**Measure for Measure**

You often hear in Buddhism of the importance of practicing kindness. For example, there are “The 6 Good Deeds,” and “The 7 Charities” which guide us towards the practice of good deeds. All these good deeds have their foundation on the Law of Cause and Effect (as does the entire teachings of Buddhism). If this Law did not exist, then there could be no karmic result for our actions whether good or bad. The Law of Cause and Effect is so important to Buddhism that a person’s understanding of Buddhism is judged by how deeply they understand the Law of Cause and Effect.

The number of times one listens to Buddhism is important.

But persistence and longevity is not the only thing in Buddhism. The quality of one’s listening is crucial. Someone has been listening to Buddhism for 30 years but regularly commits bad acts for example, you can hardly say they have been truly listening to the teachings. It’s as if they have been standing in front of the “mirror of truth” for 30 years, but with their eyes closed.

How seriously are we listening?

One of the principals of the Law of Cause and Effect is that a “good cause will bring a good effect.” What is done comes back to the doer in kind. Good for good, bad for bad. But to look from another perspective, the measure of the cause will be the measure of the effect. “Measure for Measure,” as Shakespeare said. The quality of the cause will determine the quality of the result. Excellent causes produce excellent results. Weak good deeds produce good, but weak, results.

The Buddhist teachings, it is said, can be summed up into the following: “Do good and stop Bad.” This is the basic rule for seeking happiness. But I would like to think that this is just a blueprint of happiness. The question, “how big a result do you want?” still remains. We seek big happiness, don’t we. To get bigger and better results, we plant more seeds, and plant better quality seeds.

Buddhism teaches the reality that life is both fleeting and impermanent. A fleeting life means that even if we live to 100 years of age, when we die it will still seem like a short life. Impermanence means that we live from one breath to the next. The next breath is not a guarantee. When this breath is not followed by another, we are in the afterlife. Therefore we must avail of the chance to attain true faith before it’s too late. The amount of chances to hear are limited, so we should do our best to listen with quality.

If we are not getting the results we want then we need to think about the quality and quantity of the good seeds we are planting. Maybe we need to be planting more regularly and with more care. Two students can spend the exact same amount of time studying, but it will be the quality of their study that will make the difference in their results. If we are going to put in the time to do the deed, isn’t it wise that we do it with as much of our focus as possible? Maybe this is the thought behind the Phrase-a-day #13, *“However trifling a task may be, let’s tend to it with our heart and soul.”* It makes me beggar the question that it’s not necessarily what more can I do each day but, “how can I do what I am doing, better?”

This is an article I came across that I think exemplifies quality of kindness because of the results that followed. It’s by the actor, Brad Pitt:

“My wife got sick.  She was constantly nervous because of problems at work, personal life, her failures and problems with children.

She has lost 30 pounds and weighed about 90 pounds in her 35 years. She got very skinny, and was constantly crying. She was not a happy woman. She had suffered from continuing headaches, heart pain and jammed nerves in her back and ribs.

She did not sleep well, falling asleep only in the morning and got tired very quickly during the day. Our relationship was on the verge of break up.

Her beauty was leaving her somewhere, she had bags under her eyes, she was poking her head, and stopped taking care of herself. She refused to shoot the films and rejected any role.

I lost hope and thought that we’ll get divorced soon…But then I decided to act on it.
After all I’ve got the most beautiful woman on the earth.

She is the idol of more than half of men and women on earth, and I was the one allowed to fall asleep next to her and to hug her shoulders.

I began to pamper her with flowers, kisses and compliments. I surprised her and pleased her every minute. I gave her lots of gifts and lived just for her. I spoke in public only about her. I incorporated all themes in her direction. I praised her in front of her own and our mutual friends.”

You won’t believe it, but she blossomed. She became even better than before. She gained weight, was no longer nervous and she loved me even more than ever. I had no clue that she CAN love that much. And then I realized one thing: The woman is the reflection of her man. If you love her to the point of madness, she will become it.”