

# Week 5 – Orders of conditionality

## Buddhism Level 2 – Buddhist Wisdom – doctrinal Dharma

### ORDERS OF CONDITIONALITY

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How do things befall us, especially pleasure & pain? According to doctrine of conditioned co-production, they arise & pass away in dependence upon conditions. But which conditions? There's a useful post-Buddha teaching in Abhidhamma of Five Niyamas describing the different modes, or orders of conditionality that can operate:

The Five Niyamas		
Name	Scope	Examples
Utu-niyama	Physical	Slate falling on head, caught in tsunami
Bija-niyama	Biological	Catching chickenpox, being shortsighted
Mano-niyama	Mental, non-volitional	Process of perception, post-traumatic stress
Kamma-niyama	Ethical, volitional	Getting angry, being generous
Dhamma-niyama	"Spiritual"	?? Mystical experience, insights

*"Whoever says, 'It is only kamma that oppresses beings... is wrong.... The ignorant go too far when they say that everything that is experienced is produced as the fruit of kamma.'"*

*The Questions of King Milinda, in Exploring Karma & Rebirth*

**However** karma is probably more significant than we usually give it credit for. And it is the most important because, by definition, it is the only order of conditionality over which we have influence.

Can't ever be sure what complex of conditions led to our present state, but can be sure that our karma (action) will have effect on ourselves & others in the future

### WHAT IS KARMA?

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Volitional action, of body, speech or mind. Basic Buddhist belief is that karma has effects:

Directly on modifying our mind, reinforcing that trend, liberating or oppressing our spirit

But also to a large extent we create the world we experience: can find ourself inhabiting an alienated, friendly, ugly world, if consistently act reactively. Or, if you are quite creative, a connected, vibrant world where people seem to gravitate towards you.

*Experiences are preceded by mind, led by mind and produced by mind. If one speaks or acts with an impure mind, suffering follows even as the cart-wheel follows the hoof of the ox drawing the cart.*

*Experiences are preceded by mind, led by mind and produced by mind. If one speaks or acts with a pure mind, happiness follows like a shadow that never departs*

*Dhammapada, trans Sangharakshita, v1-2*

Actions have consequences, nothing is lost, "universe recycles everything"

## MIND REACTIVE & CREATIVE

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Within karmic sphere of action, useful to subdivide into two trends: reactive & creative (Sangharakshita - not a traditional teaching, but seems clearly related to experience)

	Reactive	Creative
Sense of freedom	Confined, habitual	Expansive, many options
Awareness	Narrow or confined, partial	Present, broad
Outcome	Unfortunate, upset	Positive, creative
Feeling afterwards	Unhappy, regretful, isolated	Content, buoyed up, alive

**Reactivity** seems mechanistic, re-act, habitual. You know other peoples' reactive patterns, when they'll always lose it or get stropky when you raise a particular subject. And they probably know yours! Characterised by unskilful mental states, constricted awareness and lack of freedom.

**Creativity** can take yourself and others by surprise. It's a new response, one they're not used to. Characterised by more skilful mental states, freedom of response, broader, clearer awareness of self, other & the options

## Implications

Creativity nonetheless arises on the basis on conditions. Eg:

- Cultivating awareness
- Keeping ourselves in a good state
- Meditating regularly
- Cultivating metta
- Not placing self under too much stress
- Reflecting on our actions & motivations

It's our responsibility to be in the best possible state, both for our own sake and the sake of those around us.

In exercises, we identified a way in which we're habitually reactive that we might want to address, and the "danger conditions" that tends to lead to that reactivity.

And we also identified a "sweet spot" experience in which we felt resourceful and creative in difficult conditions.

## HOME PRACTICE

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Be especially aware when moving into your "danger conditions". When you find yourself in them, try to recall your "sweet spot" experience in which you felt more creative and resourceful. See if you can access a more creative mind. (Don't chastise yourself if you can't!)

## RECOMMENDED FURTHER READING

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*Mind Reactive, Mind Creative* chapter in *Buddha Mind* by Sangharakshita, or CD no 31

*Karma and Dependent Origination* chapter in *Exploring Karma and Rebirth* by Nagapriya, Windhorse Publications