

The Law of Cause and Effect

"Laws" means rules to protect individuals and support the constitutional rights of everyone in society and/or the nation. The Western ideas of natural laws are based on scientific evidence such as the law of gravity, or mathematical laws. Whereas scholars may have made many discoveries about the consistencies of these laws, at this time, they are still researching why certain laws exist, and exactly how and why do they work.

"Law" in Buddhism, however, has a broader meaning. It is the English equivalent for the Sanskrit word *dharma*, which means the teachings of the Buddha. Dharma is the truth of all underlying phenomena. The Buddha neither created nor laid down these laws, but clarified the Law originally governing the universe. There exist many truths, extending from the specific or phenomenal to the universal and essential. At the deepest level of life, the fundamental truth, which supports all universal phenomena and laws, is the Mystic Law or Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo.

Now, I would like to talk about the "Law of Cause and Effect." Shakyamuni Buddha stated:

If you want to understand the causes that existed in the past, look at the results as they are manifested in the present. And if you want to understand what results will be manifested in the future; look at the causes that exist in the present.

I would like to explain this simply. For example, if a student studies hard for an examination, he may pass it with high scores. Therefore, diligent work is the cause, and passing is the effect. At the same time, there is always some medium, which connects the cause to the effect. In this case, the medium is the act of taking the examination. A medium functions in two ways: it produces an effect and contributes to forming a new cause.

The same amount of effort, however, does not necessarily lead to the same results. Some students naturally have good memories, while others tend to forget things quickly. The point is the question: What produces such differences between individuals? Buddhism attributes these differences from the causes one has made in previous life existences. In other words, one's individual and natural abilities are the effects of the causes established in previous lifetimes.

Western religions usually suggest that God predetermines the course of one's life, and is a judgmental God. Buddhism, however, asserts that each individual is responsible for one's own destiny. Buddhism also teaches that each one of us has the right to change one's life for the better and develop one's character in the future. This means that a person with a weak memory does not have to resign himself to his fate. If he realizes his weak

point, he may start preparations for a test earlier than others so that he can memorize the study materials effectively.

Thus, he will be able to overcome his disadvantage. Instead of depending on his weak memory, he can make up for it by improving his understanding. By being aware of his own strengths, weakness and inclinations, it is possible to develop his strong points and improve his weak ones.

Buddhism proposes that absolutely one's future can change through one's present efforts. But what can be done about the causes we have already formed in the past? Our personality, character and destiny are all results of what we were and what we did in the past. In the Lotus Sutra, Shakyamuni Buddha directed us to a source of power, which can sever the chains of karmic forces.

The great potential inherent in our lives far exceeds what we ordinarily imagine. We naturally possess a tremendous life force and abundant wisdom. We are often unaware of our own wonderful power and put limitations on ourselves by thinking, "There's no way I can do that," or "This is my fate." In this way we frequently don't realize we can challenge and develop new potentials.

In a small way people are very much like an elephant in a circus. A circus elephant is extremely strong, but it remains tied by a flimsy-chain to a small stake; as it believes that it cannot get away. In the same way, a person possesses tremendous potential, but has the bad habit of convincing oneself that his power is limited, and, therefore, does not actively challenge himself.

We can easily cut away the "flimsy-chain" of our limitations by using the "mighty sword" of Daimoku, Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo. Please cast aside any "bad habits" that restrict your potentials, starting today, and elevate your own life-condition by confidently and actively chanting Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo.

The word *rengé* (literally, lotus flower) of Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo symbolizes the principle that cause and effect exist simultaneously in a single life-moment. This means that the causes we are making each moment will determine one's future while simultaneously we are getting the effects from our past.

Even the strongest determination may not change our destiny. Clearly we need some power which can change the flow of life itself. That power is Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo. With the awareness of this powerful key that unlocks the inherent abundant life force within each of us, we can be confident that we can form causes to emancipate ourselves totally from our negative destiny.

I ask all of you to chant Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo to the Gohonzon so that you can manifest your ultimate life condition.