

THE BUDDHA SPEAKS THE SUTRA ABOUT KARMA

Transcribed in English by: Jason Chau

This Sutra has changed the lives of many who have read it, for it explains the direct results of causes. It is also called the Golden Precepts by Lord Buddha and is reproduced here in its entirety:

"Once upon a gathering attended by 1,250 followers, the venerable Ananda, after circling thrice with folded hands around the Buddha and bowing with respect asked: "In the present dark age where the majority of our people are indulgent in unrighteousness, disrespectful to the Lord's teaching, undutiful to their parents, immoral, miserable and sordid, among them some are deaf, some blind, some mute, some idiotic, some handicapped in other aspects, and most people inured to killing, how could we understand the cryptic and fundamental principle or causes that have brought about this reality and what consequences each individual is to suffer eventually for his deeds. My Lord, would you kindly explain these to us?".

The World-honoured One then answered, "Listen carefully, I will now expound the Law of Karma. Because of Karmic effects inherited from previous lives, some people are poor, some rich, some happy and some miserable. These are four rules inseparable in obtaining happiness and prosperity for your next life. They are: to be dutiful to parents; to be respectful to Buddhas, to Buddha's teaching, and to Buddhist monks; to abstain from killing and setting free sentient beings; and to abstain from eating meat and be charitable." Then the Buddha proceeded on the Karmic Sutra:

"Destiny is aggregate karmic effects from the past. To believe in and practice this Sutra will bring you eternal prosperity and happiness.

Learn the Law of Karma expounded as follows:

'To be able to hold office in the Government is a reward for your building Buddha's statues in previous lives. For building Buddha's statues is likened to molding yourself, and to protect the Tathagata is protecting yourself. To be a public officer cannot be taken for granted, for without practicing Buddhism it will not befall you. Having helped in the construction of bridges and roads in your past life is conducive to your present enjoyment of various transportation facilities which prevent you from getting foot-worn.

To donate clothing to monks will ensure you to be well provided with clothing in future or in your next life.

To be free from want in food is the result of your providing food to the poor in your previous life.

To be miserly and unwilling to help the needy gives rise to future starvation and clothlessness.

To have ample housing is a reward for donating food to monasteries in your past life.

To build temples and public shelters will give you future prosperity and happiness.

To be pretty and handsome is the reward for your respecting and offering flowers to Buddha's altar in the past.

To abstain from eating meat and to pray constantly to Buddha will assure you to be born a very intelligent child in your next incarnation.

To have a good wife and son is reward for your disseminating Buddha's teaching in your past life.

Furnishing Buddhist temples with hangings and tapestries will enable you to have a good marriage in your next rebirth.

To have good parents is a reward for your respecting and helping those who were lonely and desolate in your past life.

Being a bird hunter in your previous life has resulted in your being an orphan now.

To have plenty of children is attributable to your setting free birds in your previous life.

To have destroyed flowers habitually in your previous life has caused you to be heirless now.

Your longevity is due to your setting free sentient beings in your past life.

Being short-lived is the result of your committing too many killings in your previous life.

To steal the wife of another man will cause you to have no spouse in your next reincarnation.

To be a widow now is due to your disrespecting your husband in your previous life.

Being ungrateful in your previous life has caused you to be a serf at present.

To covet another man's wife will cause you to have no spouse in your next reincarnation.

To distort truths habitually will cause you to suffer blindness in your next life.

To have wry mouth is due to your intentionally blowing out candles before Buddha's altar in your past life.

To vituperate (abuse) your parents will cause you to be reborn a deaf mute in your next incarnation.

Being a hunchback is punishment for jeering at the Buddha's followers in your previous life.

To have committed evil with your hands in your past life is the cause for you having disabled hands now.

Your being lame is imputable to your being a robber in your previous life.

To be reborn a horse or an ox is the result of your denying your debts in your previous life.

To be reborn a pig or a dog is the punishment for your deceiving and hurting others in your previous life.

Offering flesh to monks in your past life has given rise to your constant illness now.

To be healthy is a reward for your offering drugs and medications to save the sick and wounded in your past life.

Relentlessly perpetrating evil in your previous life is the cause for your present imprisonment.

Plugging snake-pit and mouse holds habitually will cause you to starve to death in your next incarnation.

To intentionally poison a river or water-source will cause you to die of poison in your next life.

Being forlorn and friendless is the punishment for being unfaithful and deceitful to others in your past life.

Disrespecting the Buddha's teaching will bring you constant starvation in your next rebirth.

To spew blood is the punishment for eating meat while praying to Buddha.

To have attended Buddhist instruction with levity in your previous life is the cause for your present deafness.

To be afflicted with ulcers is the punishment for offering flesh before the Buddha's altar in your past life.

To have bad bodily odour is the punishment for selling incense with dishonesty in your previous life.

To hunt animals with rope and net will predestine your death by hanging in your next incarnation.

Being unduly envious and jealous in your past life is the cause for being so lonely or being refect of spouse at present.

To be struck by lightning or burn by fire will be the punishment for dishonest trade dealings.

Being wounded by beasts or snakes tells you that those creatures were your enemies in your previous life.

Whatever you do will come back to you, so accept whatever justice and retribution that befalls you.

Be not mistaken that karma is fallacious. You will live to bear its consequences, either in this lifetime or in your future life.

Should you doubt the virtue of practising Buddhism, could you not see the happiness of Buddha's followers?

Past karma determine your present destiny. Present karmas are to mold your next life.

Whoever slanders this Sutra will not be reborn again a human being.

Whoever accepts this Sutra will witness the truth.

Whoever writes this Sutra will prosper in successful lives.

Whoever carries this Sutra will be free from mishaps.

Whoever preaches this Sutra will become a very intelligent person in successive lives.

Whoever recites this Sutra will be well-respected by people in his next incarnation.

Whoever distributes this Sutra free to all will become a leader to humanity in his next life.

If karma did not produce effect, what prompted Wu-Lin, a dutiful son, to rescue his mother under grave danger?

Whoever is faithful to this Sutra will not fail to witness the eternal paradise.

The Law of Karma works forever, and the fruit of good deed will come in due course."

Having spoken the above Sutra to Ananda and the followers, the World-honoured One added "There are innumerable examples of Karmic Law, but I have only mentioned in generalisation."

Then Ananda said, "Until the end of the present Dark Age, most human beings would have through successive lives accumulated countless misdeeds because of their ignorance of the karmic consequences, but thanks to our Lord and the Sutra he has so kindly given to us, whoever writes and reads, prints and distributes this Sutra, upon praying to the Buddha, will be blessed with eternal happiness and be admitted to see Amitabha Buddha, Avalokiteshvara Bodhisattva and all the other Buddhas in the heavenly paradise."

After Ananda spoke, all Buddha's disciples and followers felt ecstatic and enlightened and, after bowing respectfully and vowing to abide by his Sutra, took their journey home