

# *The Cause-and-Effect in the Discussion between Two Retinues*

This is a story about believing and accepting the law of cause-and-effect taught by the Buddha in the *Sutra of Miscellaneous Precious Deposits*, Book 2.

One day, King Prasenajit overheard the discussion between two of his retinues while relaxing in bed.

The first one said, “My life relies on the King.”

“My life relies on no one; I rely on my own karmic force for my life,” said the second one.

After overhearing the discussion, the King praised the first retinue who said his life relied on the King and wanted to reward him. He sent his guard to inform the Queen, “Later in the day, I’ll send a person to you. You should reward him with plenty of money, clothes and decorative jewelries.” After sending the guard off, the King asked the first retinue to bring some leftover wine to the Queen. As soon as the retinue left the King with the wine, he had a bloody nose and could not proceed any further. The second retinue was passing by, so the first retinue asked the second to send the wine to the Queen instead. The Queen saw the retinue bringing the wine and remembered what the King told her; she gave the retinue lots of money, clothes, and jewelry, and asked him to report back to the King.

The King was surprised and confused when he noticed that the returned retinue was not the one he sent, so he summoned the first retinue and asked him, "I told you to send the wine to the Queen. Why didn't you?"

"As soon as I left the door, my nose immediately started to bleed; therefore, I asked the other retinue to help me bring the wine to the Queen."

The king sighed and said, "Today, I really understand the truth of the Buddha's teachings. Whatever deed one has done in the past, one will reap one's own retribution that no one can take away."

Being able to rely on the King in the current life is a fortunate karmic result. However, if no virtues have been accumulated and cultivated in previous lives, one will not be able to reap any karmic results in this life from meritorious acts accumulated in past lives.

For example, suppose someone publishes a book titled *The Process of Becoming Rich Revealed* with a subtitle *A Book that Can Make You Rich* and documents the detailed process regarding those who have built up enormous amount of wealth from scratch. No one can exactly duplicate the process of getting rich described in the book, let alone becoming rich, due to all the differences in his or her environment, background, and mental predisposition. The main reason, among others, for this is that different individuals have different meritorious karmic deeds accumulated from past lives and, hence, will reap different karmic results.

From this example, we can see that all the good or bad karmic retributions or rewards are the results of one's action of body, speech, and mind in past lives. These karmic retributions are not provided by and cannot be intervened by any miraculous power or spiritual power coming from any celestial beings, gods in heavens, or kings in the human world.

The principle of cause-and-effect is so extremely complicated, profound, and expansive that only Buddhas, and Buddhas alone can fully understand it. The elders of a certain culture have a saying, "Drinks and meals in the current life have been determined by one's own deeds in the previous lives." It means that everybody's wealth and fortune in the current life are determined by what they did in previous lives. Therefore, all the good or bad environments or situations a person encounters in the current life are self-created and self-reaped; every man reaps the reward of his own deeds, creating his own karma and no one but himself is to be blamed for any misfortune. Anybody who desires bountiful virtues and a smooth path in the process of cultivating towards Buddhahood in future lives should strive and work hard in charitable giving and performing good deeds to benefit sentient beings while also repenting the bad deeds and righting the wrong. By doing so, one will enjoy bountiful wealth and pleasant life as wished for many lives to come. Will that not be the most beautiful things in the world?

