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## **Conditionality: The Law of Cause and Effect**

Dear Dharma Friends,

Today we are going to discuss conditionality, or the Law of Cause and Effect. When I say cause and effect, some Buddhists believe that it is simply a tool used to prod them into doing good deeds. This is not entirely correct. The Law of Cause and Effect according to the Buddha's teachings is not so simplistic.

Cause gives rise to effect—this is an inherent fact of life. The teachings of cause and effect are profound and operate with unfailing precision, more accurate than even the most advanced computers. Not only can we human beings not change the workings of cause and effect, even the gods cannot alter its path. The workings of cause and effect encompass everything

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in the universe and are the birthing ground of all conditions—past, present, and future. The *Nirvana Sutra* says categorically that the effects of helpful and harmful actions follow us like a shadow. Cause and effect spans the threefold dimension of time: past, present, and future. A cause once generated will always produce its appropriate effect.

If the workings of cause and effect govern all things in the universe, then who or what, governs cause and effect? Cause and effect is inherent in the interdependencies of all phenomena and the multitude of forces thereby created. This is not unlike the balancing act of building a tower of cards; when we add or remove a card, the repercussion of any one such action permeates throughout the whole system. The way cause and effect are linked is both profound and unique. When we say we human beings cannot alter the laws of nature, we are saying that we cannot alter the workings of cause and effect. The workings of cause and effect are most intricate, and unless we are fully enlightened, we cannot even come close to comprehending them in their entirety. While we may not fear death or the unknown, we should always maintain a healthy fear of the workings of cause and

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effect.

In Buddhism, there is a very profound saying: “Bodhisattvas fear causes, sentient beings fear effects.” The difference between bodhisattvas and us is that we have different perspectives on cause and effect. Bodhisattvas refrain from creating ill causes, for they know an ill cause will bring an ill effect. Their understanding of this law is complete, and they always examine the effects of causes before they act. Sentient beings, on the other hand, are impulsive and often act without thinking through the consequences. While we do not show any fear of creating ill causes, we dread the ill effects they bear on us. Time and time again, we act out of delusion and end up paying dearly for our foolishness.

From a sociological standpoint, culture, ethics, and laws are the main forces that give society its structure. The scope of a society’s laws is finite, and the ability of a culture to curtail behavior is limited. The effect of these externally imposed boundaries cannot compare to the impact that an understanding of cause and effect would have on us. If we are always mindful of cause and effect, we can use this to guide our actions. We will understand that our cir-

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cumstances, be they good or bad, are our own doing. If all of us can come to this level of understanding regarding cause and effect, we will always be mindful of our thoughts and actions, and the world will be a much better place.

Regardless of whether we believe in the teachings of cause and effect, we are all subject to its workings. No one can take our place in the workings of cause and effect. This is true from the very small, inconsequential causes to the life-changing ones born of our thoughts and actions. When a little boy plays with a knife and cuts himself, even the most loving mother cannot experience the pain that the child must feel. We all have to bear responsibility for our thoughts and actions; no one can stand in our place when the effects unfold.

In the first two sections of this discussion, I would like to look at cause and effect from the standpoint of everyday living and our relationships with others. In the last two sections, we will examine how cause and effect play out over time and how it can be a guide to our actions.

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## **I. Looking at Cause and Effect in Everyday Living**

The workings of cause and effect are not only confined to the arena of religious activity. Even in our everyday lives, there are infinite examples that attest to how it functions. Take the simple act of eating. We eat everyday. Why? We eat because we are hungry. Hunger is the cause, and eating is the effect. After we eat, we no longer feel hungry. In this instance, eating is the cause, and the sense of fullness is the effect. When the weather turns chilly, we put on more clothes to keep ourselves warm. One cause leads to another as inevitably as day turns into night.

Look around you; some of us are born into families of wealth while others are born to more humble circumstances. We all live in different countries. Why do some of us live in prosperous places, while others live in countries that are plagued by poverty and turmoil? Some of us live long lives, while others die tragically young. This is not because there is some god playing favoritism or that life is simply unfair. All of our circumstances are due to the varying causes and conditions we have planted in the past. Depending on our past causes, we now reap their effects.

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Causes breed effects, and the two cannot be separated.

In Buddhist literature, there is a verse about the role conditionality plays in determining our future rebirths:

*My flesh, sentient beings' flesh—  
Names different, nature the same.  
Of the same nature,  
Taking on different forms.*

*Let [the animals] suffer pain and agony,  
While I enjoy their sweet and tender flesh.  
Without waiting for Yama to judge;  
We ourselves can imagine what the consequences shall be.*

For just a moment of satisfaction for our taste buds, we cause the deaths of many animals, taking the young from their mothers or the parents from their young. The collective karma<sup>1</sup> of these killings may well be the future cause of an awful war. Additionally, the desire for ever more exotic food has driven many species to the edge of extinction, indirectly upsetting

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<sup>1</sup> Karma means actions and gives rise to causes.

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the balance of our ecological systems. We only have one earth; knowing that we may be reborn into this world many times over, it is in our own interest to preserve what we have.

Though the workings of conditionality may not be immediate and transparent, we should not doubt its functioning. Causes always yield effects. It is this interlocking web of causes and effects that gives rise to all phenomena. Our actions, or karma, are stored in our Alaya consciousness<sup>2</sup> and become the seeds of future results. Our circumstances, whether they are fortunate or not, are the result of previous causes: there is no element of luck involved. Here is a verse that sheds some light on our common predicament:

*Longevity comes from compassion;  
Early death comes from acts of killing.  
Dignity comes from tolerance;  
Poverty comes from  
Being miserly and greedy.  
Status comes from being respectful;  
The lack of status comes from pride.  
Muteness comes from slander;  
Blindness and deafness*

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<sup>2</sup> Storehouse of consciousness

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*Come from lack of faith.  
Impaired faculties and deformities  
Come from violation of the precepts;  
Wholeness in the body is  
The result of upholding the precepts*

The moral of this verse is that we determine who we are. On the other hand, we should treasure our present blessings and not take things for granted. On the other hand, we should always sow the seeds of good effects. Along the same line, Zhuzi (an ancient Chinese philosopher) used to teach his children with this verse:

*A bowl of porridge, a bowl of rice  
—contemplate, they do not come easily.  
A bit of silk, a piece of thread—always ap-  
preciate how precious they are.  
Plan before a storm; do not start digging a  
well when thirsty.*

In this world, there is no effect without a cause, and there is no cause that does not yield an effect. Additionally, there is no effect that is inappropriate for its cause, and there is no cause that will not yield

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its due effect. Ultimately, we determine cause and effect.

## **II. Looking at Cause and Effect in Our Relationships With Others**

Look! We all live in different countries and various places. I may not know you, and you may not know me. On the surface, it seems there is a lot of random disconnectedness in this world. Actually, we do all share some common causes and conditions. In the sutras, it is said that if one has the ability of looking into the past and the future, one will see the multitude of sentient beings who were or will be our parents, siblings, or relatives during our many lifetimes.

Let me tell you a story that illustrates how related we are. Once, there was a family celebrating a wedding. The house was filled with guests: family members, relatives, and close friends. Tables spilled out onto the street, and music filled the air. Everyone was in a festive mood. It happened that a monk walked by. He stood by the door, shook his head and sighed. Some of the guests were baffled and asked him why. The monk answered with the following

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verse:

*Cows, sheep, animals sitting at the table;  
Grandmother from a past life  
Is now the bride.  
Beating drums in the hall,  
Hitting grandpa's skin;  
Cooking in pots, the aunts.*

In this verse, the monk looked at familial relationships in the context of conditionality. The bride was once the grandmother in a past life. Many family members and friends sitting at the table were cows and sheep in their previous lives. The skin of the drum was made from the skin of a cow who was once the grandfather of the mother. The animals that were being cooked in the pots were the aunts from a previous life. When we pass away, our individual cumulative karmic force determines the realm of existence into which we are reborn. While we are of the same nature, each person's delusions differ in form and severity, giving each of us a different phenomenal existence. In our infinite rebirths, we meet and part. While we may be related in one life, we may be total strangers in the next.

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The Taiwanese newspapers once carried the following story. From this story, you can draw your own conclusion about how cause and effect influences the relationships we have with others. The story began with a young man who had a terrible fall while mountain climbing in Taitung. Because of the severity of the fall, he suffered a serious concussion. In order to save the young man, the medical personnel on the scene decided to call in a renowned neurologist from Taipei. Taipei is quite a distance from Taitung, and the doctor was at first most reluctant. Out of compassion, however, the doctor finally decided to make the trip. He packed his car with the necessary medical supplies and headed south. Unexpectedly half way into his drive, a middle-aged man in a leather jacket stopped the car and ordered the doctor out, saying, "Get out. I need the car."

The doctor immediately explained, "You don't know what you are doing. I am a doctor on an emergency call to save a patient." The carjacker did not wait for the doctor to finish and pulled him out of his car. The doctor had no choice but to hitch a ride from strangers. When he finally arrived at the scene of the accident, many hours had passed and the young

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man had already died. The medic on the scene was very angry with the doctor for his tardiness and told him that he was about an hour late. When the doctor approached the victim, he saw a middle-aged man beside the dead man crying, "My son, my son." The doctor took a look at the middle-aged man and immediately recognized him as the person who had carjacked his car earlier. He grabbed the man by his jacket and said, "It is you who caused your son to die."

The man in the leather jacket was the victim's father. In trying to get to the scene to see his son, he indirectly caused his son's death. Our relationships with others are governed by the Law of Cause and Effect, which often works in mysterious and complicated ways. Sometimes, in trying to love our children, we unknowingly put them in harm's way. A famous scholar in ancient China, Si Mawen, once wrote, "Save a fortune for your heirs; they may not get to enjoy it. Collect books for your heirs; they may not be able to read them. In the dark and unknown, the ultimate answer is to accumulate merit and [set a good example] for our children." This is food for thought regarding our relationships with our children.

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The realm of enlightenment and Buddhahood is beyond our comprehension; the workings of cause and effect are equally profound and wondrous. When we truly understand the deep meaning of cause and effect, in essence we understand the Dharma. Conditionality pervades all our relationships, and as such, it behooves us to treasure them all. When we comprehend the meaning of cause and effect, we will not hesitate to practice love that is grounded in oneness. When we help others, we are in fact helping ourselves. This is the joy of the Dharma.

### **III. Looking at How Cause and Effect Play Out in the Past, Present, and Future**

From the point of view of time, cause and effect span the threefold dimension of time, linking us from the past to the present and from the present to the future. Some causes produce effects in the present life, while others produce effects in the next life, and some others still produce effects many lifetimes later. Actually, this is not hard to visualize. Take the example of growing plants. Some plants that are seeded in the spring yield fruit in the fall. This corresponds to producing effects in the present life. Some plants take

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a year to bear fruit. This is similar to producing effects in the next life. Then there are some plants that will take years before beginning to bear fruit. This is analogous to producing effects many lifetimes later. One Chinese proverb says, “[Not that causes] are without effects; the time just hasn’t come yet.” The workings of conditionality never misfire; it is just a matter of time before the effect becomes apparent.

When we observe the world around us, we may sometimes wonder if life is nothing but a series of random events. We may have heard people say, “Mrs. Zhang is such a nice lady. She is a vegetarian, practices the Dharma religiously, and gives to all kinds of social causes. Unfortunately, however, she is also a most unlucky person and has experienced a great deal of misfortune. This is most unfair—why do so many bad things happen to such a nice person? How can anyone believe in conditionality? At other times, we may come across this type of comment: “That person is such a crook. You would think that he should have to pay for all the horrible things he has done. But instead he is rich and powerful. People look up to him. Will he ever have to pay?” True, when we see bad things happen to good people, or vice versa, our faith

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may be called into question. Actually, there is nothing here that is inconsistent with the Law of Cause and Effect. Let us go back to the example of Mrs. Zhang. The reason that she does not yet have a chance to enjoy any good fortune is because of her “karmic debts” from the past. Once her “karmic debts” are burned up through the process of doing good, good fortune will await her. As to those who seem to be able to forever evade the retribution of their bad actions, it is because they have stores of merit from their past lives. When their store of merit is consumed, then the effects of their unwholesome actions will come knocking at their doors.

Let me tell you a story that best illustrates how conditionality spans across time. Once, there was a monk who pledged to build a temple at a certain location. In ancient China, the method used to raise funds was different from that used today. Instead of asking for donations, the monk would sit or stand at the site of the future temple and recite sutras or preach the Dharma, hoping to move the community to action. For three months, this elderly monk sat at the locale and recited the sutras, but no one paid him any attention, except for a young boy selling hotcakes on the

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street for a nearby shopkeeper. The young boy could not bear to see the elderly monk unable to realize his vow, and compassion arose in him. He thought to himself, "This poor monk. Maybe if I give him the money from the hotcakes, I can help him realize his vow." The boy offered the money he got from selling hotcakes to the monk. When news of this boy's gallant action spread, the villagers reflected on their own nonchalance and felt embarrassed about their parsimony. By word of mouth, people came from all over to offer help to the monk. In no time, the monk collected enough money to start construction. The monk was very moved by the boy's compassion and said to him, "My little friend, your compassion today has had an enormous impact. You are a great Dharma friend to our temple. If there is anything I can do, please do not hesitate to ask." The young boy just smiled and went his way.

When the boy returned to the store, he did not have the money to give to the shopkeeper. The owner was livid and fired the boy on the spot. With such short notice, the little boy was not able to find another job and had to beg for a living. Things went from bad to worse; not only was he poor, he came down with an

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infectious disease and consequently lost his eyesight. With nowhere to turn, he suddenly recalled what the monk had said to him and decided to go to the temple for help. Now, this monk had attained the ability to see into the future and knew beforehand that the little boy would come to him for help. During the night, he gathered all of his followers together and left word saying, "Tomorrow, our great patron will be here. I want you all to be ready to receive him and show him the utmost respect."

The next day, everyone got up early in the morning to clean and dust. They waited and waited, but no one of importance came to the temple. Later, the elderly monk asked the monk in charge of hospitality, "Did our great patron grace us with his presence?"

"I did not see any great patron come to the temple today."

The elderly monk asked further, "Are you telling me that no one came today?"

"No one. Oh, only a small blind beggar boy called. He insisted on coming in, but I was afraid that he would be in the way when the great patron arrived. So, I gave him a few pieces of bread and asked him to

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leave.”

The elderly monk was flabbergasted and said, “You’ve made a great mistake. That little boy is our great patron. Please hurry and see if you can catch up with him and invite him back.” The young monk did as he was told and quickly caught up with the little beggar boy. He invited the boy back to the temple and prepared a guest room so that the boy might stay in the temple for a while. Unfortunately, one night when the little boy went to the outhouse to relieve himself, he fell into the latrine pit and drowned.

When people in the village heard what had happened to the boy, they discussed among themselves, “Look, how can we say that the Law of Cause and Effect is functioning here? Everything was going along just fine when the boy sold hotcakes for the storeowner. His luck took a turn for the worse ever since he gave money to the monk to build the temple. First, he became a beggar; then he became blind. Just when he thought things were looking up, he drowned in the temple outhouse. How can we believe in the Law of Cause and Effect?”

Comments like this quickly reached the elderly monk. He gathered everyone together to address their

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concerns. He said, “Because of his past karma, this little boy had to lead three difficult lives. In this lifetime, he was faced with poverty. In his next life, he was destined to be blind, and in the third lifetime, he was destined to die an accidental death in an outhouse. His compassion in helping to build the temple earned him great merit, and he was able to burn off his karmic debt in one lifetime. In this way, he did not have to suffer through two more misfortunate rebirths. He is now being reborn into one of the heavens. We are the creators of our own circumstances; cause and effect follow us like our shadows. Due to our ignorance of the past and future, we tend to look at our turn of events out of their proper context. How can we say that our actions would not yield their corresponding effects!” After the monk had spoken, everyone was moved, and they began to see the wondrous workings of cause and effect.

In the sutras, we come across this saying: “Hundreds and thousands of kalpas may pass, but our karma does not disappear. With the right cause and conditions, we will reap its effects.” What this means is that the seeds we sow with our actions, be they good or bad, will not disappear regardless of how

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much time has passed. Like a seed that sprouts under the right conditions, our causes will bear effects when the right conditions come to pass.

The workings of cause and effect span through the past, present, and future. Even though we are not able to see into the past or future, we can see what happens in the present. The sutras say, “If we want to know the causes we have planted in our past lives, our experiences in this life are the effects. If we want to know what our circumstances will be in the next life, just look at the causes we are planting in this life.” While we may not be able to do anything about our past causes, we are in control of the present and the future. If we understand that our circumstances today are the effect of past causes, we stand a better chance of accepting our circumstances with grace. Moreover, we can chart our future through our actions today. In this way, we mollify our past causes and plant wholesome seeds for the future. We should all take charge of the present and practice the Buddha’s teachings. When we plant good seeds today, we will have a bountiful harvest tomorrow. Using this analogy, the following Chinese verse can help to spur us into immediate action:

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*Every one of us knows  
The next year will come;  
All families plant for next year's food.  
Every one of us knows there is a next life;  
Why don't we all plant causes  
For good fortune in the next life?*

#### **IV. Looking at Cause and Effect as a Guide to Actions**

Some people have misguided notions and expectations regarding conditionality. A person who had been a vegetarian for a long time once complained to me, "There's no point in being a vegetarian. Look at me, I have been a vegetarian for over twenty years, and I am not any healthier. Since the Buddha has not been looking after me, why should I continue to be a vegetarian?" I guess he became a vegetarian because he thought that the Buddha would become his personal physician and look after his health. Another person grumbled to me, "Dharma teacher, I am going to stop reciting Amitabha's name. For years I have dutifully recited his name, yet I lost all my money in business. If Amitabha is not going to take care of me, why should I recite his name?" Ah, he

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recited Amitabha Buddha's name not to be reborn into the Pure Land but because he wanted Amitabha to provide him with financial stability. All of these are unreasonable expectations of the Buddhas.

We must understand that each cause has its respective effect. If we want good health, we should exercise and maintain a calm mind. If we want to be wealthy, we should first plant the seeds of wealth by giving alms. We also need to provide the right conditions for wealth to grow by working hard, being trustworthy, and helping others whenever we can. We have to help ourselves first. We cannot simply hope for wealth by praying to the gods. If we pray to Amitabha Buddha to help us get ahead while at the same time we selfishly take advantage of others, we are essentially asking Amitabha to stoop to our level, which is most ludicrous.

Some people bring a few pieces of fruit to a temple and expect to strike a bargain with the Buddhas to bless their families with fame and fortune. If this were how the world operates, would we all not want to make such a trade? Such a belief is not in accord with right view, but is characterized by greed and delusion. In this world, you cannot get something

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for nothing, and any religion that is worth its name would not teach its followers to be so opportunistic.

Bai Juyi, a scholar of the Tang Dynasty once asked Chan Master Niaofo to teach him the Dharma. The Chan master replied, “Refrain from all wrongs, practice all good.”

Bai Juyi answered disappointedly, “Is this what the Dharma is about? It is so simple. Even a three-year-old toddler knows this!”

With joined palms, the Chan master answered smilingly, “Yes, a three-year-old toddler may know this, but even an eighty-year old has difficulty practicing it. It is one thing to speak of the Dharma; it is another to put it into practice.”

While we instinctively know that we should do good and refrain from evil, it is very hard to put this into practice. Often, we act impulsively without thinking through the consequences of our actions. If we can truly internalize the Law of Cause and Effect, we will constantly be reminded to think before we act. Sometimes, when we see bad things happen to good people, we may begin to lose our trust in conditionality. Seeing good things happen to bad people, we end up thinking that we may be able to evade the

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effects of our actions. Little do we know that while we may be able to temporarily escape the laws of society, we will never escape the effects of conditionality. The following verse reflects the way many of us may look at the world:

*Before unwholesome karma bears fruit,  
The ill-doer thinks  
His pursuits bring him happiness.  
When the effects of karma ripen,  
The ill-doer then realizes  
The destructive nature of his actions.*

*Before wholesome karma blossoms,  
The good-doer looks at his efforts  
As burdensome.  
When the effects unfold,  
The good-doer begins to see  
The goodness of his actions.*

If we can channel the energy we expend perpetrating harm into performing wholesome actions instead; if we can maintain resolve when problems arise; and if we can do what is right and not what is easy, we will one day reap the fruits of our labor.

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During the Period of the Warring States in Chinese history, there was a general by the name of Liu Bei. On his bed, he left these words of advice with his son: “Do not commit a wrongdoing thinking that it is only minor; do not skip doing a good deed just because it is small.”

The sutras explain this idea, taking it a step further, “Do not be lulled into thinking that a minor wrongdoing does not bear any ill consequence. A trickle of water, though small, can gradually fill a large container. Do not look down on a minor benevolent act, thinking that it will not yield any blessings. A small blessing like a trickle of water can accumulate into great blessings.” Thus, in daily life, we need to be mindful of every thought and action. If we look around and observe the world, we will see how conditionality applies even to the most minute detail.

When we see others who are more fortunate than ourselves, we may long for their good luck and wonder why we are not equally blessed. Actually, if we understand the Law of Cause and Effect, we will realize that the circumstances in which we find ourselves is the product of our own minds, and luck has

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nothing to do with it. Not only is the mind the generator of karma, it is also the sole agent of karmic change. If we are continually vigilant of the mind and keeping it focused on right thoughts, then even misfortune can be changed for the better. If we let our minds run wild with ill thoughts, then whatever blessings we have cannot last.

Venerable Cihang was a well-respected monk during his time. Before he passed away, he left behind this verse, which puts the interplay between the mind and karmic conditions into perspective:

*Here's a word of advice to all:  
It's imperative to continually reflect on  
Activities and thoughts each day.  
Take stock of how much good and harm  
You have caused.  
As long as you have peace of mind,  
North, east, south, west are all good.  
As long as one person remains  
To be ferried across,  
We must not cross over ourselves.  
Dharma nature is inherently  
Empty and serene.  
No cause planted is ever lost.*

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*We reap what we sow;  
No one can stand in our place.  
Places of practice—  
Like a flower in the sky, moon in the water,  
Build them everywhere and ceaselessly.  
I hope you all will do good,  
Fostering many good conditions.  
Without delay, work toward liberation  
For yourself and the world.*

While conditionality never fails, its effect is not always instantaneous. We, however, should not let short-sightedness get in the way of better judgement. I offer you here a verse from which we can draw a parallel lesson.

*Goodness like a green pine,  
Delusion like a flower.  
Gazing at it now,  
[The green pine] pales in comparison.  
The morning after a day of frost,  
The green pine remains,  
But not the flower.*

While a blooming flower is a feast to the eyes, it

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is also fragile and cannot withstand the test of weather. On the other hand, a tall pine may be plain, but it is also strong and sturdy. When a storm hits, it is the green pine that remains standing. The many choices we make everyday are like choosing between a pretty but short-lived flower and a plain but sturdy pine. How we choose is entirely up to us.

Today, we spent some time talking about cause and effect. I hope we all can internalize these teachings and realize firsthand that we are responsible for who we are. When we truly understand the nature of conditionality, we will be in touch with our Buddha Nature, a realm of great wisdom and happiness. May your wisdom grow and may you experience the joy of the Dharma.

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## **About the Author**

### **Venerable Master Hsing Yun**

Venerable Master Hsing Yun was born in Jiangdu, Jiangsu Province, China, in 1927. Tonsured under Venerable Master Zhikai at age twelve, he became a novice monk at Qixia Vinaya School and Jiaoshan Buddhist College. He was fully ordained in 1941, and is the 48th Patriarch of the Linji (Rinzai) Chan School.

He went to Taiwan in 1949 where he undertook the revitalization of Chinese Mahayana Buddhism on the island with a range of activities novel for its time. In 1967, he founded the Fo Guang Shan (Buddha's Light Mountain) Buddhist Order, and has since established more than a hundred temples in Taiwan and on every continent worldwide. Hsi Lai Temple, the United States Headquarters of Fo Guang Shan, was built outside Los Angeles in 1988.

At present, there are nearly two thousand monks and nuns in the Fo Guang Shan Buddhist Order. The organization also oversees sixteen Buddhist colleges;

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five publishing houses, including Buddha's Light Publishing and Hsi Lai University Press; four universities, one of which is Hsi Lai University in Los Angeles; two nursing homes for the elderly; a secondary school; a satellite television station; and an orphanage.

A prolific writer and an inspiring speaker, Master Hsing Yun has written many books on Buddhist sutras and a wide spectrum of topics over the past five decades. Most of his speeches and lectures have been compiled into essays defining Humanistic Buddhism and outlining its practice. Some of his writings and lectures have been translated into various languages, such as English, Spanish, German, Russian, Japanese, Korean, etc.

The Venerable Master is also the founder of the Buddha's Light International Association, a worldwide organization of lay Buddhists dedicated to the propagation of Buddhism, with over 130 chapters and a membership of more than a million.

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## About Publisher

### **Buddha's Light Publishing F.G.S. Int'l Translation Center**

As long as Venerable Master Hsing Yun has been a Buddhist monk, he has had a strong belief that books and other documentation of the Buddha's teachings unite us emotionally, help us practice Buddhism at a higher altitude, and continuously challenge our views on how we define and live our lives.

In 1996, the Fo Guang Shan International Translation Center was established with this goal in mind. This marked the beginning of a string of publications translated into various languages from the Master's original writings in Chinese. Presently, several translation centers have been set up worldwide. Centers that coordinate translation or publication projects are located in Los Angeles and San Diego, USA; Sydney, Australia; Berlin, Germany; Argentina; South Africa; and Japan.

In 2001, Buddha's Light Publishing was estab-

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lished to publish Buddhist books translated by Fo Guang Shan International Translation Center as well as other valuable Buddhist works. Buddha's Light Publishing is committed to building bridges between East and West, Buddhist communities, and cultures. All proceeds from our book sales support Buddhist propagation efforts.

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