

## Cause and Effect: A Universal Law

The following verses from *The Dhammapada* illustrate the universal law of cause and effect – a law that influences all of life, commonly expressed in the words "what goes around, comes around".

He suffers in this world, and he suffers in the next world; the man who does evil suffers in both worlds. He suffers, he suffers and mourns when he sees the wrong he has done.

(*The Dhammapada*: Contrary Ways, 15.)

He is happy in this world, and he is happy in the next world; the man who does good is happy in both worlds. He is glad, he feels great gladness when he sees the good he has done.

(*The Dhammapada*: Contrary Ways, 16.)

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He sorrows in this world, and he sorrows in the next world; the man who does evil sorrows in both worlds. 'I have done evil', thus he laments, and more he laments on the path of sorrow.

(*The Dhammapada*: Contrary Ways, 17.)

He rejoices in this world, and he rejoices in the next world; the man who does good rejoices in both worlds. 'I have done good', thus he rejoices, and more he rejoices on the path of joy.

(*The Dhammapada*: Contrary Ways, 18.)

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Watchfulness is the path of immortality; unwatchfulness is the path of death. Those who are watchful never die; those who do not watch are already as dead. Those who with a clear mind have seen this truth, those who are wise and ever-watchful, they feel the joy of watchfulness, the joy of the path of the Great.

(*The Dhammapada*: Watchfulness, 21-22.)

The man who arises in faith, who ever remembers his high purpose, whose work is pure, and who carefully considers his work, who in self-possession lives the life of perfection, and who ever, forever, is watchful, that man shall arise in glory.

(*The Dhammapada*: Watchfulness, 24.)  
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Men who are foolish and ignorant are careless and never watchful; but the man who lives in watchfulness considers it his greatest treasure.

(*The Dhammapada*: Watchfulness, 26.)

Watchful amongst the unwatchful, awake amongst those who sleep, the wise man like a swift horse runs his race, outrunning those who are slow.

(*The Dhammapada*: Watchfulness, 29.)

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'He insulted me, he hurt me, he defeated me, he robbed me.' Those who think such thoughts will not be free from hate.

(*The Dhammapada*: Contrary Ways, 3.)

'He insulted me, he hurt me, he defeated me, he robbed me.' Those who think not such thoughts will be free from hate.

(*The Dhammapada*: Contrary Ways, 3.)

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The mind is fickle and flighty, it flies after fancies wherever it likes; it is difficult indeed to restrain. But it is a great good to control the mind; a mind self-controlled is a source of great joy.

(*The Dhammapada*: The Mind, 35.)

Invisible and subtle is the mind, and it flies after fancies wherever it likes; but let the wise man guard well his mind, for a mind well guarded is a source of great joy.

(*The Dhammapada*: The Mind, 36.)

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An enemy can hurt an enemy, and a man who hates can harm another man; but a man's own mind, if wrongly directed, can do him a far greater harm.

(*The Dhammapada*: The Mind, 42.)

A father or a mother, or a relative, can indeed do good to a man; but his own right-directed mind can do to him a far greater good.

(*The Dhammapada*: The Mind, 43.)

For that deed is not well done when being done one has to repent, and when one must reap with tears the bitter fruits of the wrong deed.

*(The Dhammapada: The Fool, 67.)*

But the deed is indeed well done when being done one has not to repent, and when one can reap with joy the sweet fruits of the right deed.

*(The Dhammapada: The Fool, 68.)*

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The wrong action seems sweet to the fool until the reaction comes and brings pain, and the bitter fruits of wrong deeds have then to be eaten by the fool.

*(The Dhammapada: The Fool, 69.)*

A wrong action may not bring its reaction at once, even as fresh milk turns not sour at once; like a smouldering fire concealed under ashes it consumes the wrongdoer, the fool.

*(The Dhammapada: The Fool, 71.)*

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If a man does something wrong, let him not do it again and again. Let him not find pleasure in his sin. Painful is the accumulation of wrongdoings.

*(The Dhammapada: Good and Evil, 117.)*

If a man does something good, let him do it again and again. Let him find joy in his good work. Joyful is the accumulation of good work.

*(The Dhammapada: Good and Evil, 118.)*

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A man may find pleasure in evil as long as his evil has not given fruit; but when the fruit of evil comes then that man finds evil indeed.

*(The Dhammapada: Good and Evil, 119.)*

A man may find pain in doing good as long as his good has not given fruit; but when the fruit of good comes then that man finds good indeed.

*(The Dhammapada: Good and Evil, 120.)*

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As a man who has no wound on his hand cannot be hurt by the poison he may carry in his hand, since poison hurts not where there is no wound, the man who has no evil cannot be hurt by evil.

*(The Dhammapada: Good and Evil, 124.)*

The fool who does evil to a man who is good, to a man who is pure and free from sin, the evil returns to him like dust thrown against the wind.  
(*The Dhammapada*: Good and Evil, 125.)

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Neither in the sky, nor deep in the ocean, nor in a mountain-cave, nor anywhere, can a man be free from the evil he has done.  
(*The Dhammapada*: Good and Evil, 127.)

Let a man avoid the dangers of evil even as a merchant carrying much wealth, but with a small escort, avoids the dangers of the road, or as a man who loves his life avoids the drinking of poison.  
(*The Dhammapada*: Good and Evil, 123.)

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He who for the sake of happiness does not hurt others who also want happiness, shall hereafter find happiness.  
(*The Dhammapada*: Life, 132.)

Never speak harsh words, for once spoken they may return to you. Angry words are painful and there may be blows for blows.  
(*The Dhammapada*: Life, 133.)

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When a fool does evil work, he forgets that he is lighting a fire wherein he must burn one day.  
(*The Dhammapada*: Life, 136.)

Is there in this world a man so noble that he ever avoids all blame, even as a noble horse avoids the touch of the whip?  
(*The Dhammapada*: Life, 143.)

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Only a man himself can be the master of himself; who else from outside could be his master? When the Master and servant are one, then there is true help and self-possession.  
(*The Dhammapada*: Self-Possession, 160.)

Any wrong or evil a man does, is born in himself and is caused by himself; and this crushes the foolish man as a hard stone grinds the weaker stone.  
(*The Dhammapada*: Self-Possession, 161.)

It is easy to do what is wrong, to do what is bad for oneself; but very difficult to do what is right, to do what is good for oneself.

(*The Dhammapada*: Self-Possession, 163.)

By oneself the evil is done, and it is oneself who suffers; by oneself the evil is not done, and by oneself one becomes pure. The pure and impure come from oneself; no man can purify another.

(*The Dhammapada*: Self-Possession, 165.)

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Arise! Watch. Walk on the right path. He who follows the right path has joy in this world and in the world beyond.

(*The Dhammapada*: Arise! Watch, 168.)

Follow the right path; follow not the wrong path. He who follows the right path has joy in this world and in the world beyond.

(*The Dhammapada*: Arise! Watch, 169.)

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He who in early days was unwise but later found wisdom, he sheds a light over the world like that of the moon when free from clouds.

(*The Dhammapada*: Arise! Watch, 172.)

He who overcomes the evil he has done with the good he afterwards does, he sheds a light over the world like that of the moon when free from clouds.

(*The Dhammapada*: Arise! Watch, 173.)

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'All is transient.' When one sees this, he is above sorrow. This is the clear path. 'All is sorrow.' When one sees this, he is above sorrow. This is the clear path. 'All is unreal.' When one sees this, he is above sorrow. This is the clear path.

(*The Dhammapada*: The Path, 277-279.)

Find joy in watchfulness; guard well your mind. Uplift yourself from your lower self, even as an elephant draws himself out of a muddy swamp.

(*The Dhammapada*: Endurance, 327.)

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**Source:** Quotations are taken from Mascaró, Juan, trans. *The Dhammapada: The Path of Perfection*. London: Penguin Books, 1973.

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