

The Cause and Effect Sūtra



The Buddha Speaks The Sūtra On Cause And Effect In The Three Periods Of Time

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That time, Ānanda was on Magic Mountain, together with twelve hundred fifty in the assembly. Ānanda made obeisance with his palms together, circumambulated the Buddha three times, and knelt with his palms joined. Then he asked Sākyamuni Buddha this question: "During the Dharma-Ending Age, all the living beings in Southern Jambudvīpa will give rise to much unwholesome karma. They will not revere the Triple Jewel, or respect their parents. They will be lacking in the Three Bonds. The Five Constants that safeguard the universal obligations between people will be in disharmony and disarray. Beings will be poor, destitute, lowly, and vile. Their six faculties will suffer impairment. All day long they will engage in killing and harming. Moreover, they will not be of equal status; some will be wealthy while others will be poor.

What are the conditions leading to these various different rewards and retributions? We disciples pray that the World Honored One will compassionately explain each one of these for us."

The Buddha told Ānanda and the assembly of great disciples, "You should now listen attentively. Good indeed, good indeed! I will clearly set forth all of this for you.

All men and women of the world, whether they be poor and lowly or wealthy and noble, whether they be undergoing limitless sufferings or enjoying blessings without end, are all undergoing the rewards or retributions which are due to causes and effects from their past lives. What should they do from now on?

"First, they should be filial and respectful to their parents.

Next, they should reverently believe in the Triple Jewel.

Third, they should refrain from killing and instead liberate the living. Fourth, they should eat pure vegetarian food and practice giving. These acts will enable them to plant seeds in the field of blessings for their future lives." Then the Buddha spoke these verses on cause and effect:

Wealth and dignity come from one's destiny, from causes planted in

lives in the past. People who hold to this simple principle will reap good fortune in lives in the future.

Kind men and women, listen to the causes, hear and remember this Sūtra's reminder of the causes and effects of karmic deeds in the past, in the future, and in the present. Cause and effect is no small care. True are my words; don't take them lightly.

1. **Why are some people officials at present?** Because with gold they gilded the Buddhas in their past lives, long, long ago. It's from their practice in lives in the past that they reap in this life a rich fruition. The purple gown and golden cordon - The honored marks of higher office: Should you seek them, seek with the Buddhas. Gilding the Buddhas is your own gain. Robing Thus Come Ones, you robe yourself. Don't say it's easy to become an official; It cannot happen if causes aren't planted.
2. **What are the causes of owning a carriage and riding on palanquins?** People like that were builders and menders of bridges and roads.
3. **Why are some people wearers of satin?** That is because in times in the past, robes they save as gifts to the Saṅgha.
4. **Sometimes people have plentiful goods,** the reason, in fact, again is quite fair. In the past those people gave food to the poor.
5. **Others don't have food or drink;** Who can guess the reason why? Before those people were plagued with a fault: Stingy greed made them squeeze every penny.
6. **The well-to-do among us dwell In very tall mansions and vast estates.** The reason is they gladly gave rice, lavishing gifts of grain on monasteries. Enjoying blessings and justly prosperous, are people who reap a fitting reward. In times now past they helped build temples and saw that the Saṅgha had huts

and shelters.

7. **Some people's features are fine and perfect,** surely the reason for such rewards is that beautiful flowers they offered to Buddhas.
8. **Why are some people gifted and wise?** In former lives they ate pure food and remembered the Buddhas with mindful regard.
9. **Look at men whose wives are loyal, their reward comes now for what happened before: Their conditions are strong in the Buddha's door. Some have marriages lasting and meaningful. Their happiness doesn't happen by chance.** The cause this time is the hanging of canopies and streamers before the Buddhas' statues.
10. **Some happy fellows' fathers and mothers enjoy long lifespans, contentment, and ease. Where is the source for rewards such as these?** They protected orphans in times now past and regarded all elderly ones as their own.
11. **Orphans must live without fathers and mothers** since before they shot down birds for sport.
12. **How does one set lots of children and grandchildren?** By letting birds fly from their cages to freedom.
13. **In raising children, some really fail badly.** It's because before they drowned female infants.
14. **When barren, people won't bear any children.** That's their due for committing promiscuous deeds.
15. **Some have long lifespans, why are they lucky?**

Liberating creatures, they ransomed lives.

16. **Have you seen how many suffer short lifespans?** Their wanton slaughter of beings is why.
17. **Lonely are men whom no women will marry.** They're paying their debt for committing adultery.
18. **Widows bear a sad retribution.** They held their past lives' husbands in scorn.
19. **Servants and slaves made that bondage themselves** by neglecting repayment of goodness's done them.
20. **Bright are the eyes of some fortunate beings.** Before Buddhas they offered lamps filled with oil.
21. **The blind of this world bear a heavy burden** for past failure to tell the way clearly to travelers.
22. **Some people's mouths are very misshapen.** They blew out lamps on the Buddhist altars.
23. **To be deaf and mute is a dreary existence.** Reward appropriate for scolding one's parents.
24. **How do people get to be hunchbacks?** They berated and laughed at those bowing to Buddhas.
25. **Take heed of malformed hands, my friend.** They betray people prone to evil.
26. **Fellows with crippled and useless feet,** ambushed and robbed with reckless abandon.

27. **Most cows and horses were humans before**, people who didn't settle their debts.
28. **Many former people are now pigs or dogs**, because they injured and cheated others.
29. **Illness and pain:** An effect inevitable for bestowing meat and wine on the Buddhas.
30. **Freedom from illness:** A fine reward for relieving the sick by bestowing medicines.
31. **The fate of imprisonment catches some people** due to fiendish deeds and a failure to yield.
32. **Death by starvation:** Due retribution for stopping up holes of rats and snakes.
33. **Appropriate that a victim of poisoning** caused aquatic poisoning, dammed up waters.
34. **Abandoned, forlorn,** rejected beings were cruel of old, abusing others.
35. **The stature of some is extremely short.** Before, they read Sūtras spread out on the floor.
36. **Vomiting blood?** Believe it's from first eating meat, then reciting the Sūtras.
37. **Another deed that determines deafness,** to not listen well to Sūtra recitals.
38. **Sores and scabies bother some people** who gave stinking fish and flesh to the Buddhas.

39. **People who reek with a terrible stench, sold inferior scents and phony goods.**
40. **Why do some by their own hand hang themselves?**
Before, they used nooses to capture their prey.
41. **All those widowed, alone, unwed, or orphaned,** are now paid justly for former jealousy.
42. **Those struck by lightning, consumed by fire,** rigged their scales to better their business income.
43. **Fierce tigers and snakes that feast on people** are enemies bearing resentments from lives before.
44. **In our myriad deeds, whatever we do,** we reap our own rewards, it's true.
45. **Who can we blame for our woe in the hells?** Who can there be to blame but ourselves?
46. **Don't say that cause and effect is unseen.** Look at you, your offspring, heirs, and grand children.
47. **If you doubt the good of pure eating and giving,** look around and find those enjoying fortune.
48. **Having practiced of old, they now harvest abundance.**
To cultivate now will bring blessings anew.
49. **Those who slander the cause and effect in this Sūtra** will fall and have no chance to be human.

50. **Those who recite and uphold this Sūtra** are supported by Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.
51. **Write out this Sūtra, study it hard** and in the future your families will flourish.
52. **Uphold this Sūtra atop your heads** to avert disasters and fatal accidents.
53. **To lecture this Sūtra on Cause and Effect** is to sharpen your wits in successive rebirths.
54. **Chanting this Sūtra on Cause and Effect** will make one revered, well-regarded by all.
55. **Print and distribute this precious Sūtra** and reap rebirth as a ruler or king.
56. **To verify former cause and effect,** regard Mahākāśyapa's golden body.

A case of future cause and effect:

57. **Bhikṣus Good Star slandered the Dharma** and lost his chance for human life.
58. **If cause and effect contained no truth,** why did Maudgalyāyana seek to rescue his mother from the hells to save her from suffering?
59. **Those who trust the words of this Sūtra as true,** will all be reborn in the Western Land of Bliss.

To speak of present cause and effect to proclaim future and past as well, is a deed that could never be done to its end.

Join at the door of the Triple Gem. With blessings and wholesome belief one can enter The door, supported by gods and dragons; dragons and sods who won't let you down.

For every part of giving you practice, you'll reap ten thousand parts reward. Such blessings are stored in a solid treasury, for enjoyment in future rebirths without end.

If you care to know of past lives causes, look at rewards you are reaping today If you wish to find out about future lives, you need but notice what you're doing right now.

End of The Buddha Speaks The Sūtra On Cause and Effect In Three Periods of Time.

Verse Of Transference:

May the merit and virtue accrued from this work, Adorn the Buddhas' Pure Lands, repaying four kinds of kindness about, and aiding those suffering in the paths below. May those who see and hear of this, all bring forth the resolve for Bodhi, and when this retribution body is over, be born together in the Land of Ultimate Bliss.



Skanda Bodhisattva
Dharmapāla (Dharma Protector)
Namo Skanda Bodhisattva

Aspiration to Skanda Bodhisattva, Dharmapāla from the Mahāyāna Buddhist Liturgy

O Skanda Bodhisattva, Lord & General of Devas,
A Transformation-Body Bodhisattva,
Vast and Deep are Thy Great Vows,
Cherishing and Guarding the Buddha Dharma,
Your vajra sword can quell the demon armies!
Incomparable Merits & Virtues,
We beseech Thee as Guardian of our Minds,
Namo Universal Eye Bodhisattva Mahāsattva!
Mahāprajñāpāramitā!

The next page is another summarized version of the Cause and Effect Sūtra.

The Buddha Speaks of the Karma Sūtra (Cause and Effect)

There was a novice monk who has only 7 days left to live. One day on his way back home, he noticed an army of ants about to be washed away by the current of sudden downpour. Spontaneously, he used mud to block the flow of water and thus, saved the lives of the ants.

As the saying goes: "Good actions produce good results", the novice monk lived up to a ripe old age, above eighty, before he entered Nirvana.

To understand your previous life, look at what you have in your present life; To have a preview of your next life, examine your daily act in this life.

Of The Myriad of Dharma, The Kindness of Parents is The Greatest!
The verse of Maitreya's advice on filiality says:

In the family there are two Buddhas, regretfully, people in the world do not know; No need to use gold and color to adorn, also no need to use chandana to carve;

Just look at your present father and mother, they are Sākyamuni and Maitreya; If you can mark offerings to them, where is the need to do other merit and virtue.

Thus have I heard;

Once upon a gathering at Lin Shan Assembly, where 1,250 followers attended, Ānanda, one of the chief disciples, after circling thrice with folded hands around Sākyamuni Buddha, bowing in respect, humbly asked, "In the present dark age, where the majority of our people are indulgent in unrighteousness, disrespectful to the Buddha's teaching, unfilial to their parents, immoral, miserable and sordid, among them some are deaf, some blind, some mute, some idiotic, some handicapped in other aspects, the most people inured to killing. How could we understand the cryptic and fundamental principle or what consequences each individual is to suffer eventually for his deeds. My Lord, would

you kindly explain there to us?"

Sākyamuni Buddha told Ānanda and the rest of the disciples to listen carefully, "I will now expound the Law of Karma. Because of Karmic effects inherited from previous life, some people are poor, some rich, and some miserable. There are four rules inseparable in obtaining happiness and prosperity for your next life.

They are to be filial to parents; to be respectful to Buddha's teaching, and to Buddhist monks; to abstain from killing and set free sentient beings; and to abstain from eating meat and be charitable."

Then the Buddha proceeded on the Karma Sūtra: "Destiny is the aggregate Karmic effects from past life. Past karma determined your present destiny. Present karma are to mold your next life. Learn the Law of Karma expounded as follows. For karma are consequential and my words truthful."

1. Effect: Why in this life you have cars and various transportation facilities?

Cause: Because you have repaired broken bridges and paved roads for the benefits of other in your previous life.

2. Effect: Why in this life you have clothing in great variety?

Cause: Because you have donated warm clothing to monks in your previous life.

3. Effect: Why in this life you have splendid food?

Cause: Because you have donated food to the poor in your previous life.

4. Effect: Why in this life you are starving and cloth-less?

Cause: Because you were too stingy to donate to charity in your previous life.

5. Effect: Why in this life you have houses and building?

Cause: Because you have donated food to monasteries in your previous life.

6. *Effect: Why in this life you are prosperous and happy?*

Cause: Because you have donated money to temples and public shelters in your previous life.

7. *Effect: Why in this life you are pretty and handsome?*

Cause: Because you respectfully offered flowers to the Buddha's altar in your previous life.

8. *Effect: Why in this life you are so intelligent and wise?*

Cause: Because you were a devout Buddhist and sober vegetarian in your previous life.

9. *Effect: Why in this life you are liked by others?*

Cause: Because you have created good relationship with people in your previous life.

10. *Effect: Why in this life husband and wife are faithful to each other?*

Cause: Because you have decorated temples with scrolls and tapestries to Buddha in your previous life.

11. *Effect: Why in this life you have both parents?*

Cause: Because you have respected and helped the lonely in your previous life.

12. *Effect: Why in this life you are an orphan?*

Cause: Because you were a bird shooter in your previous life.

13. *Effect: Why in this life you have many children?*

Cause: Because you have printed and distributed sūtras in your

previous life.

14. *Effect: Why in this life a son dies young?*

Cause: Because you have committed killing by drowning a baby girl in your previous life.

15. *Effect: Why in this life you are heirless?*

Cause: Because you have destroyed flowers habitually in your previous life.

16. *Effect: Why in this life you enjoy longevity and good health?*

Cause: Because you set free sentient beings in your previous life.

17. *Effect: Why in this life you are short-lived?*

Cause: Because you committed too many killings in your previous life.

18. *Effect: Why in this life you have no spouse?*

Cause: Because you have committed adultery in your previous life.

19. *Effect: Why in this life you are a widow?*

Cause: Because you have ill-treated your husband in your previous life.

20. *Effect: Why in this life you are a servant?*

Cause: Because you were disloyal and ungrateful in your previous life.

21. *Effect: Why in this life you have clear and good-sighted eyes?*

Cause: Because you donated oil to light up the Buddha's altar in your previous life.

22. *Effect: Why in this life you suffer from blindness?*

Cause: Because you have distorted truth and misled others in your previous life.

23. *Effect: Why in this life you have wry mouth?*

Cause: Because you have intentionally blown out candles before Buddha's altar in your previous life.

24. *Effect: Why in this life you are hunchback?*

Cause: Because you jeered at Buddha's followers in your previous life.

25. *Effect: Why in this life you have disabled hands?*

Cause: Because you have committed evils with your hands in your previous life.

26. *Effect: Why in this life you have lame legs?*

Cause: Because you were a robber in your previous life.

27. *Effect: Why in this life you are born as a horse or an ox?*

Cause: Because you never paid your debts in your previous life.

28. *Effect: Why in this life you are born as a pig or a dog?*

Cause: Because you have deceived and harmed others in your previous life.

29. *Effect: Why in this life you suffer from constant illness?*

Cause: Because you have offered meat to monks in your previous life.

30. *Effect: Why in this life you are healthy?*

Cause: Because you have offered medicine to cure the sick people

in your previous life.

31. *Effect: Why in this life you are imprisoned?*

Cause: Because you have relentlessly committed evils in your previous life.

32. *Effect: Why in this life you are starved to death?*

Cause: Because you have plugged snake pits and mouse holes in your previous life.

33. *Effect: Why in this life you die of poison?*

Cause: Because you have intentionally poisoned a river or water source in your previous life.

34. *Effect: Why in this life you are forlorn and friendless?*

Cause: Because you were unfaithful and deceitful to others in your previous life.

35. *Effect: Why in this life you are born as dwarf?*

Cause: Because you have read and written sūtra on the floor in your previous life.

36. *Effect: Why in this life you spew blood?*

Cause: Because you have eaten meat while praying in your previous life.

37. *Effect: Why in this life you are deaf?*

Cause: Because you have attended Buddhist instructions with levity in your previous life.

38. *Effect: Why in this life you are afflicted with ulcers?*

Cause: Because you have offered meat before the Buddha's altar in your previous life.

39. *Effect: Why in this life you have bad bodily odor?*

Cause: Because you have sold incense with dishonesty in your previous life.

40. *Effect: Why in this life you die by hanging yourself?*

Cause: Because you hunted animals by using ropes and nets in your previous life.

41. *Effect: Why in this life you are bereft of a spouse?*

Cause: Because you have been unduly envious and jealous in your previous life.

42. *Effect: Why in this life you are struck by lightning or burnt by fire?*

Cause: Because you have committed dishonest trading with customers in your previous life.

43. *Effect: Why in this life you are wounded by beasts or snakes?*

Cause: Because you have created enemies in your previous life.

Whether you reap or you sow;

44. *Effect: If you suffer in hell.*

Cause: Blame yourself for what you did in your previous life.

45. *Effect: You will be respected by many people in your next life.*

46. **Cause: If you in this life recite the Cause and Effect Sūtra.**

47. *Effect: You will become a leader to humanity in your next life.*

Cause: If you in this life print and distribute the Cause and Effect Sūtra free to all.

48. *Effect: You are always depressed, having to witness the happy and prosperous people around you.*

Cause: If you doubt that eating vegetarian is cultivating charity.

49. *Effect: You will be rewarded in return.*

Cause: It is good to cultivate giving to the Triple Gems.

50. *Effect: You will be free from disaster and calamity.*

Cause: If you carry the Cause and Effect Sūtra.

51. *Effect: It will manifest either immediately or later in your life.*

Cause: Do not think that the Cause and Effect Sutra is fallacious.

52. *Effect: You will be wise and intelligent in your next life.*

Cause: If you spread the truth of the Cause and Effect Sūtra.

53. *Effect: You are a Minister or an Officer in this life.*

Cause: You gain the fruits because you cultivated pains in your previous life.

54. *Effect: You will no longer be a human being in your next life.*

Cause: If you in this life insult the Cause and Effect Sūtra.

55. *Effect: The generations will be smart scholars and live happily.*

Cause: If in this life you transcribe the Cause and Effect Sūtra.

56. *Effect: Whatever you do will be witnessed by the Buddhas*

and Bodhisattvas.

Cause: If you recite and act according to the Cause and Effect Sūtra.

57. Effect: It is impossible to exhaust the speaking of the Law of Cause and Effect.

Cause: The fruit of a good deed will come in due course. The good cause you have accomplished in your previous life will be the foundation of your good fortune. The good seeds you have planted in this life will give you good fruits in your next life.

58. *Effect: See how Maudgalyāyana could save his mother from suffering. The Cause and Effect must not be treated as small matter, the Buddha's words are truth, you must not slight.*

Cause: If you doubt the efficacy the Cause and Effect Sūtra.

59. *Effect: This will bring them all together to the Pure Land of Ultimate Bliss*

Cause: If people deeply believe in the Cause and Effect Sūtra.

Having spoken the sūtra to Ānanda and the other followers, Buddha added: "They are innumerable examples of the Karmic law. But I have only mentioned them generally."

Then Ānanda said: " Until the end of the present dark age most human beings would have, though successive lives, accumulated countless misdeeds because of their ignorance of the karmic consequences. But thanks to our lord and the sūtra he has so kindly given us, whoever writes and reads, prints and distributes this sūtra, upon venerating the Buddha, will be blessed with eternal happiness and be able to see Amitābha Buddha, Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva and all other Buddhas in the heavenly realm."

- **Whatever you do will come back to you.**
- **Dress-up neatly and pay respect to the Buddha.**
- **To protect the Tathāgata Monastery is to protect yourself.**
- **For building Buddha's image is molding yourself.**

The Buddha Says: To understand your previous-life, look at what you have in you present-life. To have a preview of your next-life, examine your daily act in this life.

- Past Karmas determined your present destiny.
- Present Karmas will mold you next-life.