

THE INCREDIBLE PHENOMENON OF KARMA (CAUSE AND EFFECT)

**Why One Should Perform Good
And Pursue Wisdom**

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DEDICATION

To those sentient beings who seek the Highest
Perfect Wisdom.

- Wun Ho -

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PREFACE

I am currently a professor teaching in a national teachers' college in Taiwan. To affirm the importance of education, I often explain the role of a teacher in this society to my students to help them realize their responsibilities. Sometimes I cite proverbs to encourage them to contribute effort in their field. For example, a proverb from the Bible states "Giving is better than receiving" ; and the saying in Buddhism is that "Performing wholesome actions will bring good result in return, whereas conducting unwholesome actions will receive a bad outcome."

One day, one of my students asked me an unexpected question, "If giving is better than receiving, what makes it better? If performing wholesome actions will bring good result in return, what evidence can prove this saying?" At that moment, I only could give him a general answer due to lack of documented evidence at hand. Because of this, I started to search for more detailed information and collect more data to document the evidence. I conducted a series of research investigating high profile cases that happened in the society and interviewed and surveyed various groups of people of different gender, age, career, and social class. I found people who often contribute themselves, such as donating money or materials or caring for others or being volunteers, live in happiness. Some of them even experienced miracles after their contributions. After I compiled these people's real experiences, I wrote a series of books entitled The Incredible Phenomenon of Karma (Cause and Effect). These books have become well known in Taiwan and other countries, and they have been reprinted many times. Some overseas readers had requested me that I translate them into English to help their children or family or friends understand the law of cause and effect. Therefore my daughter and relatives and their friends living in the USA put

tremendous effort together to present this book to our overseas readers.

There are two parts in this book. The first contains twelve true stories of karma (cause and effect) doctrine in our society now, and the second contains some meaningful teachings of Buddha summarized from the Buddha canonical literature as well as the teachings of some recent honorable master venerables.

Furthermore, I would like to ascertain that these twelve stories are true and unprejudiced experiences from people who wanted to share their stories with all of us. I myself will share a similar experience as well. If one can make contributions sincerely as the stories stated, one may have similar experiences later on. However, if there is no special blessing or miracle coming to us after long term contributions, there may have been some reasons such as the followings.

First, making contribution is for your own advantage. If making contributions is only for fate or profit or reputation, it is selfish rather than generous. The merit we receive is limited. On the other hand, if one helps people with a gracious heart without expectation of reward, then the merit received is unlimited.

Second, doing double-faced action. If a person makes contributions while conducting unwholesome actions by body, speech, or mind such as killing, or stealing, or lying, or committing adultery, the merit he receives will be used to counteract the unfavorable return from his unwholesome actions.

Third, insufficient funds in the merit bank. If a person's unwholesome karma-result is enormous, especially it is carried over from his past lives, his merit received in this life is applied to write off his bad karma-result. This is similar to a person with a large amount of debt; and he can only pay it back little by little.

Buddha stated that "Good begets good and bad begets bad. People have to reap what they sow." Owners of their karma are the beings, heirs of their karma, the karma is their womb from which they are born, their karma is their friend, their refuge. Whatever karma they perform, good or bad, they will later inherit it. With regard to when karma will result, karma may ripen during this life-time, or may ripen in the next birth, or may ripen in later births."

If we investigate our lives with an objective and scientific attitude through long-term observation including previous, current, and future lives, we will come out with an ubiquitous conclusion: the phenomenon of karma is a true and undoubtable theory in our universe. Dr. Chiu-Nan Lei says, "The universe is a big circle. Whatever we send out will bounce back to us. If we love (or hate) others, they will give us love (or hate) in return." Therefore, I hope all of us understand the true meaning of karma and will take action to take care of our society, which is the key to improving our interpersonal relationships in our family and society, and the lead toward peaceful lives.

In the end, I would like to express my great appreciation to the following people: Rachel S. Chen, my daughter, who translated this book into English and carried it with her as a part of her lifetime journey; Mrs. Beverly A Cook for editing the manuscripts; Ms. Yu-Ing Ching and Mr. & Mrs. Song & Vera and their daughter, Sue Yeh for their valuable assistance; My colleagues Dr. Li-Yu Cheng and Dr. Tien-Cheng Shen, who read through the manuscripts and made many editorial suggestions; and Liang Yunn Chen, my son, for the cover design; and others who took part in the preparation of this book. I thank you all.

Wun Ho
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PART I TRUE STORIES OF KARMA (CAUSE AND EFFECT) IN OUR LIVES

1. How blessings applied to a person rescuing a dog

Mr. Yu, a reader living in Taipei, recently sent me a letter with a touching story which proves that a person will obtain unexpected blessings from doing things with a good heart whether helping people or animals. It is important that we should keep the teaching of karma (cause and effect) in mind. Below is part of his letter.

Mr. Shu, a good friend of mine, currently is working at Taipei Municipal Government. He has lots of friends owing to his kindness and concern for people. He did not go to college after high school and in 1974, instead, he went to military service in Kingmen. There, he was the leader of his squad. One day, after coming back from a short dismissal in the evening, he found a dog tied under a tree close to the assembly ground. Out of curiosity, he went to see the dog and found it was howling and crying miserably. He was stunned by the scene for he never heard nor saw anything like a dog's crying before. He only heard that buffaloes could do something like this. He felt terribly sorry for the miserable dog.

He asked his men where the animal came from, and they replied that the dog was bought by several soldiers from King City, the biggest city in Kingmen. They also mentioned that they had planned to slaughter the dog to eat the meat in order to keep their bodies warm during the cold weather. (It was a custom for soldiers to eat dog meat during cold weather to keep their bodies strong and warm.) In order to rescue the dog, Mr. Shu negotiated the price with the soldiers and paid them NT\$300 for the dog. He kept it with him; thus, the dog escaped from its fate.

About half a month later, Mr. Shu discovered that the dog's belly was becoming bigger and bigger. He realized then that the dog was pregnant at the time bought by the

soldiers. He was so delighted that he had purchased the dog in time to save the unborn puppies.

One afternoon a month later, Mr. Shu led the whole squad on a mission. The soldiers lined up in a straight line to march to the compound. For some reason, Mr. Shu had one soldier walk in front of him, and he remained in second position. As the first soldier climbed a dirt hill, a shell was fired from mainland China and targeted right at his head. It landed 40 to 50 meters away and exploded. The poor soldier's head was cut in half by the shrapnel; his blood and brain burst everywhere. He fell and died following a miserable cry. The other soldiers who witnessed the incident were very frightened. Because Mr. Shu did not walk in first position of the line, he avoided a big calamity in a miraculous way.

A few months later, Mr. Shu went back to Taiwan on a mission and had a chance to visit his family. Mr. Shu's mother, a pious Buddhist, took him to visit a master in a temple at Bancho in order to pray for his well-being during his military service. The master gazed at him and said, 'You just avoided a diaster, didn't you?' Mr. Shu and his mother were stunned by the master's words. The master then asked him, 'Did you rescue a dog before?' Mr. Shu's face turned completely white, and he could not answer the master's question. Mr. Shu's mother then asked him what happened. (Mr. Shu had not told his mother about the horrible incident for he had not wanted her to worry about him.) In fact he had never told anyone about the incident.

Mr. Shu said that he considered the incident as a coincidence before meeting with the master, and he never thought much about the pregnant dog. However, after the master's words, he suddenly realized the truth of cause and effect(*) and became one of the Triratna(*) disciples.

We can learn a lesson from the above story. As the old

saying goes, "There is a virtue from God who likes to promote creation." Due to Mr. Shu's kind nature, he not only rescued a pregnant dog and its unborn puppies, but also showed a good example. Therefore, he could escape the great calamity through his blessings. His story reflects the Buddha's teaching, "If your heart is full of goodwill, you will also be well blessed."

Cause and effect: Every cause has its effect, as every effect arises from a cause.

Triratna: "Three Jewels or Gems, which by all Buddhists are revered as the most venerable things are the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Holy Sangha."

2. Killing animals has bad effects

Not very long ago a reader told me of his past experience which makes me afraid of doing wrong. Below is part of his story.

I am a chiropractor living in the countryside not very far from Chiayi City. I have a child who is very intelligent. In his seventh grade, one day he was not paying attention in class but was reading an extracurricular book. When the teacher found out, he was asked to answer questions from an untaught lesson. The teacher wanted to teach him a lesson of humility. He paused, read the textbook for a minute, then answered the questions correctly. Everyone was amazed at his talent. Some time later, the teacher met me on a road and asked me in admiration, 'How have you raised a child so smart?'

Sadly my son started to fall behind as he reached the eighth grade. His grades dropped and his academic ability was not as high as before. He dropped to the bottom of the class. I was so worried about him. I went to many temples and fortune tellers to ask about his future; I even called god mediums to get help from supernatural power. I was disappointed because everything was in vain. My son ridiculed my behavior. He even imitated the god medium's action to tease me. I could not stand his disrespectful behavior, and told him to stop. Suddenly, at that moment, his body became unexpectedly strong; he became wild. Due to my professional training as a chiropractor, I know martial arts quite well. However, at that moment, I could barely fight my son. I was injured by sticks he threw at me. To me, this incident was unbelievable. I worried about his strange and cruel behavior and had no idea what to do about it.

Right at that time, an old friend of mine, a pious

Buddhist, came to visit me. He suggested that I visited a famous master who might be able to help my son. The next day, I went to visit the master who was very kind to me. He made arrangement for several members of my family and me to talk with him. From this long talk, I finally realized the reason for my son's sudden change of disposition and his falling grades. It was all due to the bad behavior of my son's grandfather years ago. At that time, he was so incensed by a group of monkeys that had eaten and destroyed his crops. He used any means possible to capture them. Each time when he caught a monkey, he used a knife or stick to kill it. He even chopped their heads off in order to scare the other monkeys. He also brought trapped monkeys home, slaughtered and ate them. Due to the huge amount of monkeys he slaughtered, the dead monkeys' spirits searched for the killer and his descendants for revenge. Thus my poor child became one of their victims.

From this story, we can see the dreadful result of killing or torturing animals. This is a lesson we should keep in mind.

Recently, another reader living in Meisan sent me a letter. His last name is Shu. He had an experience in the bad karma (cause and effect). Below is part of his letter.

I was so naughty and naive when I was a young child. I liked to catch frogs a lot. Each time, as I went fishing, I would catch some little frogs and use them for bait; I had killed many little frogs. Meanwhile, my family used to raise ducks. In order to feed these ducks, I often went with other people to look for earthworms; I have killed thousands or millions of earthworms as well. As a Buddhist, when I recall my past, I realize that I was sinful and committed many bad deeds. I now believe that my body has been tortured by disease due to the strong connection to my killing of animals in the past.

Another thing which makes me feel miserable is recalling my biology class in high school. We had to study the anatomy of small animals, especially frogs. I was so sorry for those little frogs as their trembling bellies were cut apart with their organs exploding. After the scene, I did not have an appetite for meals at all. I threw up everytime I tried to eat. This symptom took many years to heal completely.

There is another story I feel ashamed to tell. When I was in elementary school, I used to help people peel bamboo shoots to help support my family financially. One day my father scolded me for something, and I became angry at him. In spite, I spit on the bamboo shoots and stamped on them. Since then my throat has been itchy and sore, and it can not be healed by any medicine. I have never had a chance to enjoy fine meals or snacks. It is such a pity.

Finally, I have one more shameful story to tell. I used to call people 'stink head' all the time I was in high school. Strangely, my head later got some kind of skin disease. This disease was treated but came back again and again. Thus, I became a 'stink head' myself. From this experience, I strongly feel that we should never hurt people by calling their names. Some day, sooner or later, the curse might come back to haunt us. It is a lesson we should keep in mind.

3. A High School Teacher's Confession

Not long ago, a reader living in northern Taiwan sent me a letter. She mentioned that something happened to her husband which bothered her dreadfully. Below is part of the letter.

I would like to confess my husband's sinful past in public in order to alert people to the lesson of karma. By telling this story, I would like to let everyone know the truth of Buddha's kindness and prove that worshipping Buddha piously and respectfully can eliminate sudden disasters and sufferings.

My husband was a high school teacher. He was an educated person; however, he did not believe in karma. He believed that nothing existed after a person's death. He always said that as long as he could live happily in this life, he would not worry about the cruel punishment in hell, such as the knife mountain and boiling oil pot; and that karma was only religious propaganda to scare people. He not only rejected Buddha's teaching, but also destroyed Buddha's images, sutras, and sculptures in front of me. He then told me in a loud voice, "See? Is there any Buddha here? Are there any ghosts here? They are just liars!" I was so sorry for his action of blaspheming Buddhism because it might have bad effect on him later.

Originally, my husband's body was strong, especially his heart. A doctor used to tell him his heart was as good as a twenty-year-old man; however, he started to feel something wrong after destroying Buddha's images and sutras. He also dreamt about his friends who had passed away. He was confused; he also worried about his future. For safety's sake, he asked me to chant sutras for his dead friends. As I went through the Sixth Part of Ksitigarbharaja Budhisattva (God of the Hell) Sutra, I suddenly realized

that if a person often dreams about dead people, it could mean that his dead family members, relatives, or friends in this life or previous lives are suffering in hell. They cannot escape from the suffering, but call him for help, in order to release them from the suffering and to have a better future life. On the basis of my understanding, I began chanting more seriously for my husband's late friends. A few months later, my husband's health condition not only did not improve, but became worse. One day, he had a heart attack. This was the last thing I expected! My mother used to tell me about her dreaming of late family relatives, but she remained well. My husband, however, only dreamt about his late friends for a couple of months when he became ill. What was the difference between these two people? Was it because my mother had been a vegetarian for a long time, and she also worshiped Buddha and chanted each day so she could escape from calamities? This is a question that I still cannot answer.

Meanwhile my husband remained conscious for two days following his heart attack. He still had some feeling and he sometimes had tears coming down from his eyes. However, on the third day, he lost consciousness; his limbs started getting colder and colder. I begged the doctor to give him the best treatment and medicine regardless of cost. But he told me he had done his best. He also told me that if patients stop breathing for more than three minutes, a third of them will die immediately and the rest of them may become vegetables later on. At that moment, my intuition told me I should pray for Buddha's and Budhisattva's blessing for my husband. In order to save his life, I knelt down in front of Buddha and Budhisattvas and started to pray for a miracle. After three days of my continuous worship and prayer, my husband regained consciousness. But he could not understand anything and talked like a baby.

He looked like a completely different person. I then called for some masters to chant sutras for him; meanwhile, I chanted Ksitigarbharaja Budhisattva Sutra by his bed without stopping. Ten days later, my husband slowly started to talk in an unusual tone. Suddenly one day he declared, "I don't want to eat meat anymore." I was so surprised, for he and I almost got divorced over the matter of being a vegetarian. The fact that he could come back from near-death was a miracle; his words after awakening were even more incredible to me. I asked him if he had seen Ksitigarbharaja Budhisattva during his comma. He said that he didn't, but some masters had appeared in front of him to guide him to a temple in a mountain to chant sutras. Because he had not read nor studied any sutras before, he could not chant any. He could only say the name of Amitabha(*). Due to his continuous repetition of the name, Amitabha, he gradually regained consciousness. He showed no sign of becoming a vegetable from then on.

It took nearly six months for my husband to completely recover. During his recovery period, he used to talk to himself when he was half conscious. Because he was handsome and loved women, he had had lots of love affairs. He once said 'I used to be a soldier in mainland China. I had lots of missions to kill certain people, but I did not kill them; instead, I let them go. However, I really did tons of wrongdoing by having affairs with women. I got involved with someone's wife; had an affair with her, let her divorce her husband, got married to her, and divorced the woman ten years later.' During this half-conscious period, he often looked at me in a strange way as if taking me as his ex-wife. He would then kneel in front of me to confess his past, begging me to forgive him. He would also ask me to go back to "my ex-husband;" he also felt sorry for destroying their marriage.... . Each time, as he became excited in

talking about his past, he knocked his head and chest, and sometimes he bled without stopping. Meanwhile, he also called his own name, blaming himself and saying he deserved this kind of punishment. Besides that, he sometimes thought of me as a street prostitute. He would accuse me of running away from him any time when I was about to leave home. Each time, as I went out of the door, he thought I was going to seduce other men. At times, he told himself that he 'saw' a man there with his wife; he then grabbed a kitchen knife and ran to the bedroom to search the bottom of the bed, closet, and so on. Later on, he asked himself again, 'Why should I suffer this kind of pain and trouble? Is this what I got from having affairs with women? I don't blame anyone; I only blame myself for the silly thing I did. No one should copy my past misbehavior. I am so ashamed and deeply regretful about what I did.' He would then go in front of the Buddha's image to confess. But he also complained that he only committed a small sin, yet the consequence was like that of a sin ten times the size!

Another thing that bothers me is that he was always very conservative when making contributions. This has not changed. Currently, he has lots of retirement funds, but he keeps telling people he cannot survive because he has run out of money. He also keeps saying he wants to commit suicide... .

All I said above about his misfortunes is absolutely true. I always wonder why a highly educated person does not believe in karma until he has paid the high price of suffering; struggling with life and death. This leaves me heartbreaking wondering.

4. How I Saved My Nearly Broken Marriage

Ms. Shieh, one of my students, told me of a recent incident. Below is her story.

I am an early childhood teacher. In 1984, I took a continuing education class at a teachers' college. There was an instructor who often told us true stories in class regarding good causes and good effects. We were so touched by his words that some of my classmates gathered funds for charity activities. I went with them once or twice. Frankly, I was not enthusiastic. I felt that as long as I kept a good heart without hurting people or doing bad things, that should be good enough. Why should I make contributions? I never contributed to charity before, yet my life was going smoothly. Why should I change now? These questions stayed in my mind, and to me making contributions was just meaningless. However, as I gradually learned from my past experience, I eventually found my belief was not correct at all.

I was happy with my marriage. My husband was good and considerate to me and our two lovely children. He often cooked dinner for us. During the meal, he also liked to chat with me and we truly enjoyed it; therefore, we often had our dinner for a few hours. My in-laws, neighbors, and friends thought of us as a perfect couple. However, the lovely days did not last long. Right after I graduated from the teachers' college, a newly employed colleague in my husband's company fell in love with my husband. She tried all possible ways to reach my husband's heart, even asking him to do assignments with her. My husband used to tell me about her, but swore to me of his unchangeable love to me. I truly believed him, for he was so reliable. Besides, he had not done anything to make me worry before. One day, three months later, my husband called from his office. He said he had been transferred to a branch company in central

Taiwan. He wouldn't be coming home... I could not accept this fact. My in-laws asked him why he ran away from his family, and he could not say any reasons. Later on, after asking many questions, I realized that he had moved in with his female colleague somewhere out of town. So I went to his office to talk to him. But he was always aloof and impatient to me, telling me that there was no love between us any longer. He asked me not to see him again. At times, I had my children go to ask him to come back home, but he refused them, too.

My in-laws also urged him to go home, but he still claimed that he did not want me and his family any longer. At that time, I felt so helpless that I went to visit temples and fortune tellers. I even believed in some god mediums' words by burning some spells, and I paid a good price to have someone put incense ash into my husband's drinks or soups. I desperately wanted him back. Instead though, he sent postcards to my working place every two or three days. He not only blamed and scolded me, but also threatened to file for divorce. In order to prevent people from knowing my private life, I went to school very early in the morning. I also paid special attention to everyday's mail as well. I asked myself why he was so unkind to me. Why? One thing I could not understand at all was that I had such a faithful attitude toward taking care of my in-laws and my family, yet I was suffering so much. I also never made any big mistake in my past. And my in-laws considered me as a good daughter-in-law. However, despite this effort I had made, my husband did not appreciate it; instead, he ran away from me and had an affair outside. I just could not let go of the thoughts I had. My in-laws had the same feelings as I did. They could not understand why either. They had no effective solution but had a few long talks with him; hoping he would turn back. Meanwhile, they also urged me

to be patient. But I was on the pinnacle of my sufferings; I could not feel relieved. Suddenly, I thought of my instructor who told us lots of stories about karma at the teachers' college. He might be the right person I could get help from. I went to visit him, telling him my story. He told me to continue playing my role of being a good wife, mother and daughter-in-law; he also encouraged me to keep living the way I had been without turning to anger. Also, he added, I should make more contributions to charity in order to eliminate any negative effects from my past. Thus, with both, my life might have a turning point in the future. I was doubtful, but, I did not have any better solution, so I took his advice. I attempted to take a part of my monthly salary out to help needy people. After a year of my continuous effort, I had my uncle accompany me to see my husband. Miraculously, he came home with me, and he kept coming back home every two or three weeks. Unfortunately, he still acted like a stranger to me. I tried to strike up a conversation with him, but his attitude was awful. This went on for a year. I went to see my instructor again. Once again, he encouraged me to continue my efforts without stopping. With patience and confidence, things would turn around soon. So I increased my contribution to NT\$2,000 each month. A month later, my husband's attitude gradually improved; he became kinder and kinder to me and finally he acted just like he did in our early marriage days.

I often heard many wives quarrel and fight with their husbands once they found about their affairs. Not only do their physical and emotional conditions break down, but also the family is broken into pieces. It is a real pity to have this unfortunate result. My marriage was once on the edge; however, through my best effort, I saved it. I should thank for the blessing from Buddha and Budhisattvas. I should also ask myself why my marriage was saved. Is it related

to the fact that I had been continuously making lots of contributions?

There is something else I shall never forget. One midnight, in 1990, my husband, children and I went to my mother's house. On the way back, I urged my husband to speed up for I needed to use the restroom. As we approached Suesang, a huge bang came out from our car, and we hit the highway fence and rolled over to the bottom of the ditch where the car flipped over. The four of us were stuck inside. My husband and I were trapped inside by the seat belts. Suddenly water started to gush in and quickly reached our heads. Fortunately, my husband and I did not lose consciousness. We struggled with the water for a while to keep from drowning. Meanwhile, my children in the back seat were crying for mom and dad; my husband asked them to get out of the broken windows carefully and try to get help from the highway. A few minutes later, three people came and pulled us out of the car wreck. We were completely soaked but very grateful that we were all right except for a little cut on my head.

My instructor used to tell us, "If you often make contributions, you can prevent or eliminate bad things from happening to you. A huge disaster will be reduced to a smaller one; and a small disaster will be eliminated." Now, I finally realize the meaning of his words. It was not empty talk for there is much truth in what he said.

5. I Came from the Road Full of Thorns

If someone asks me the question, "Can people change their fate through their own effort?" I can give a definite answer, "Yes. It is possible." This is the answer which I have spent half a century and paid the highest price to learn from my experience throughout my suffering in the past. I truly believe it from the depth of my heart. I am going to tell everyone this story from my own past.

I was born in a town in southern Taiwan. My father was a top millionaire in that town. He used to be a councilman during Japanese ruling over Taiwan. My brothers and sisters were well educated; some of them even went to Japan to study. My brother is a doctor, and I was fortunate to study in a highly respected teachers' college. People knew we were a prosperous family in the community. After I graduated from the teachers' college, I was assigned to an elementary school which was close to my hometown. Later, I met my husband. Because he was not a native Taiwanese, having little knowledge of our language, and had no money or property here, my father strongly objected our dating each other. But I wanted him to be my husband and said so to my family. The result was that my father got extremely angry. He warned me, "You must not get married with this 'no money' and 'no status' man, or I will disown you and you will not be allowed to come back home again." Despite my father's strong opposition and my family's attempt to dissuade me, I did not change my mind. When I got twenty, I went to court and married my husband. None of my family went to my wedding; none of them gave me a wedding gift. During the first nine years of our marriage, I never went back to my family. My husband tried many times to visit them, though, with gifts and a smiling face; however, his efforts were in vain. My father always gave

him an angry face and threw the gifts out of the door. This is something I feel so sad about.

Soon after my marriage, my first child was born. She was a smart and considerate girl, and we were happy to have her in our family. Two years later, my second child was born. When he was less than seven days old, we found out that he had a serious liver disease. The doctor said it was because of an obstacle in the gall tubes which caused Jaundice. His stool was white and his urine was yellow. The baby was not able to suck my milk either. As the situation went on, the doctors shook their heads, even urged me to give him up, for it would be highly expensive to bring up this sickly child. At that moment, I was so worried about my son that I could not think of any solution.

Later, I went to a fortune teller, asking about this baby's future. I was told that he "had got into the hole of the tomb" and it would be difficult for him to live on unless his ancestors had accumulated some merit for him. I was so shocked by the fortune teller's words; however, I was determined to keep my baby alive. Later, a friend of mine told me that clam broth might be a good substitute for mother's milk which was good for this kind of medically helpless baby. But, as my baby drank the clam broth, his condition became worse. Another enthusiastic colleague then took us to see a Fujo herbal doctor. As the herbal doctor took a look at my baby, he shook his head and said he could not treat him at all; however, when I begged him for help, he agreed to treat my child although without much hope. I followed his instruction and boiled special herbs for my son who seemed to look a little better; his urine odor was not as strong as before. Later on, I fed him corn beard juice which my friend advised and he became much better. Due to the huge medical bills, I ran out of savings and accumulated lots of debt. My husband and I almost gave away

our whole monthly salary to pay our debts to our dear colleagues. Fortunately, some of our colleagues understood our situation quite well; they were willing to lend us more money to meet our basic needs at home.

A few years later, when my second child returned from kindergarten each day, his limbs had some wounded spots, and he fell easily for no special reason. His fingers also had the tendency of getting rotten due to his sucking behavior. I became worried about his condition once again. A friend of mine suggested that I checked my child in a big hospital. So I took him to a famous surgical hospital in Kaoshung. After an exam and X-ray, the doctor said it might be possible that a virus had invaded my son's bones. He suggested my son's legs should be put into casts at once, in order to let them be calciumized. I did not understand but agreed to the doctor's treatment. After my son had been casted, he had antibiotics injected each day to destroy the virus. A week later, my son's condition became worse again. His stool was filled with blood. I became nervous then; for I had been leery of the doctor's treatment from the beginning. I immediately asked the doctor to take the casts off. When he did, I found that my son's legs had changed drastically in size. I immediately took him out of the hospital and went to a recommended hospital, for I heard that there was a famous doctor who specialized in this kind of bone disease. There I begged the doctor to treat my son. After his first check up, he said my child's condition was rare; he had to take samples from his bone to study. The operation began immediately, but it lasted for eight hours. My husband and I waited patiently outside the operation room. Later, the final result did not show any virus in the dark spot of my son's bone. We were relieved at the news because it meant he could be treated with physical therapy. From the worry, though, my husband's hair had turned

completely gray during that long waiting period that night.

Later, I took my son to a hospital in Kaoshung for treatment for several months. It was so difficult for me. I always wondered if it was because my son had drank too much clam broth and herbal medicine instead of my milk, so he would break his arms and legs so easily when he fell down during his play. The injured spots were difficult to heal. Since then, all of his limbs have been broken many times and even a piece of stainless steel remains inside his body. Those wounded spots reminded me of all the pain and suffering. I always ask myself, "Why do I have a seriously ill son whose care is costing me my savings?" Tears fall down my cheeks as I recall my painful past.

In addition to my second child, my third child also gave me lots of trouble. The boy was intelligent with good grades at school; however, after he enrolled in a top high school, his grades fell because he had a girlfriend. He could not pass the Joint College Entrance Exam although he tried many times. He went to tutoring classes to study for the exam again after his military service. I was worried about his academic future. In order to know his chances of passing the upcoming test, I went to Minshung to see a famous blind fortune teller. I had to wait two days before my turn. The fortune teller told me directly that my third child was like "a rhinoceros looking at the moon" and "soy sauce in the black bottle," meaning that his fortune was blurred and hard to see. He also said that he might not pass the upcoming exam without luck. Additionally he mentioned that "his academic luck has passed and currently he won't have any scholastic future at all." Hearing the fortune teller's words, I almost fainted. Why should I suffer so many painful things? I had no choice but to go to some temples for Buddha's and Budhistattvas' blessing. One time, I went to Ksitigarbharaja Budhistattva Temple. By chance, I saw a

book on the shelf. As I finished reading the little book, a ray of hope came upon me. I started to think, if making contributions had worked for so many people, why shouldn't I give it a try? Since I had tried fortune tellers and prayed for blessings, why shouldn't I replace the old ways of trying "cause and effect" in order to switch my fate? After making up my mind, I started to make contact with some charity organizations printed in the back of the book, and I contributed a certain amount of money. Although the amount of my contribution was limited, I felt joyful all the time after making such an offer. Soon afterwards, many "miracles" did happen to my family. One of the happiest thing was that my third child passed the Joint College Entrance Exam that year and was easily accepted into a national university. His achievement had overthrown the blind fortune teller's prophecy. On the basis of this positive encouragement, I gained more confidence in making contributions; I even became involved in more charity activities. I put my family members' names on the list to make contributions for many years, and I found everything began going more smoothly for everyone. My first child went to teach in a teachers' college after her graduation from a vocational college. Later, she went to study in the United States with government financial aid. Recently she has obtained her doctoral degree in music. My second child has become healthier and healthier. Lately, he found a very compassionate wife to take care of him; my third child went to the United States to study after his graduation from college. Furthermore I am happy about my purchase of real estate. I used to join my friends to purchase some property, although financially my budget was tight. A few years later, the price of real estate went up, and many people could no longer afford it. I was fortunate to have my own property; it is because I had a wonderful chance to purchase a house

right before the price went up. I thank Buddha and Budhis-tattvas for their blessing. I often ask myself why my life changed so much from a nightmare to a life of prosperity. What is the main factor? I think the key lies in "with people's power, it can overcome fate's will." One should have a strong will to face reality and overcome difficulties with courage and confidence; meanwhile, long-term effort of making contribution is not a superstitious belief at all. This is what I have learned from my past experience.

6. A Professor's Child

I have a very close friend teaching in a national university. Recently, he told me a true life experience about cause and effect. Below is his story.

I have two children, a boy and a girl. My boy was highly interested in drawing when he was in elementary school but his grades were not high. As he went into middle school, he was assigned to a regular class after an evaluation which showed he was of average achievement and intelligence. His self-confidence and self-esteem were low compared with the other students in the honor classes. My wife and I were sad for his overall situation. To help him study more effectively, we went to ask about tutoring school and the best teacher in town, and had him go there to study. However, his achievement did not go up as we expected. Later, we paid high tuition to hire a "famous private tutor" to come to our house to help him study; however, the result was quite the same. We were so worried about his academic future, especially my wife. She then heard that there was an elder who had supernatural power and excelled in looking at people's karma; besides, he could "light up people's wisdom." She went to visit him and asked him for help. The kind elder agreed to help due to my wife's sincere request. He came to our house each morning at six o'clock to help my child "light up his wisdom;" however, three months later, my child's achievement and intelligence remained as before. My wife then heard that chanting a particular sutra was so powerful that it could make a wish come true by chanting it many thousand times. So she did that. Each day, she went in front of the Buddha and Budhisattvas and chanted the sutra from her heart. Of course, she had been sacrificing the time of watching television with her family, and she kept chanting for

two more months and then finished her commitment. She then contributed money to print many thousands of copies of the sutra. However, her wish seemed to be too far away to reach. As the time for the Joint High School Entrance Exam approached, our worries increased. What should we do? At that moment, I found some books talking about the importance of making contributions to needy people to help them reach their hopes and make their wishes come true. I also thought of the old saying, "The family which has been accumulating merit shall have happiness and treasure at the end," which might have some value to those people who believe so. I was worried, though, that making financial contribution of money would be difficult for us, so I discussed the idea with my wife. She agreed to it, although she knew we had a very tight budget. After a few contributions, we found our son's achievement test score seemed to improve a little. Due to this encouragement, we engaged in contributing more often and his achievement test score went up even higher. At the final announcement of the Joint High School Entrance Exam, he got accepted by his second choice of high schools. After high school, he got accepted into a national junior college. Many people thought of his achievement as an unbelievable miracle. He was invited back to his junior high school to talk to students on the school's home coming day. He often encouraged students who were not in the honor classes not to give up hope for their future.

After my son graduated from the junior college, he went into military service. My wife was worried again about his well-being during the first step of military training and the later assignment; she was also worried that he might be sent to Kingmen or Martsu Island to serve his term. Because we had no relatives or friends in the military, we could not find any one to look after him. Again, what

should we do? I discussed with my wife about our son's situation; we agreed that it might be good to do the same thing that we did when he was struggling with his Joint High School Entrance Exam. We then used his name to make lots of contributions.

We went to visit him during his dismissal time of the first step of the military training. He mentioned that the military training was very strict; however, a few weeks later, his commander discovered his talent in calligraphy and art, and asked him to make posters for military propaganda. Thus, he could get away from the military field training. Right before his first step of training ended, the new military trainees would be allocated to different locations. My son told me later that one third of the trainees were sent to off-shore islands. At first, he was allocated to be a paratrooper. However, on the second day, the military training center received an order from the Ministry of Defense which said that they had to select twelve new soldiers to serve in the Ministry. After the process of selection, my son ended up on the list. From then on, he served in the compound close to the Ministry of Defense, the President's house, and other related area. Many of the old chief petty officers used to tell him and his colleagues, "Those of you who were selected to come here to serve were lucky because your ancestors accumulated lots of merit for you. You folks are extremely lucky to be here." Why should my son be so lucky? I think not only because of his individual qualifications but also because of our contributions for him.

Although he was cared for by his commander and colleagues during his military service, one incident happened to him. One day, he lost his military identification card. He could not find it, although he had searched for it in each drawer and even came home to look for it. His commander found out this, and asked him to find it

within a certain time; otherwise, he would be punished. Because of this, all of us were so worried but could not find any solution. I decided to contribute NT \$6,000 to a charity by his name, using the money which I had just earned from an academic conference. I also prayed for his well-being, hoping he would escape the punishment. Later, my son called back and mentioned that originally he was prepared for punishment at the last day of the deadline; however, as the last mail came in, there was a letter for him. Curiously, he opened the envelope and found his identification card inside. He was extremely thankful to the stranger who sent the card back in time so that he did not have to receive a punishment. It was an incredible incident.

After my son retired from the military service, he went to a tutoring school to study for the upcoming exam to get into university. Because he was not a high achiever in the past and there were so many people registered to take the exam, we were worried again. Based on our past experience, our making contributions along with his trying his best seemed to be an effective way to help him succeed. I also considered that I would rather invest my children's future through accumulating lots of merit for them instead of leaving them a huge amount of money. It would also be more meaningful for them to be blessed with physical and psychological health. They would be more beneficial to society at large as well. In order to fulfill my wish, I was determined to make contributions each month to help him by tightening up our budget. My wife chanted sutras and prayed for him; she even went to get help from a master. A year later, my son took many exams. He passed only one and was placed on the waiting list for that university. He put all of his hope on that university, but he needed to wait until all students finished the registration to know whether he would have a chance to get in. When he still did not

receive any notice after the registration deadline, he became nervous and very disappointed. He was worried about his unknown future. At that moment, we could not give him any effective advice; we all felt his pain. However, one day after school started, a telephone call from that university notified him that a student just cancelled his registration and therefore that space was available for him. What a joyful miracle to us! This opportunity not only changed his future, but cleared up the gloomy atmosphere in my family. Once again, I realized the true meaning of the old saying, "If people make contributions to accumulate merit, they would receive good fortune in the end."

I did not study very much about Buddhism; I also did not quite understand how to cultivate in myself the right practice to become a Buddha or enter into the western heaven of Amitabha. However, during these past years, I have continuously experienced a clear and doubtless understanding, which is that if a person makes contributions to society through a long-term effort, Buddha won't forget his effort and will double it in return. With this returned effort, we could prevent horrible things from happening to us or change our situations and have our dreams come true. This statement has become my unshakable philosophy.

7. An Elementary Teacher's story

Is there any "cause and effect" phenomenon existing in the world? Some people suspect it, while others consider it only a belief in Buddhism without any evidence at all. However, I feel that existence of "cause and effect" through an unbelievable experience I had.

I am currently an elementary teacher. The reason I can keep my meaningful position is due to my consistently helping children in poverty in my past. I became a certified teacher because of this unbelievable reason. Below is my true story.

More than thirty years ago, after I graduated from high school, I temporarily obtained a substitute teaching position in a very remote elementary school. This small school only had twenty children ranging from seven to nineteen years of age. Although their ages and learning levels were extremely different, I tried my best to teach them; I even sacrificed my weekends and holidays to tutor my students. I considered my students as my brothers and sisters; they all thought of me as a family member. During this period, I found an especially short child suffering from poor nutrition. Although he was nineteen years old, he looked like he was only seven or eight. After a home visit, I found out his mother had run away from home, and his father was sick and could not get a job to support his family. The boy was often hungry; he was sometimes even close to death. I felt so sorry for him that I decided to let this family receive my allowance of rice each month; meanwhile, I also urged people to help this unfortunate family. Some time later, a kind-hearted person promised me he would help this child and the family, which eliminated my burden, and I was happy for them as well. After two months of substitute assignment, I lost my job. I went back

to Minshung, my old home, and did not know what to do. Sometimes I wondered what my future would be and felt pessimistic about my life. However, later on, I dreamt that I was standing in a very misty mountain alone. Without direction, I wandered everywhere and could not find a way to go down the mountain. At that moment, I felt someone grabbing my arm. With fear I asked, "Who are you? Are you a ghost? Why do you grab me?" Although I could not see anything, I could hear someone's answer, "I am the mountain god here. Because you have a kind heart and you rescued a poor family before, your reward is unlimited. I am taking the Buddha's order to help you go down the mountain." Surprised, I woke up at that time.

That morning, while walking down the street, I met a good friend of mine. As soon as he saw me, he said, "Right now Taipei Teachers' College is recruiting people interested in becoming teachers, especially high school graduates. Have you registered for that?" I was so surprised as I had been looking for this kind of chance because it was the easiest way to go for my future. I asked him about the deadline for registration and knew it was the last day. I then looked at my watch; it was 10:00 AM. I hurried back home and rode my bike to Chiayi train station. There, I found the 11:10 train had just left; if I took the next one, I would not arrive in time for registration. Frustrated, I went into a soybean milk store for a snack. There was a newspaper delivery truck parked by the store. The driver told people that he was leaving for Taipei. When I heard that, I thought that was my best chance to get to Taipei. I then asked the driver for a ride. He hesitated, but finally agreed to take me.

Later, however, I found that I left school diploma at home. I begged the driver to stop by my house and let me get it, but he insisted keeping going without stopping. I

was upset because unless some kind of miracle happened, I would not be able to register after all.

As we got to Shinju suburb, there came a strange sound and then the truck stalled on the road. I worried I could not catch the upcoming deadline. Fortunately, a repair shop was close by, and the owner was kind enough to fix the truck first after knowing our predicament. In one hour, the truck was fixed, but then the driver found it was out of gas. So he borrowed a bike and a gas tank to go downtown for gas. It was near 6:00PM by the time we reached Taipei. After expressing my gratitude to the truck driver, I started to look for a taxi. Coincidentally, someone just had held a taxi right besides me. As he saw my anxious face, he asked me what happened; surprisingly he invited me to ride with him to the registration site. As I reached the site and intended to pay for the fare, he said he would take care of it later, which made me appreciate his kindness. I then dashed into the registration office. The time was 6:00 PM. The officers were ready to leave. As they saw me running towards them, they explained that the time was over and they could not do anything to help me. I was devastated and begged them to do me a favor, since I had barely managed to get here from Minshung. These people would not listen to me! But one of them, out of his curiosity, asked me about the big bus accident that happened at Minshung two days ago (July 1, 1972). He asked me whether I saw that full-loaded bus collide with a train. I told him I passed by the scene two hours after the accident and saw the huge mass of bus pieces and body parts, which was so awful to see. While I told them this story, they became so interested that they changed their mind and told me that they would take my registration anyway. When they asked for my high school diploma, I told them I forgot it in my rush to get here. They did not know what

to do because they could not process my registration without diploma. I begged them again to trust me, promising I would send it to them later. Suddenly, one of the men said, "Let's believe him this time, shall we?" It was a miracle to be able to register to take that test.

A month later, when I took the exam, I passed it. I then formally entered the teaching field and became a certified teacher. Looking at my past, I should attribute my current achievement to the series of marvelous events and many key people who had helped me in need, or I wouldn't have been here today.

Recently I read Professor Wun Ho's series of books regarding the teachings of karma. I deeply consider that the statement "good behavior will bring reward" is not empty talk, nor a superstitious belief. It is absolutely true.



8. He Escaped the Calamity Of A Burning Bowling Alley

Not long ago, I received a call from a reader in Taipei, introducing himself as Huang, who is the head of Daily Gracious Heart. As he knew I was the author of The Incredible Phenomenon of Karma, (Cause and Effect) he was delighted to tell me an incredible occurrence which took place recently. Below is part of his story.

"I was so encouraged by your book last year as I read it by chance. I then decided to gather my friends to contribute to the society." After several discussions, we decided to gather funds to reprint the book, The Incredible Phenomenon of Karma, (Cause and Effect) in order to promote the teachings of karma in our society. We would then establish a charity organization, Daily Gracious Heart, which would require each member to contribute NT \$200 dollars monthly for emergency funds. Later on, each time, as a member discovered any cases in the local communities, we would get together to investigate the cases and give the needy people a hand. This is all we did. Although the distributed money was not very much, everyone was delighted and experienced the meaning of "the basis of happiness comes from helping people" and "giving is better than receiving."

About a half year later, many of our members had experienced some incredible incidents. Mr. Lo, for example, had approximately lost NT\$ 200,000 dollars between February and April. Later, a sum of NT\$4,000 dollars Mr. Lo planned to use for contribution was missing again. Based on some hints, they thought the thief might be an insider. Mrs. Lo then burned incense and prayed to Buddha, hoping He could find the suspect. After they called the roll and threw lots, one of the names on the list had shown up "the

yin-yan sign" three times. From there, they knew who the suspect might be. Later, as the suspect realized the evil of his crime (perhaps he even blamed himself consciously), his relatives came unexpectedly to apologize to Mr. Lo's family, and returned portion of the money as well as other valuables.

Additionally, Mr. Lo's second son was just dismissed from the military service recently. He occasionally went bowling with friends at Jongho City. He always bowled at the number 2 bowling lane which was located at the rear of the building, and played ten games and by then it would be midnight. One night in early May, he went to the bowling hall as usual. As he went through the sixth game, he did not feel well and left the bowling place at 2:30 AM. At noon, as he watched the TV news, he saw a stunning report that the bowling alley he went to had caught fire at 2:50 AM that morning. Not only was the whole building destroyed, but also twenty young people were killed in the fire. He was astonished and felt incredibly lucky that he had left the building only twenty minutes before the fire started.

Here is another case in point. Another member, Mr. Huang, tried to remodel his old home, but his remodeling was considered illegal; much trouble came to him. His mother was very worried about this. Later, he joined our contribution activities. He then had the city inspectors reinspect the building. This time, the city officers determined the remodeling of his old home was legal after all; therefore, the government dropped the charge against him. He was so relieved and his family was happy once again. Another time, Mr. Huang drove to Longsan Temple. He accidentally hit an old lady. He stopped his car and went out to see her, thinking that she might be seriously injured. However, she was not hurt. This also made him feel greatly

relieved.

Mr. Jo, another of our members, became more and more prosperous after joining in our contribution activities. Even though the economy slumped, his business continued doing well, and he continued to receive a great amount of foreign orders, which made his competitors very jealous.

As for myself, I climbed to the top of my water tank on the second day of the Chinese Lunar New Year. As I was descending, I injured my spinal cord and was in severe pain. I could only lie in bed for two days. However, on the fourth day in the early morning, a strong light shone upon me while I was in deep sleep. As I opened my eyes, I saw the light become as large as a car wheel shining everywhere, which astonished me but also brought me joy. At that moment, I dared not get up to see what it was because of my back pain. I stayed in bed and watched as the bright wheel became larger and larger; it lasted a very long time before it vanished. That moment, due to extreme curiosity, I jumped out of my bed without considering my pain. It was then that I realized my pain was completely gone and my body was totally relaxed and felt light. Later, I walked to Longsan Temple to worship Buddha in gratitude.

Everything I said here is absolutely true. At this time, we all deeply believe the statement that making contributions and helping people not only can benefit the whole society but also can benefit ourselves, for it can help us escape potential danger, and this is the way we can change our fate.

9. The Sadness of Abortion and Rape

Not long ago, a reader sent me a long letter. In it, she described her experience in karma. Below is part of her story.

My family name is Tseng. I used to study in a graduate school of Chinese Literature. I have been married for three and a half years now, and I have a son. However, at one time I sought to become a nun. Because of this, my husband and I argued whenever I went to a temple. He always insisted that "cultivating oneself into the right practice can be done at home; it is not necessary to leave home and become a nun." But I was not of the same opinion as he was; therefore, I always quarrelled with him. When he became provoked, he sometimes threw things at me or would go out for a drink. My family life was truly in shambles.

At the end of last February, a painful event took place. One day, my husband went out to the hospital to take care of his father. At midnight, a burglar broke into our home. His face was covered and he wore black clothes, and carried a long knife. He saw that my young son and I were home alone; he attacked me, injured my head, and then raped me. He took my money and jewelry, and escaped. When my husband returned and found me, he was shocked and angry. He took me to the hospital for emergency treatment and to make sure I would be all right. After this incident, I always prayed for Buddha's and Budhisattvas' blessing, hoping I would recover physically and emotionally from the trauma. However, after a half year, I was still experiencing nightmares. I not only dreamt that the burglar came to rape me again, but also mistook my husband's intimate action for that of the burglar. I then started to fear all males.

Later, we moved to the countryside to help me forget that awful incident. I started to chant sutras and faithfully worshiped Buddha everyday. After a while, I finally was able to go to a temple I had been longing to visit long time ago. Luckily I met the master there who was very compassionate about my unfortunate past, and said he would like to help me. He asked me to burn incense in front of the Buddha and Budhisattvas and sincerely call for my enmity to part. At that moment, when I was in a sincere and regretful state of mind, a baby girl spirit attached herself to one disciple's body. She said that she was looking for me and was filled with hate. She said she was my aborted child, which was a shock to me. (Later, I recalled and remembered that one time, right after we got married, I took birth control pills for the fear of having a child too early. Thus, a baby was aborted.) The baby girl then said, for the revenge of my heartlessness, she often made my boy cry very long each time. No wonder I always had a doubt why he cried so hard without any reason, and why he was always so naughty. When he went out to play by himself, he liked to play with dangerous objects; occasionally he went to the street alone without adults; and sometimes he was so unrestrained that he hit me as well. Therefore, I often spanked him, as I lost my patience. However, once he had the chance to see or meet masters or hear the Buddha's name, he seemed to calm down and was more peaceful than before, which for him, was so unusual.

The next spirit who appeared was an elder female. She said I had been a male in one of my previous lives. She originally planned to be single and leave home to become a nun. However, I had raped her during that life and made her pregnant, and she had a son later. She died with a broken heart. For her revenge, she often followed me and blocked my way of cultivating myself into the right prac-

tice. For example, I intended to reach Buddha but seldom had the chance to meet masters and listened to Buddha's teaching. Also, she made my marriage full of trouble and then guided the burglar to rape me, which severely damaged my body and soul. From then on, I deeply believed that the incident I had experienced was caused by the karma I made in my prelife. Because of the attack, I used to get very depressed and consistently complained that Buddha and Budhisattvas did not bless me, and asked why the police did not work harder to catch that burglar and bring him to justice. However, as I had learned the meaning of karma, I then swore in front of the Buddha and Budhisattvas: I would like to devote myself to practicing the rules that "every bad thing one must not do" and "every good thing one must do;" I would like to make people surrounding me all believe in karma and understand Buddha's teachings; I would also like to treat my husband and my child with a gracious heart instead of anger. After swearing my words, I found many incredible things began to take place in my family life. In the past, my husband was easily jealous. He always suspected I was disloyal to him. If I talked with a male friend a little too long, his gaze became hostile. I never mentioned any male friends in front of him for fear he would tackle me with multiple questions. However, it is totally different now. He does not give me any suspicious looks, no matter whom I talk with. If I talk with someone regarding Buddha's teaching, he stands aside and listens attentively. Additionally, he does not restrain me from making contributions; instead, he encourages me to do it. Lastly he does not stop me from visiting masters any more, and I have more chances to listen to Buddha's teachings.

Right now we are all vegetarians. And my child is much more tender than before. Although he does not eat meat, he grows well and people say his face is one of forti-

tude and courage. Why do we experience such a dramatic change? The factors might be: 1) I am deeply regretful of the sins I had done in the past, and I do not want to make such mistakes again; 2) I am very seriously contributing to needy people and join related activities on a long-term basis; and 3) Due to my master's guidance, I attended ceremonies for releasing souls from sufferings several times, and turned the blessings to my enmity in the past lives to seek their forgiveness. From there, I have obtained their forgiveness and then freed myself from their torturing, and from now on, I am going to keep those lessons in mind and create a brighter future.

The master told me a story about a professor who had been suffering from back pain for thirty years. He could not heal it by taking any kind of Chinese herbal medicine or Western medicine; he even went to the United States but still could not find any cause for the pain. During these years, due to his pious belief, he came to an understanding of his source of pain. In his prelife, he was a high status officer in Ching dynasty. He used to employ cruel punishment to criminals, specifically beating their backs. Many of them died from this punishment. He also abused criminals through pressing their fingers and breaking legs. As enmities appeared, their hands were shaking and legs were barely able to move at all. They blamed Buddha's injustice, "Why can this kind of cruel person still be a professor?" The master then explained that a person's achievement of status and his fate in this life stems from the result of the causes in his prelives. We cannot focus on this person's behavior at a certain time only and omit the overall picture and following causes; therefore, we should not complain to Buddha and Budhisattvas and people in general or be of a jealous mind toward this person. However, to compensate for his wrongdoing and show his confession, the professor

knelt down to his enemies for their forgiveness, and promised the following things: 1) to set up memorial tablets and release their souls from suffering; 2) to contribute a huge amount of money for building a place of enlightenment; meanwhile, he would also make contributions to needy people; 3) to tell people of his inhumane behavior in order to warn people not to make such a mistake. After this communication, the professor's back pain slowly began to disappear with each passing day, which was an incredible experience to him.



10. The Influence that Making Contributions Has on Academic Study and Achievement Status

Recently, many enthusiastic readers have provided me with some experiences regarding karma. Below are some of them.

1) Ms. Jiang told me that Mr. Ho, one of her relatives, was very interested in becoming a certified Chinese herbal doctor. He had tried for ten years to take the examinations; however, each year, he failed to pass by a small margin (about 0.5 to 2 points). He was so frustrated and thought of giving up his dream many times. One day, Ms. Jiang heard about his struggles and suggested he attend our activities of making contributions to an orphanage for it might help him pass the examination. With his half-suspicious belief, he joined our activities. After three contributions, he passed the examination and became a certified herbal doctor. He was so delighted that he has since become one of our faithful members.

2) About two years ago, Ms. Chang sent a letter introducing herself as a student of a private nursing college. She mentioned that she purchased a book entitled Studying Method by chance in her freshmen year. She then followed the book's instruction to study and found the method was very effective to her; she achieved first place in her class. Later, one of her classmates told her that she should discard the book for it was so old. So she tossed it away; however, her grades began dropping immediately. She attempted to find the book but her effort was in vain. She could not locate it anywhere. Her anxiety grew as her grades fell further and further. At the end of the semester, she was forced to retake the same courses due to her low achievement. A year later, she became a sophomore, but then had to repeat that grade as well. Because of all this,

she was terribly disappointed and developed low self-esteem and low confidence. She then saw a book entitled The Incredible Phenomenon of Karma.(Cause and Effect) After reading it, she was filled with hope.

She sent me a letter, telling me her current situation and mentioned her regret at discarding the useful book. She also mentioned that she had searched for the book through all of the big and small libraries, all of the bookstores and publishers in Kaoshung, Tainan, and Taipei, and asked all of her classmates, friends, relatives, and teachers to help her find a copy of it. She was terribly worried about the consequences especially since she might need to spend eight, nine, or ten years to obtain a normal five-year college diploma. She asked me to assist her with this matter. I wrote her back a letter suggesting she open her mind without focusing on one person's studying method. If possible, she could review other types of studying methods from different books and get help from her school teachers or friends. She responded to my letter thereafter and stated that the missing book had the most effective and powerful way of influencing her studying effort; the rest of them were not useful and she did not want to use them either. She asked me to look for that book, Besides she wanted me to help her in her academic study. I attempted to search for that book for her, but the result was in vain. All I could do was to help her regain confidence. I suggested she take notes in classes, review the textbooks frequently, ask teachers for help, and discuss her work with classmates. Meanwhile, she also could save some of her allowance to make contributions. If possible, she could also chant Buddha's name and pray for blessings daily. She then told me that she was studying very hard for the fear of failing classes again; meanwhile, she tried to save money to give to the orphanage. Whenever she was free, she chanted Buddha's

name and prayed for blessing.

However, after a couple of months, her school performance was still the same. She did not know what to do. I told her that making contributions sometimes can bring forth a quick "miracle", but sometimes it doesn't. It depends on the big or small karma in front of each individual. If the karma is small, the contribution can eliminate our enmities and have the effective result soon; but, our karma may be big. To free ourselves from the trap, we need to put more effort into it and make more contributions on a long-term basis, and we should have the confidence not to give up half-way. If possible, I would give her a hand to help her. She then told me that she followed my suggestion, she studied harder and made contributions more. Her achievement then began to improve slightly but was still far away from the ideal. I told her to have a strong belief in the teachings that "people's mind can overcome god's will" and that "god helps those who help themselves," and "if we help ourselves and then people will help us." If we can make contributions on a long-term basis and put lots of effort into it, our sincerity will remove obstacles, and will obtain unexpected help. I often prayed for Ms. Chang and assisted her as I could. She told me that during these years, her grades were in crisis at first, then she could pass her classes and finally graduated. Later, as she recalled this period, she said it was so "fearful" and "hard to recall at all." Although she had paid the great price and hardship for her academic study, her result was sweet which was "not quite satisfactory but acceptable." She also had the strong belief in the meaning of "no pain, no gain" and "making contributions continually will obtain blessings and rewards later." As for me, I am so proud of her hard working in fighting the problems; meanwhile, I was so glad she could take my suggestion and practice them and change her

destiny later.

3) An enthusiastic reader often comes to my house to attend charity activities. Each time, she takes some of my books with her and distributes them to her colleagues, relatives, and friends. She also puts the rest of the books into hospitals, train or bus stations, temples, vegetarian restaurants, stores, or other public places for people to read. Recently, she told me that she and two other colleagues went to Taipei for an examination. She thought of bringing some books with them so that people could have more chances to read them and learn the meaning of karma. The other two ladies did not agree with her, thinking these books would be a burden to them; besides, it would be troublesome to distribute them later. However, she said that it would be very beneficial to the whole society, although bringing the books was really a burden. So she brought one hundred books with her to Taipei and brought them to a popular temple after her examination. After the announcement of the results of the examination, she found she passed it, while the other two failed.

On the basis of this experience, she strongly believes that "Buddha blesses the people who are righteous" and "A good heart will be rewarded in return."

11. The Consequences of Not Believing in Karma and Not Devoting Oneself to Filial Duty

Last May, a reader called me and told me she read four of my books regarding karma. She considered the meaning of karma very meaningful to her. Recently, there were some stunning incidents occurring in her hometown, which made her strongly believe that karma is not a superstitious belief at all.

She said the first incident occurred in her community was told by the victim's daughter. She said her friend's father once raped a girl in mainland China in 1945. Due to her noncooperation with him, he was angry and stabbed her to death. Later, they moved to Taiwan and her father was well for several decades. One time, by chance, her father and his friends had some conversation regarding karma. At that moment, he loudly claimed there was no evidence to prove the existence of karma, for he was the best example. He said he once raped a girl in mainland China in such a cruel way, and nothing bad happened to him since then. He totally disagreed with the so-called "superstitious" teaching of karma. That night, a female ghost with messy hair and a blue face appeared in front of him, saying, "I have been looking for the killer for forty years who raped and killed me; however, I never could be sure which one he was. Today, when I heard you admitted the crime, I realized it was you. You are too cruel without any conscience, and I want to take you to see the God of the Hell now." He was so frightened that he begged the apparition to forgive him; however, she did not change her mind. Suddenly he fell to the floor and died with blood oozing from his mouth. Several strips were found on his neck by his family later. This incident has become well known in the community.

Another true incident took place. A young woman was

married and had two children. When her husband died, she claimed that she would remarry for a better life due to the fear of loneliness. Because her husband was the only child of the family, her in-laws wished her to stay with them, so she could take care of not only the two sons but also the old couple on a daily and financial basis. However, she would not change her mind, although the old couple begged her and even knelt down in tears. She ran away with her young sons and went to marry an old man. The old couple got sick and passed away. Many of the neighbors cursed the woman so she could not be blessed. A year later, her first son gave a cry of "Wa" and fainted on the floor without any reason; although he was sent to a local hospital, they still could not save his life. The same thing happened to the second son the following year. The woman was frightened and extremely sorrowful for her lost sons. Furthermore, unfortunately, she found herself with cervical cancer. She had spent all of her savings on her medical expense, but her condition was getting worse. Incredibly, her cancer stayed in her for twenty-three years. Many doctors have sighed and can't understand how she can survive so long. It is a lesson of no devotion in filial duty, which we should really keep in mind.

12. Other Recent Examples of Karma

Recently I found several good examples to prove that making contributions can help people solve problems, eliminate trouble and bring about blessings.

This February, as schools started the spring session, I could occasionally hear a child screaming and crying in my neighborhood. Sometimes, I heard the mother blaming and beating the child. It lasted for almost a week. Due to my curiosity, I asked the mother why her child was unhappy each morning during the week. I finally knew that her youngest boy was ready for kindergarten this year but he only wanted to stay home with no desire to go to school, although the mother had tried coaxing, then beating him. She did not have any effective way to convince her boy at all. I then suggested she accompany him to the classroom the first few days, trying to help him familiarize himself with the new environment. If the child still was having problems adjusting to the new environment, she should discuss the issue with the child's teacher. However, the mother said she had tried the above methods many times, yet, nothing helped the child move forward. I then suggested that since she had tried many methods, perhaps she could try another way, such as making contributions, because it might have some effect on him. She mentioned that her husband liked to contribute funds for building temples and support many activities for a political party; he had done lots of good things, but she could not understand why her boy did not listen at all. I then asked her the name that her husband was making contributions for, and she answered that her husband always used his name. I told her that her husband had accumulated lots of blessings due to his enthusiasm in the social welfare; therefore, his business became very prosperous. However, because no contri-

butions were made in the child's name, the child's problem was not eliminated. To avoid the problem, they should contribute for the child, because, on the individual basis, "the one eats and the one's stomach is full only; the one makes the merit and the one will get the benefit only." The child obviously was not able to contribute himself, therefore his parents should use the child's name to make their contributions, in order to get a better life for their child. She then contributed NT\$1,000 dollars to a charity organization. Within the amount, half of it was for her boy and the rest of it was for the entire family. The miracle happened the next day. Her son went to school without any disobedience or crying, which was totally different from before. Since then, the child goes to school happily and comes back with smiles and likes to talk with his family and neighbors about school life.

Because of this experience, the child's mother makes contributions for the entire family each month, and the child is becoming nicer and more gentle. His school work is also improving.

Recently, I also received the letter below from a reader living in Kaoshung.

"Dear Professor Wun Ho: 8-27-1993

How are you? I have obtained many blessings since I read your book, The Incredible Phenomenon of Karma. (Cause and Effect) At first, I did not pay attention; however, out of curiosity, I tried several times to make contributions through reprinting your books. The result was incredible to me! I used to have some female problem, and I tried everything from Chinese herbal medicine to western medicine, with no improvement; however, after my contributions, the problem was quickly healed. Of course, I

took certain pills I purchased from the pharmacy store. I only took them three to four times and I could immediately feel the change, which amazed me. I believe that Buddha and Budhisattvas are blessing me.

I had a bike accident one time. I did not get hurt at all, but my front tire was distorted and out of shape. I was so fortunate to escape from that accident. Another wonderful thing is here. Our original senior class was reorganized through allocation. I was the first girl to be allocated to my new class. At that time, I was so nervous and the result was I was put into the class which lots of my classmates and I were craving to go. I was extremely lucky to have a placement in the teacher's class I really wanted to go. This was a kind of miracle and a blessing to me.

Besides that, I also contribute in my mother's name, and her illness is getting better each day. Oh, it is truly Amitabha! All I have written above is true without any fiction. I wish professor Wun Ho could publish my letter in your book, so that everyone can understand that "making contributions has lots of fun." Thanks.

Sincerely,

Your faithful reader

**PART II WHY MAN SHOULD PERFORM GOOD
AND PURSUE WISDOM**

Immanuel Kant, a famous philosopher, said "Thoughts without content are empty; intuitions without concepts are blind." It is similar to the meaning of making contributions. Here, we may adapt Kant's idea and say, "Talking of making contributions without action is empty; making contributions without wisdom is blind." If a person only talks about how to make contributions without doing it, his idea is empty. Conversely, if a person tries to make contributions without the guidance of wisdom, his effort is always temporary and considered thoughtless. Additionally, it is possible that he may go in the wrong direction toward the devil's world and not to be blessed. Socrates alluded to this when he said, "knowledge is virtue," for he meant that virtue should be built wisely on knowledge, so that no adverse result would occur later.

Recently, I have heard that some organizations collect millions of dollars from their members periodically and bring the funds to charity organizations, which is a good will in nature. However, some of the top managers in the organizations expect that Buddha will give them a huge amount of treasure as a reward for their long-term contributions. They often request lucky numbers from gods while they encourage their members to buy lotteries, in order to obtain the reward from Buddha. Thus many members have lost millions of dollars from these lotteries. On the other hand, some of the donors have hot tempers and are hard to get along with, they often quarrel with their colleagues or family members and scold or even beat their children. They also don't devote themselves to their filial duty. Some people are very enthusiastic about making contributions; however, once something bothers them, they keep continuously asking for Buddha's blessing, going to the fortune tellers to ask about their future and try to change their destiny, for they cannot solve the existing problems. Some

people kill animals and bring them to the altar to worship god and burn a huge pile of gold and silver paper money to show their piousness. Some people visit temples to worship Buddha all the time but don't want to take care of their children or their parents. These kinds of inappropriate behaviors exist everywhere. So it is important for people to know how to make contributions wisely and not to do it superstitiously.

During these years, I have studied many of the Buddhist Canonical literature and sutra, attended many venerables' seminars or lectures, and listened to venerables' tapes. I deeply believe that Buddha's teachings are scientific, rational and progressive and contain valuable knowledge and wisdom as a mirror for everyone to follow up regardless of time and space. With the advance of modern science, people seem to have become more and more materially-minded and have almost ignored the mental realm. Thus I like to share some of Buddha's teachings which can guide us toward peace, happiness, and salvation. Below are some of the Buddha's teachings.

** Someone asked Buddha(*) in Jetavana Grove, "What is the sharpest sword? What is the most poisonous drug?"

Buddha answered, "Blaming people maliciously is the sharpest sword, for it can hurt people's heart seriously; Greed is the most poisonous drug, for it can destroy a person's will without any treatment."

"Who will obtain the most merit in the world? Who will lose the most virtue?"

Buddha answered, "whoever makes contributions obtains

Buddha: "completely conscious, enlightened, and came to mean the enlightener." The one who "has achieved enlightenment, having discovered the essential evil of existence.

the most blessings, for God will give them double in return. Greedy people and people who do not return other people's help will lose the most virtue for their behavior of being unkind and unfriendly. They will be cast aside with disgust forever."

"What is the most powerful thing in the world? What is the most disgusting act in the world? What is the easiest way to destroy friendship?"

Buddha answered, "Making contributions is the most powerful act, for it can nurture all kinds of virtue. The most disgusting act is wrongdoing, for it makes people fall into the bottom of hell; meanwhile, jealousy and selfishness are the surest ways to destroy friendship in the world."

"What are the best goals to strive for in the world? How to obtain them?"

Buddha answered, "Virtue and wisdom are the best things in the world, for, with both of them, people won't fall into the realm of rebirth and can get away from sufferings and pursue happiness. To obtain virtue and wisdom, a person should make contributions, uphold precepts, and practice the doctrines physically and spiritually."

** One day, Buddha spoke to a person, who believed in another religion, about law of karma(*) and cause and effect(*). He asked, "Look at the farmers in front of the village. If they do not cultivate and plant seeds in spring but pray for harvest in front of gods, do you think they will have a good harvest time in fall?"

The person answered, "No. If they did not cultivate and plant seed in the field, they could not have any good crops in the field, although they pray for harvest so piously."

"Good. One more question. If the farmers are planting, irrigating, fertilizing, and weeding for the crops without praying for gods' blessing, will they still have a good harvest time later?"

"Yes."

"If a person doesn't have a right livelihood and doesn't want to work and exercise at all, do you think this person will change his life better and his body will become stronger later?"

"No, absolutely not."

"That's right. In fact, everyone and everything cannot go against the natural law of cause and effect; therefore, everybody should believe the statement that people's will can overcome gods' power. Our own fate is created by ourselves instead; we should not be superstitious to believe in paganism."

Law of cause and effect: Every cause has its effect, as every effect arises from a cause.

Karma: "Action, word, deed, moral duty", Karma is moral action which causes future retribution, and either good or evil transmigration.

** One time, Buddha spoke to his disciples, "Gamini, if you throw a big rock into the river, and people along the shores pray to Buddha for the rock to float on the water, do you think it is possible?"

The disciple answered, "Absolutely not."

Buddha said, "Here is same meaning. If a person does extremely bad things, even people pray for his well-being, it's impossible to let him go freely without punishment. This bad person not only will be punished by law, but also go in hell after death. Let me ask you another question. If you pour oil into a river and many people pray for the oil to sink underneath the water, do you think it is possible?"

"Absolutely not."

Buddha then said, "You are right. If a person does good deeds frequently, he cannot be hurt by anyone, for he will be respected and beloved and will go up to heaven after death. People doing bad things will go down to hell. It is the law of karma (cause and effect) which is definitely unchangeable."



** There are three kinds of Budhisattvas(*). The first kind is people with gracious heart but no wisdom of saving the others. They can't save or free themselves either; they are like people who cannot swim but like to rescue people from drowning. They cannot save other people freely; conversely, they drown as well. Therefore, to rescue people, we should have not only a kind heart but wisdom. The

Budhisattva: 'Enlightenment Being' is a being destined to Buddhahood, a Future Buddha.

second kind of Budhisattvas is on the opposite side of the first kind. They only pursue wisdom for their own rather than save people. They like to be alone and live in remote mountains to cultivate themselves in the right practice. These people will only become Arhans(*) instead of Buddha. Buddha considered that this type of people only recognize themselves without dedicating efforts for the public interest. They are just like "burned sprouts and planted darnels" in the field. The third kind of Budhisattvas consider both of virtue and wisdom evenly. They can "go up to pursue the Buddha's doctrine and go down to liberate people." Like a bird with both wings or a person with two legs, they can maintain equilibrium between two extremes and become Budhisattvas with virtue and wisdom. It is the best practice among the three kinds.



** One time, Buddha saw an eighty-year-old man building a villa without knowing that he was going to die soon. Buddha took pity on the old man. He went to see him and tried to remind him of doing good deeds which would return blessings for the rest of his life. However, as the old man met Buddha, he said that he had no time to listen to Buddha's teaching because he needed to supervise the construction. Buddha told him again that there was something more important to do and he should take time to study Buddhadharma(*). The old man still insisted on contin-

Arhan: Buddhist saint, who has attained liberation from the cycle of birth and death, generally through living a monastic life in accordance with the Buddha's teaching.

Buddhadharma: Buddha's teachings.

uing his busy schedule. He said he would like to listen to Buddha's teaching later. Buddha reminded him the third time that if he did not do it now, he might not have the chance to hear it later. The old man became angry at Buddha; he lost his patience and left for the construction site. Buddha sighed for a while and then continued on his journey. Ten minutes later, the old man was killed by a piece of wood dropped suddenly from the villa. His family moaned for his death. Buddha felt sorry for this old man who did not want to take time to listen to his teaching. On the way back, some non-Buddhists met Buddha and asked where he came from, and Buddha told them about the incident. After they heard the story, they bowed to Buddha to express their respect for his grace and wisdom. Buddha then spoke to his disciples, "The fool does not know the taste of the tea, no matter how much he drinks, whereas the wise man knows the tea immediately after a sip of it. The way of becoming a Buddha is similar to this."



** Rahula, Buddha's son, left home and became a monk with Buddha in his teenage years. He was very naughty and liked to lie to people. Due to his special relationship with Buddha, no one dared to correct his misbehavior. Gradually he had developed lots of bad habits. After knowing his son's behavior, Buddha decided to give him a lesson. One day, Buddha ordered Rahula to get a bucket of water to wash Buddha's feet. After his son washed his feet, Buddha asked, "Could we drink this water?"

"No we can't," Rahula answered.

Buddha said, "As the water gets dirty, it won't be clean

to people and will be disregarded. It means that if a person often lies to people, he won't be trusted again. Do you understand that?"

Rahula became ashamed of himself at that moment. Buddha then ordered him to dump out the water, and asked, "Could we use the bucket to wash rice or vegetables?"

Rahula answered, "No. Nobody will use it for washing rice and vegetables."

Buddha said, "That's right. If a person doesn't have a clean mind and talks without responsibility, he will never be respected. He will be treated by people as the bucket is used only for washing feet. If you don't correct your own wrongdoing, you will be just like this bucket." Buddha then kicked the bucket away and asked Rahula, "I just kicked the bucket away. Do you feel sorry for it?"

Rahula responded, "Not very much, because it is only a useless bucket."

Buddha said, "That's right. The same thing is here. If a person doesn't behave himself and likes to stay in the inferior position, he will disappoint people and people won't love him very much either." Buddha then turned the bucket upside down, and asked, "Do you think the upside bucket can carry water?"

"No", Rahula responded.

Buddha said, "Right, now you are just like this bucket. Your mind and mouth are not clean at all. You often talk without responsibility and mix up with black and white. You also try to make empty be full and make full be empty. You are not worthy to be loved at all."

Rahula became repentant after this lesson. He sincerely regretted what he did in the past and promised to correct his behavior. Later Buddha praised Rahula as Mahaynist(*).

Mahaynist: Bodhisattva who represents the Ultimate Wisdom of the Buddhas.

** Master Wen Chiao, a famous Korean zenist, said, "I once tried to put forth all of my best effort including supernatural power to prevent a flower from dying. I failed. I even tried to gather a hundred units of supernatural power to do it but still could not change the law of impermanence (*). Therefore, it is a fact that law of impermanence can not be eluded in this world; it can not be changed through your wish." From his words, we surmise that we can't change any signs that impermanence has brought to us: flowers will die eventually; human beings are in the process of birth, growth, decay and death; young and beautiful women will become older and uglier as time goes by; treasure, power, and status are like mist which will come and go at any time; there is no feast going forever; flowers can't keep the red color for a hundred days; and people can't keep their luck for a thousand days. Some people attempt to use ubiquitous supernatural power to stop the law of impermanence; the result is in vain.

For example, as king of Viadurya attacked the Sakya clan, Maudgalyana used supernatural power to place hundreds of Sakya's men and women into a bowl and put it in heaven, so that the Sakya clan might continue. After the war, he opened the bowl and found there was nothing left but bloody water. Although Buddha had six ubiquitous supernatural powers, he still suffered from severe back and stomach pains and passed away at eighty. Maudgalyana, the first Buddha's disciples, had ubiquitous supernatural power but was killed by his enemy. Therefore, ubiquitous supernatural power is less powerful than "karma" producing evil fruit. The wise way to cultivate ourselves into the right

Impermanence: all things are impermanent from the cycle of being born, becoming old, getting sick(or the change of itself) and dying towards the end of the life journey; they can not stop the cycle at any moment.

way of life is to practice truth, justice, happiness, kindness, and compassion. We should believe that "good begets good and bad begets bad" and "reap what we sow." We must not take a short cut or tricky way to practice our belief; otherwise we may regret later.



** One day, a non-Buddhist insulted Buddha. Buddha kept in silence without talking back. Later a disciple asked Buddha, "Someone just criticized you a few minutes ago. Why didn't you talk back to him?"

Buddha asked the disciple, "If someone gives you a gift but you don't want to accept it, what will you do with the gift?"

The disciple answered, "The sender should bring the gift back."

Buddha said, "That's right. If someone blames you but you keep silent without talking back, then those bad words will be brought back by this person. Therefore, silence sometimes is the best solution."

Another day, Buddha went with his disciples to a local market. They saw a fish booth. Buddha asked Ananda to take out the grass underneath the fish and smell it.

Ananda said, "It smells fishy."

Then they walked into an incense store. Buddha asked Ananda to borrow a bag used to carry incense, and smell the bag as well.

Ananda said, "It smells very good."

Buddha then spoke to his disciples, "An object smells fishy because it is in contact with fish. Conversely, if it is

placed with incense, it will smell as good as the incense. Although we place the object there for a short time, the odors are totally different. It is the same as choosing our friends. If we make friends with good people, we will be as good as they are; on the contrary, if we stay with bad people, we will be as bad as they are. It is very important to choose friends carefully."



** One day, a Brahamna (the highest rank of the monks in ancient Indian society) asked Buddha, "How do you explain the fact that people belong to various ranks as they were born, and the statement that people are equal?"

Buddha answered, "Although you are a noble and are luckier than other people, there are some questions I would like to ask you here. Can you suffer less from your karma result than the ordinary people? Can you escape from the cycle of birth, growth, aging, illness and death towards the end of the life journey? If you do evil things, will you get a special privilege from God due to your noble status so that your karma can be eliminated?"

The Brahamna admired Buddha's answer. He bowed to Buddha in gratitude and became a Buddhist.

** One day, a disciple asked Buddha, "Lokajyestha(*), could you use one sentence to summarize all of your teachings?"

Buddha answered, "Yes. All of my teachings can be summarized into a sentence, which is 'you must not cling to being.' Here, the so-called "cling to being" means foolishly and unreasonably sticking to one's opinions or habit. People who cling to themselves are unchangeable, can not be objective, and can't open their minds to any of others' thoughts. In the natural world, there are some animals that must eat certain types of food to live; for example, silkworms only eat mulberry leaves, and pandas only eat a certain kind of bamboo leaves. These special habits have reduced their chance to survive in the world. Therefore, as Buddha just obtained his enlightenment beneath the Bodhi Tree, he roared a declaration as solid as diamond, "All the living beings on earth are equal and have the Buddha's Nature; they can't obtain enlightenment due to delusion and clinging to themselves."

"If we can free ourselves from this clinging, our mind will be peaceful and everything will be in harmony." In Diamond Sutra, it preaches that "One's mind should cling to nowhere." "If a Buddhisattva doesn't cling to what he is doing while practicing giving, his virtue is unlimited." When a person looks for the best way to discard his discriminating thoughts such as the existence of one's self, living things and the universal itself, then he is able to attain wisdom. Wisdom will help us get rid of the "clinging" habit and not create karma again. It is like "lighting a lamp which can drive away thousand years of darkness."

Lokajyestha: Lord of the world.

** Buddha believes that all types of knowledge in the world come together to a certain degree, whereas the knowledge of Buddha's teaching is more integrated and holistic because each subject in science or social science, e.g., physics, chemistry, political science, psychology, and so on, specializes in a very specific field. This type of knowledge will lead people to have a mind that makes distinctions. People will lose themselves in the world of knowledge, sometimes even to the point of being controlled by heretical views. On the other hand, the knowledge of Buddha's teachings teaches us how to eliminate our egotism and be free from clinging. The Buddha's teaching emphasizes compassion, kindness, the law of cause and effect, impermanence, and conditional cause(*), etc., which guides people to obtain true freedom and joy.



** Buddha once spoke to his disciples about how to take good care of their parents. He specified that everyone should devote himself to the filial duty toward parents with a gracious and appreciative mind. Everyone should make his parents feel proud of his achievements, for they gave him life, raised him with endless love and effort. They are the most important benefactors in his life, and he should return his parents' generosity. Everyone should never do anything against his parents; for that would be the most sinful action.

Conditional cause: a coopting cause, the concurrent occasion of an event as distinguished from the proximate cause.

Buddha once mentioned, "As I recall in my past lives, I was an emperor, a king, and right now I am a Buddha. The only reason I have such good fortune is because I have been sincerely respectful to my parents in my past lives. Therefore, all of you must remember that being filial to your parents is the best virtue in your lives."

There is an old saying that says "the first merit among hundreds of them is being devoted to parents." On the contrary, if a person neglects his filial responsibilities, he will obtain the most sinful punishment. In Buddhism, killing parents is the most severe sin among five rebellious acts; people who commit the five rebellious acts will suffer in hell after death. Therefore, if a person is not filial to his parents, he can't make up his sin even if he has been making lots of contributions by all means.



** There are some good references in Sixth Patriarch Zen Sutra. Below is part of them.

Buddha said the Western Pure Land(*) is definitely not far away from here, and it is about a hundred and eight thousand miles away. If a person commits ten evil acts (killing, stealing, adultery, lying, double tongue, coarse language, sexual misconduct, greediness, anger, perverted views) and eight improper practices (improper view, improper mentality, improper speech, improper action, improper living, improper effort, improper attention, and

Western Pure Land: Generic term for the realms of the Buddhas. It is "a paradise realm of the spirit world".

improper concentration), the Western Pure Land will seem very far away from him. If a person can rid himself of the ten evil things first, he will reach a hundred thousand miles; if he can rid himself of the other eight improper practices, he will go eight thousand miles further. If we can keep our human nature and our thoughts straight forward, we can go to the Western Pure Land very easily and see Amitabha(*) Buddha in a second. On the contrary, if we use our mouth to cultivate ourselves in the right practice but still have evil thoughts in minds, how can Amitabha Buddha welcome us to the Western Pure Land? All in all, if we truly understand the enlightenment of not clinging to things and keep it in our mind, and remove improper thought, we could see the Western Pure Land in a short time. If we don't know the way of enlightenment but depend on chanting sutras to seek a better future life, how can we get there quickly? Therefore, "To be a Buddha is to seek our human nature itself; don't look for it from the external world." "Confused by our nature is all of the mortals; enlightened by nature is Buddha. Guan Shyihin Budhisavatta is the symbol of compassion and mercy, Dah Syh Jyh Budhisavatta is the symbol of giving. Sakya Buddha is the symbol of pure mind; Amitabha Buddha is the symbol of being righteous." "Clear up the perception! If we conduct good deeds frequently, heaven will be there for us." "If we want to cultivate ourselves in the right practice, doing it at home will enable us to obtain enlightenment. It is not necessary to make it in temples. If we are able to conduct the right practice at home, it is like people with gracious heart; if we can not cultivate ourselves even we are

Amitabha(Amita): Amitabha is the most commonly used name for the lord of Infinite Light and Infinite Life. Presides over the Western Pure Land, where anyone can be reborn with an utterly sincere recitations of His name at the time of death.

in temples, it is like people with evil heart. If we keep purifying our minds, we will reach the Western Pure Land through our own nature."

"Good medicine tastes bitter. Good advice sounds unpleasant. Correcting mistakes can beget wisdom; defending wrong doing is not unwise. We should help people with our best effort in our daily lives and do good things to benefit the society in general. Obtaining enlightenment doesn't stem from making contributions through money; it lies in our mind and need not be sought through the external world. On the basis of this guideline, we can cultivate ourselves into the right practice, and the heaven is just in front of us."

"When Buddhadharma is in the world, Bodhi(*) will be obtained easily. To search for Bodhi outside of this world, it is like looking for a hare with horns. "

From the above dharma teaching, we can understand further that "all laws are created by our minds only. Doing good or bad things, being Buddha or being a living creature, and going up to heaven or going down to hell are all determined by our thinking at one moment." People with gracious heart will go to heaven; people with greedy heart will fall into the path of hungry ghosts; people with perverted view will fall into the path of animals; and people with evil heart will fall into hell.



** Master Wen Chiao ran away with his company from a war to a remote mountain. It was dark at the time. Both of them were hungry and thirsty. They stayed in a

Bodhi: Awakenment, enlightenment, supreme knowledge.

small temple and saw some cakes on the offering table. Because they couldn't stand the hunger, they folded hands to tell the Buddha, and then devoured the cakes. He then still felt thirsty and his company had a bellyache, so he went out for water. Later, he found a pond in the woods under the blurred moon light and took the water with a bowl and went back to the temple. His company drank the water and praised the delicious taste of it. The next day, both of them went to the pond to take more water. Suddenly, they saw a rotten body with lots of worms in the pond. Stunned by the scene, they threw up all of the water they drank last night. There he obtained enlightenment at once, realizing "all laws are created through our mind." Sometimes people praise water for its delicious taste, other times people disgust it because of its bad taste. Therefore, we have learned that all of the living creatures judge things to be good or bad by their own mind. They change their mind as their perception change. In other words, the "mind" moves because of different "standpoints." If people can obtain wisdom through mindfulness practice reaching the ultimate realm with absolute calm mind, and recognize the truth that all the elements of this external world are but delusion and impermanence, their mind won't be confused by fame, status, power, and wealth. Then they will truly understand the meanings of life.



** There is a story about shooting birds with gold bullets in Buddhist canonical literature. A millionaire's son liked to hunt birds with bullets made of gold. Many people

considered this an absolutely luxury, wasteful, meaningless and foolish behavior; however, those people are not aware that their thoughts are wrong. As we know, the most precious things in the world are not gold, money, or real estate property, nor are the fame, status, or power. The most important thing is our life and time. This is because we get material things back easily, but once we lose the latter ones, we can hardly get them back again. Although we own much treasure, status, or power, time can't come back again. Recently, many people use their valuable time in doing meaningless deeds day after day and year after year; they don't know they should wake up as soon as possible to do something meaningful to their society. Wen Ming Tao, a famous poet in ancient China, wrote a poem to remind people, "Golden years won't come back again; it is hardly to go back to the morning again; we should encourage ourselves to make efforts in time; for time waits for nobody." Samantabhadra Budhisativa always used a hymn to remind us the value of our lives, "As the day passes by, our lives are reduced one day shorter; it is like to reduce water to the fish, which is not happy at all." Master Yehn Yin used to encourage his disciples to cultivate themselves in the right practices when they were young. He said, "Don't wait until your are old to learn the doctrine; most of the tombs are occupied by young people; if you don't cultivate your life now; when will you do it?"

It is said that Master Ian Kwan didn't hang Buddha's image but a big Chinese character of "death" in his room, which was to remind himself to cultivate himself into the right practice earnestly without wasting time; otherwise, as impermanence comes, it would be too late.

** A venerable master often reminded his disciples, "There are two things we can't wait to do: one is to devote ourselves to the filial duty to our parents, the other one is to do good deeds." Many people think that their parents are still healthy so they can wait to do it later; they also think their abilities are limited and can't benefit the society, so they would like to wait until they earn lots of money to make contributions. This type of attitude often makes people regretful later for their wrong decision. We should catch the time to act immediately, so that our lives will be full of joy and peace. If we hesitate to act now, we may regret whenever the impermanence comes.



** Two thousand and five hundred years ago, Buddha told people that there were eighty-four thousand germs within a drop of water, and our body was a huge place for germs; it takes ten months to develop a new-born baby; and there were still billions of planets like the earth within the universe. These sayings have been proved one by one through scientific research. Additionally, Buddha also owned six ubiquitous supernatural powers. He knew the past five hundred lives and the future five hundred lives and their karma; he even knew thoroughly about the very far past and the future. We should value and sincerely respect his great wisdom. In Diamond Sutra, "Tathagata(*) is the person who speaks true words, honest words, right words, no lying words and no distorted words." In order to save all

Tathagata: One who has arrived according to the norm; one has attained the goal of enlightenment.

of the living creatures, Buddha consistently propagated his doctrine through the most sincere, the easiest, the truest, and the most gracious way to have all of the living creatures stay away from sufferings and work as early as they can toward enlightenment.



** Dr. Chiu-Nan Lei, promoting the holistic approach of healthy body and mind, recently gave a speech in Taiwan. She mentioned that the universe is a big circle: if you give off yourself, it will come back to you. Therefore, if you wish people to treat you well, you should love people first; Thus, we learn that the phenomenon of karma in Buddhism definitely exists. If a person wishes to earn merit, he should do good deeds, in order to receive the harvest fruit later.



** How to make contributions? In Buddhism, there are three ways of making contributions. The first one is through contributing material goods to help people. The second way is through almsgiving of the Buddha-truth, i.e., its preaching or explanation, in order to urge people to do good things and purify people's mind as well. The third way is through bestowing confidence to people i.e., showing sympathy to people and keeping people away from fear.

Additionally, Master Shing Wun also has some good suggestions here. He said, "There are many ways to make contributions: the basic one is to offer money and other material goods; the next one is to commit to making offerings to people in need; a better one is to speak nice words when you have a chance; and the best one is being respectful and happy." Only contributing money or other material goods to help people belongs to the lower level; nevertheless, if we could go further to rescue people and without caring for external fame, we would have a better result. If we can urge people to do good things and to be good, we can obtain the best merit. Therefore, being a teacher has the best chance to make this kind of contributions. If we can have a gracious, joyful, and respectful heart and make contributions through language (i.e. greeting), facial expression (i.e. smiling, graceful face, and eye-contact), physical assistance (i.e. sympathizing and sharing the joy with others), we are giving our best effort.



** It looks like a person has paid a lot when he contributes his money, time, strength, and heart to make donations. His returns can't be measured by money; his soul is full of peace and joy. If a person is limited financially but still makes a wish to contribute his limited effort, he will be richest among the poor. If a millionaire with lots of treasure can contribute much effort to help needy people in the society through a gracious heart, he will have joy and peace in his spirit; he will become the richest among the

rich. On the contrary, if a person always feels empty and melancholy, he will find everything meaningless, boring, lonely, and miserable, even though he owns countless treasure, lives in a luxury villa, drives an imported car, eats rare dishes, and wears expensive clothing and jewelry. This kind of person is the poorest among the rich. Looking at this world, people who suffer the most are the poorest among the rich and the poorest among the poor. The people who enjoy the most are the richest among the poor and the rich. My dear friends, which one would you like to be?



** Socrates, an ancient Greek philosopher, was respected by his students for his wisdom. Unfortunately, he had a mean wife. His students always felt sorry for him. One time, Socrates heard his students talking about his situation. He then spoke to them, "If a man marries a beautiful and nice wife, it is because he earned good merit in his past; if he gets married to a mean and unkind wife, he then can be a philosopher. Is there anything wrong with this?" The students were puzzled, asking what he meant. He answered, "If a man has a mean and unkind wife, it is the best time to cultivate his patience and nature. Therefore, if he can tolerate this kind of person, whom could he not tolerate?" Like Socrates, if a person can face a situation with humor and look at the positive side, rather than the negative side, he won't complain about anything or burst out in temper, instead, he will turn the obstacle into a challenge. He will be a mature and wise man.

** Each of the Buddhists realizes that chanting sutra is not for seeking merit and eliminating calamity, but for using the Buddha's wisdom to clean up our human mind such as greediness, anger, delusion, arrogance, and doubts, and so on. Therefore, the correct way of chanting sutras should not only use our mouth to chant, but also take Buddha's doctrine to practice in our daily life. If people who have been chanting sutras for a long time and still keep the human mind with them, their effort will be meaningless. It is the same as a person who recites Dr. Yat-Sen Sun's will hundreds of times but doesn't follow Dr. Sun's spirit in being patriotic to fight for his country. As we know, the function of sutra is for us to practice rather than to chant. (Who wants to listen to that? Buddha? Ourselves? Do we need to chant so many times each day?) If everyone can be pious and concentrate on the chanting itself for a couple of minutes and always keep Buddha and his teachings in mind, it is more meaningful than chanting hundreds of times without concentration. Chanting sutras is only one of the means to reach the Buddha's level and become a Buddha. Recently I have found that many people sacrifice sleep time or free time with their families or do not do house chores, and only stay in front of the Buddha's image and chant hundreds or even thousands of times. This creates a lot of family problems. For example, children without enough care or supervision may play on the streets after school. Also it brings negative influence on accumulating merit due to lack of time or money for contributions.

In short, we not only chant sutras, worship Buddha, and research Buddhism, but also should go further to learn the spirit of Buddha and become a Buddha, which is the correct attitude toward Buddhism.

GLOSSARY

1. **Amitabha:** Amitabha is the most commonly used name for the Lord of Infinite Light and Infinite Life. Presides over the Western Pure Land, where anyone can be reborn with an utterly sincere recitations of His name at the time of death.
2. **Arhan:** Buddhist saint, who has attained liberation from the cycle of birth and death, generally through living a monastic life in accordance with the Buddha's teaching.
3. **Bodhi:** Awakenment, enlightenment, supreme knowledge.
4. **Buddha:** "completely conscious, enlightened, and came to mean the enlightener." The one who "has achieved enlightenment, having discovered the essential evil of existence.
5. **Buddhadarma:** Buddha's teachings.
6. **Budhisattva:** "Englightenment Being" is a being destined to Buddhahood, a Future Buddha.
7. **Law of cause and effect:** Every cause has its effect, as every effect arises from a cause.
8. **Conditional cause:** a cooperating cause, the concurrent occasion of an event as distinguished from the proximate cause.
9. **Impermanence:** all things are impermanent from the cycle of being born, becoming old, getting sick (or the change of itself) and dying towards the end of the life journey;

they can not stop the cycle at any moment.

10. Mahaynist : Bodhisattva who represents the Ultimate Wisdom of the Buddhas.
11. Ksitigarbharaja Budhisattva: God of the Hell.
12. Lokajyestha: Lord of the world.
13. Sutras: Buddhist canonical literature.
14. Tathagata: One who has arrived according to the norm; one has attained the goal of enlightenment.
15. Triratna: "Three Jewels or Gems, which are revered as the most venerable things by all Buddhists, are the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Holy Sangha."
16. Western Pure Land: Generic term for the realms of the Buddhas. It is "a paradise of the spirits".
17. Karma: Karma is a Sanskrit word which means "to do or to make." It is energy in action or volitions. It is intentional, conscious, deliberate, willful action. Every action must have a reaction, an effect, like the law formulated by the great physicist Newton. If we do wholesome action, we will get a wholesome fruit, and if we do an unwholesome action, we will get an unwholesome, painful result. This is what most people mean when they say that causes bring about effects that are similar to the causes. The word of Karma-Vipaka or Karma result is similar to the effects or fruits. The law of Karma is a substitute to the law of Cause and Effect.

As this is a Dhamma text,
We request that it be treated with respect.

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offer it to a monastery, school, or library.

Thanks for your co-operation.

Namo Amitabha!



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