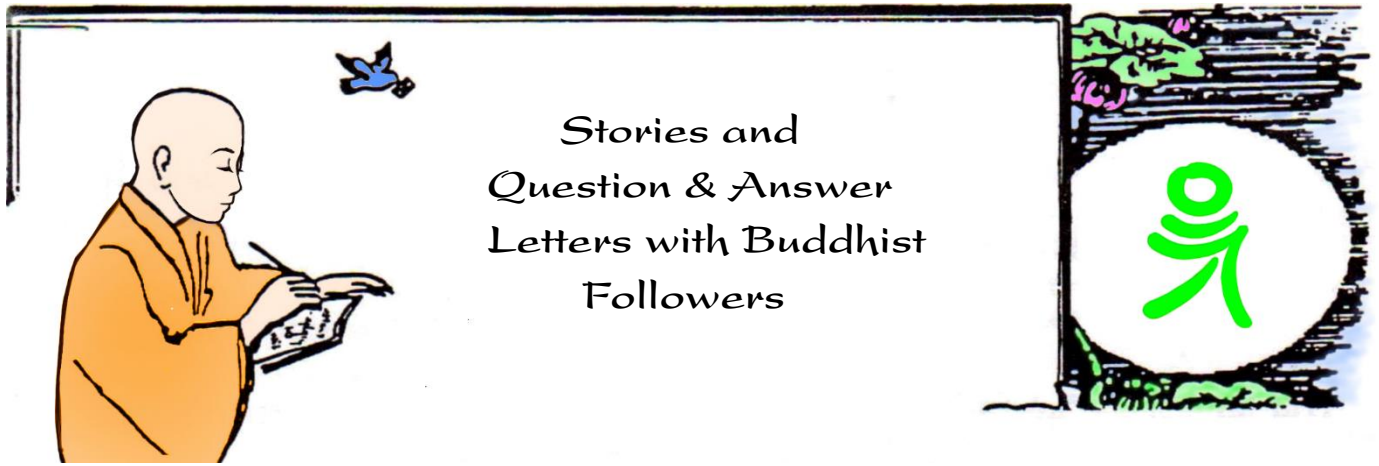




What is cause-effect?

Cause is the starting material (*seed*)

Effect is the product (*fruit*).

(The cause created will lead to corresponding result.)

Master Bai-Zhang Huai-Hai was a famous Buddhist monk in China. Whenever he lectured, there often was an elderly man who followed the assembly into the hall to listen. One day after the lecture, the assembly had left yet the elder still lingered behind. Master Bai-Zhang asked: *Sir, may I ask who you are?*

The elder replied:

- *Your Grace, I'm not human. I'm a weasel living on the other side of the mountain. Five hundred years before the time of Kasyapa Buddha (one of the ancient Buddha before the historical Gautama Buddha) I was a Buddhist monk. Someone asked me during one of my lectures: "Are cultivators who realized the theory of True Nothingness bounded by the influence of Cause-Effect?"*
- *I responded:*
- *"They are not bounded by Cause-Effect."*
- *Subsequently, I have been condemned to the life of a weasel until now. Still, I don't understand what I did wrong. I beseech you, oh great Master, to rectify my errors and to escape this weasel body.*

Master Bai-Zhang said: *Please repeat that question to me.*

The elder man asked Master Bai-Zhang:

- *Are cultivators who realized the theory of True Nothingness bounded by the influence of Cause-Effect?*

Master Bai-Zhang replied: *"Cultivators who realized True Nothingness are still trapped in the cycle of Cause-Effect."*

The elder immediately understood and said:

- *I thank you your Grace. I am now liberated. I am no longer a weasel. If I may, please allow*

me to have a funeral ceremony of a Buddhist monk?

Satisfied, he disappeared.

After lunch, Bai-Zhang led the assembly to a cave on the other side of the mountain, and therein found the weasel corpse. They took it back and performed a cremation ceremony.

The ancient taught:

“One must carefully contemplate on the consequences of any actions”.

If each Buddhist can be mindful of this axiom, he can avoid sins and failures both in life and cultivated paths.

In other words, CAUSE is the seed and EFFECT is the fruit. Planting one type of seed will result in that type of fruit.

The Patriarchs also taught:

“Chant the Amitabha Sutra. Recite the Compassion Mantra often. Repeat the Buddha name hundreds of thousands of times. Sutras and Mantras are precious and the merit of chanting them will not be lost. But how can one be saved from infinite sins and enmity accumulated?”

Growing squash will bear squash; planting beans will bring beans. Reflect on the truth. People who created evil karma will suffer the evil consequences. We shall receive the fruit of our own action.”

The teaching above does not deny the power of the Sutra nor the Mantra. The Patriarchs’ primary mission is to preach Buddhists that:

“While the majority of Buddhists nowadays attends Temples regularly, adopt a vegetarian lifestyle, and constantly recite Buddha names, sutras, mantras, they also butcher, swindle, and cheat. They superficially carry out good deeds, make offerings, or donate, only to earn praises. Ironically, they don’t know how to self-reflect to terminate greedy thoughts, selfishness, jealousy, ignorance, anger and wickedness”.

On one hand, we conduct good deeds; on the other hand, we commit wicked acts. It is easy to create negative karma, but merits and virtues are hard to cultivate. As such, the positive karma earned is not sufficient to compensate for the sins. Then how can we possibly eliminate the endless, ever-increasing debts? Those who accumulate such negative karma instead turn around to blame Buddhas and Bodhisattvas for not saving them; criticize sutras and mantras for being less than miraculous. Such attitude cannot be tolerated!

In general, Buddhists can be divided into two groups.

1/- The first group consists of hard-working, studious disciples who can benefit from the help and guidance of their mentors and peers. If one is always lazy and

unmotivated, then his/her parents, teachers and friends cannot help.

Since the institution of Pure Land and Esoteric Buddhism is categorized as salvation by faith, cultivators must strive with all their heart (*self-power*) in order to achieve results.

2/- In the second group, dependency on self-power is prioritized, but to quickly achieve results, external support is also crucial. Like a student who is studious, his/her progress will increase exponentially if often assisted by good teachers and friends.

The Patriarchs feared that cultivators cannot withstand disturbances from the five maras (*demons*) associated with the **five skandhas** (*aspects constituting sentient beings*). Even the sages who have overcome the skandha of thinking and achieved the Anagamin stage (*those do not transmigrate between realms*) can be tempted by **Deva mara** (*celestial demon*) in a split moment of distraction, and subsequently transgress. Therefore, they sincerely advised cultivators to recite mantras to gain the protection of Buddha and Bodhisattvas.

When an evil thought arises, other people may not know, but we know. Ghosts and spirits know; and ofcourse the enlightened saints can recognize the thought as clearly as reading the lines on their palms or seeing reflections in a clean mirror.

When we know, our good conscience will blame ourselves and cause us to be shameful and regretful.

When ghosts and spirits know, they can angrily scold or punish us.

When Buddhas and Bodhisattvas know, they have compassion for us. Though they will not harm us; our karma remains unavoidable. The law of causality fairly reflects in everything, from our actions to our thoughts.

Therefore, the Patriarchs taught:

–“Consequences of both good and wicked deeds follow us like shadows. When a wholesome thought arises, guardian angels have blessed us even though the good merits have not matured. The moment a wicked thought arises, the demons immediately acknowledge, even though the disastrous consequence has not occurred.”

This **Cause-Effect** and **Reincarnation** book is the Buddhas’ great expedient means to clarify the unfailing law of cause-and-effect.

Whichever seeds that one planted in the previous lives, will yield the corresponding fruits when the time comes. This ideology lies in accordance with the following teachings of Buddhas and Patriarchs.

“Karmas have been accumulated.

When conditions are fully mature

Supposing even after a hundred, thousand kalpas (aeons)

Retribution will come without fail”.

As a Buddhist who acquired little or much Buddha Dharma (teachings), one must carefully ponder the consequences prior to committing any action.

That is:

1. **Before committing any action, one must think about its consequence.**
2. **One must examine any action that he is about to commit to determine whether the action will create any wicked karma, in order to avoid future retribution.**

This precautionary approach will save one from “**blaming fate, reproaching plight**”, or from detesting the heavens, and humans (*when bad, horrific outcomes surface in the future*).

On behalf of sentient beings, Venerable Ananda, known as the ‘Dharma Initiator’, asked about the causality of good/evil consequences of sentient beings.

From this request, the Buddha expounded the law of cause-effect and its manifestation; so that sentient beings can know and refrain from planting wicked seeds, and gladly and frequently perform good deeds.

The Abhidharma (*Commentaries*) teach that:

To learn about causes in past lives,

Just examine the effects in current lives.

To learn about the fruit in future lives,

Just examine the seeds planted in current lives.

The law of samsara and recompense permeate all three life spans and explain the concept of ‘you reap what you sow’.

- a) When you sow good/wicked deeds and reap good/wicked consequences in this life, this is called ‘**Immediate Retribution**’.
- b) When you sow good/wicked deeds in this life and reap good/wicked consequences in the next life or several lives after, this is called ‘**Future Retribution**’.
- c) When you sow good/wicked deeds in this life and won’t reap good/wicked consequences until many lives and kalpas into the future, this is called ‘**Ultimate Retribution**’.

(*In other words, the consequence arrives in a distant future, such as tens, hundreds, thousands of life spans afterward.*)

Our world throughout history witnessed many wars, unknown pandemic diseases, unexpected pilages and plunders, uncontrollable starvations and endless sufferings. Every year, natural disasters (*such as hurricanes, earthquakes, crop failures...*) occur globally without restraint.

Recalling the fierce 9.0 earthquake that hit the coast of Japan, it caused much pain, devastations and broken homes. Similar to the worldwide outlook, people are

progressively becoming more wicked and devious, with no shame. These heart-breaking tragedies that occur both in secular life and behind religious doors are caused by:

- **Greed for love and desire...**
- **Greed for wealth, fame...** leading to countless incidents of deceiving and harming each other.

The Flower Adornment Sutra (*Avatamsa Sutra*) preached:

**Our mind is a creative artist,
Sketch up endless worldly scenes.**

Therefore, life can be joyful today, yet miserable tomorrow... all are a result of good or wicked actions originated from our very own mind.

To lessen the tragic plight nowadays (*in both the secular and religious paths*), each and every one must repent and vow not to repeat the same sinful mistakes.

In addition, one must sincerely practice (*the essence of*) the following 12 values:

1. Filial piety (*dutiful toward one's parents*)
2. Loyalty (*faithful*)
3. Trustworthiness (*keep one's promises*)
4. Etiquette (*uphold moral values*)
5. Sense of shame (*maintain proper conducts and be shameful of wrongdoing*)
6. Candor
7. Sincerity (*in loving and helping others*)
8. Be content
9. Not greedy
10. Not angry
11. Not exceed one's responsibilities
12. Maintain one's initial vows (*when first entering the cultivated path*)

Moreover, we must be content, uphold our responsibilities, and rely on the protective power of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, in order to eliminate negative karmas, avoid tragedies and natural disasters. To 'be content' means: to desire less and be satisfied (*e.g., do not raise thoughts of desire and be satisfied with what one currently has*).

We must understand that wars, hurricanes, earthquakes, diseases, etc. are not casted upon us by any superior being as punishments. They are all originated and created by our outrageously wicked mind. These disasters are generated by our cumulative karmas. Despite the calamities, the saints are unable to save us even if they wanted to. The karma force is stronger than a tornado or hurricane, and capable of wiping out the entire earth without any possibility of disruption.

The Sutras calls this ‘CONCERTED KARMA.’

(Those who commit similar wicked deeds suffer the common retribution. People died and were reborn in this life with a former karma; they do NOT cultivate to lessen the karma, but accumulate new wicked karmas. In addition, people also inherit common karmas from current environment and society. These three kinds of karmas influence and control living beings; escaping is nearly impossible.)

Because living beings create much amoral karmas, earthly merits and blessings will slowly thin out, causing the seven treasures’ (gold, silver, lapis, crystal, agate, rubies, cornelian) to gradually disappearance.

In the future, rice will rarely be available. One must trade an ounce of gold for a bowl of rice, but the rice is not purchasable. Gold, silver and diamond will also dwindle away; fake gold, fake diamond and colored rocks, will be used as substitutes.

As seen in Vietnam today and other countries in Southeast Asia (*such as Laos and Cambodia*), sea water is encroaching into rivers, turning the fresh water brackish, making it more challenging to grow crops.

Therefore, the more corrupted, ferocious, devious, clever, creative, complex, or scientifically advanced our mind is; the more tragedies and disasters will strike us, without compassion or discrimination.

The Buddha taught:

“Dependent Retribution changes with Direct Retribution” (*Direct Retribution is our physical being. Dependent Retribution is the environment and universe that we live in*).

The Patriarchs taught:

Bodhisattvas fear Cause

Living beings fear Effect

Because Bodhisattvas fear Cause, they don’t create (*sinful*) Cause. Sentient beings don’t fear Cause, thus they freely accumulate (*immoral*) Cause. When the (*vile*) Effect turns up, we blame the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas for not having the compassion to salvage us. In the U.S. nowadays, for example, many people reproach heaven and god for not saving sentient beings whenever they face sufferings and or tragedies

However, they don’t realize that these tragedies (*e.g., natural disasters, fire, hurricane, etc.*) are all generated by their (*evil, atrocious*) mind. One evil mind, two evil minds, multiple evil minds, combined with the minds of all evil people in this world together would definitely attract DESTRUCTIVE CONSEQUENCES.

Why don’t we reprimand ourselves instead of blaming the gods?

Buddhas and Bodhisattvas cannot save living beings with “devilish mind, devilish speech, and devilish thought”. Mara-*raja* (*e.g., Satan*) cannot harm beings that are good-

natured, sincere in cultivation, grateful and always finding ways to reciprocate.

Buddhas and Mara-rajā only help mortals to fulfill their wishes in accordance with their pure or dark hearts. One should know that the gods themselves do not grant merits to anyone. Similarly, the Yama King (*King of Hell*) cannot arbitrarily accuse or punish anyone. Merit and punishment themselves occur as karmic outcomes (*or combined karmas*) of moral and amoral conducts.

Wicked people who commit more wicked acts, are shameless, unrepentant. They do not cultivate the mind and body, but on the contrary, blatantly blame gods, Buddhas...these individuals will experience even more devastating tragedies (*than ongoing catastrophic events*).

The more one criticize gods, Buddhas, the greater the negative karmas and disastrous retribution one will collect.

One must be careful with his karma of speech. People suffer consequences for scolding/cursing good people; what would be the consequences for verbally abuse gods, Buddhas, Saints?

One can research all of the sutras and books of the sages from thousands of years ago and not able to find a single teaching that encourages living beings to commit sinful acts. Every word, every line of the Buddha, teaches, advises, and regulates sentient beings not to create NEGATIVE KARMA.

In spite of mountains of Buddhist materials, those who lack the affinity with the true Dharma (*doctrine*) are incapable of comprehending them. Even if the Sutras are handed to them, they would refuse the gesture.

To distinguish the good person from the bad, one can examine his current fruit of karma as well as his physical and verbal actions; and it will be apparent. Sooner or later, their true colors will be exposed. You can run, but you cannot hide.

Therefore,

WE MUST THINK OF THE CONSEQUENCE BEFORE COMMITTING ANY ACTION.

An arrow that is shot straight up into the sky will eventually lose its momentum and fall back to the ground. Similarly, those who carry out evil acts or harm too many people will eventually, when they are old, weak, and running out of blessings, follow their (*wicked*) karma into Avicii Hell (*uninterrupted hell*).

In summary, cause-effect and reincarnation are boundless and constantly changing. These concepts can be so complex that they can be considered beyond reasoning and discussing.

If a Buddhist cultivator can capture the key points discussed above and contemplate this issue, then he can understand the correlation between Cause and Effect.

In essence, the Cause will lead to the corresponding Effect spontaneously. However, the karma can change due to the influence of other positive or negative factors. For example, if we add salt to a glass of fresh water, we will taste the salinity. If we proceed to adding sugar, the taste will be altered. The shift among good/bad cause-effect follows the same notion.

In 1990 and 2011, I (*Bao-Dang Velvet*) published the Sutra of ‘**Good & Wicked Cause-Effect** – A Bodhisattva’s Vow to Cultivate Virtuous Conducts’. The original Chinese script was translated into Vietnamese by the late Venerable Master Thich Trung-Quan.

Recently, I have seen many too people planning wicked Seeds and subsequently harvesting numberless wicked Fruits (*diseases, psychosis, possession by demon/spirit, misery everywhere, etc.*).

Hence, at the beginning of 2015, I distributed the second edition of the book, titled “Cause-Effect, Samsara, and Power of Karma” in both Vietnamese and English, with illustrations. All were free of charge. The primary purpose is to provide a means for readers to recognize their bad habits and conducts; perform good deeds and eliminate sinful acts... in order to improve social peace and morality from this day forward.

If this publication creates any blessings and good merits, I (*Velvet*) would like to dedicate them all to:

- **Late Venerable Grand Master Thích Thiên-Tâm**
- **Late Venerable Master Thích Hải-Quang** (*Buddha Recitation Hermit*)
- **Late Father Nguyen Van-Phan** (*Upasaka Đăng Nguyên*)
- **Late Mother Nghiêm Thị Thịnh** (*Upasika Đăng Thịnh*).
- **Adopted child Shea** (*Upasika Sheala*)

Who gained rebirth and permanently reside in the Western Pureland. I wish them to promptly achieve enlightenment, salvage all suffering beings, and achieve Avaivartika (*or Non-Regression stage*).

I too would like to dedicate these blessings to my parents in the last seven life spans, the four Great Debts, the Three Kinds of Existence, and sentient beings in the dharma universe; I wish them all to cultivate good deeds, develop the Supreme Bodhi heart of the Buddha, convert all being to the proper Dharma, and ultimately gain Buddhahood.

Sincerely,

Nam mo Amitabha Buddha!

(Based on the teaching about Cause-Effect by Venerable Master Vô-Nhất, the late Venerable Thích Thiên-Tâm of Đại-Ninh Temple)

Foreword written by: Bao-Dang (*Velvet Bias*)

On behalf of the late Venerable Thich Hai-Quang

Head disciple/Director of Dharma Propagation Department