

## Shoyo Sensei's Dharma Message:

Buddha-Dharma: Introduction - 4

### Question (1):

In the November *Golden Chain*, you said that “the Buddhist way of living is to live our day-to-day life positively, happily and wholesomely in the midst of various difficulties and troubles of life. And it is possible by understanding the law of Causal Conditionality.” Can you give me some examples of such a law?

### Answer (1):

There are so many examples of Causal Conditionality. Though the law operates both in the material and non-material worlds, the Buddha explained to us only the one in the non-material world, such as actions (physical, verbal and mental), behavior, attitudes or conducts. We ourselves can see them by closely examining and carefully watching reality, including ourselves. In this regard, seeing the law is equal to seeing ourselves.

Among innumerable principles, the following is most crucial:

When self-centeredness is present, *dukkha* is present;  
From the arising of self-centeredness, *dukkha* arises;  
When self-centeredness is absent, *dukkha* is absent;  
On the cessation of self-centeredness, *dukkha* ceases.”

(A. I. 156-157)

### Question (2):

What is *dukkha*?

### Answer (2):

*Dukkha* is stress, anxiety, worry, irritation, fear, confusion, tension, frustration, distress, pain, disappointment and many other negative states of mind that we experience in our day-to-day lives.

The above principle tells us the relationship between self-centeredness and stress, anxiety, worry, irritation, fear, confusion, tension, frustration, distress, pain and disappointment: Self-centeredness and *dukkha* occur interdependently and simultaneously. Self-centeredness and *dukkha* also reduce interdependently and simultaneously. Self-centeredness and *dukkha* also promote and reduce proportionately: When there is more self-centeredness, there is more *dukkha*. When there is less self-centeredness, there is less *dukkha*. When self-centeredness reduces by half, immediately stress also reduces by half.

### Question (3):

What is the value of such information to us?

### Answer (3):

When we repeat a certain behavior, attitudes, conducts or actions for many times, such behavior or action becomes habitual. Habitualized behavior gradually formulates our personalities and characters in a long period of time. That is why, facing the same situation, some experience more *dukkha*, while others experience less *dukkha* and can live more positively. If we act with a big ego constantly, we constantly experience *dukkha*. Understanding the Causal Conditionality of an action and its reaction is, therefore, very crucial to leading a positive way of living.

**Question (4):**

Can you tell me other examples of Causal Conditionality of our actions?

**Answer (4):**

When self-centeredness is present, attachment/anger/confusion is present;  
 From the arising of self-centeredness, attachment/anger/confusion arises;  
 When self-centeredness is absent, attachment/anger/confusion is absent;  
 On the cessation of self-centeredness, attachment/anger/confusion ceases.”

When lying is present, attachment/anger/confusion is present;  
 From the arising of lying, attachment/anger/confusion arises;  
 When lying is absent, attachment/anger/confusion is absent;  
 On the cessation of lying, attachment/anger/confusion ceases.”

When stealing is present, attachment/anger/confusion is present;  
 From the arising of stealing, attachment/anger/confusion arises;  
 When stealing is absent, attachment/anger/confusion is absent;  
 On the cessation of stealing, attachment/anger/confusion ceases.”

And many more. The more carefully you see the reality, the more Causal Conditionality you can see. This seeing of the relationship of action and its reaction is “Wisdom.”

**Question (5):**

How about positive examples of Causal Conditionality?

**Answer (5):**

When *Dana* (giving/sharing) is present, joy/happiness (*Punna*) is present;  
 From the arising of *Dana* (giving/sharing), joy/happiness (*Punna*) arises;  
 When *Dana* (giving/sharing) is absent, joy/happiness (*Punna*) is absent;  
 On the cessation of *Dana* (giving/sharing), joy/happiness (*Punna*) ceases.”

When *Nembutsu* is present, wisdom and compassion is present;  
 From the arising of *Nembutsu*, wisdom and compassion arises;  
 When *Nembutsu* is absent, wisdom and compassion is absent;  
 On the cessation of *Nembutsu*, wisdom and compassion ceases.”

And many more. If to list the “present” section only, it would be, “When *Nembutsu* is present, non-self-centeredness is present,” “When tolerance (*Ksanti*) is present, no-attachment/anger/confusion is present,” “When Mindfulness is present, Wisdom is present,” “When Wisdom is present, Compassion is present,” etc.

All the Buddhist Practices were designed and programmed by the Buddha himself to reduce self-centeredness and to promote happiness and positivity in the person who activates them. It is not “the person” who reduces self-centeredness or promotes positive mind. It is the Practice itself that reduces self-centeredness and promotes happiness. That is also the Law: “When Practice is present, happiness is present.” That is the way it is (*Dhammata*). Shinran Shonin called it “*Jinen Honi*,” the Way It Is. That is why Buddhist Practices are all “Other-Power” (*Tariki*), but never “Self-Power” (*Jiriki*).

**Question (6):**

Are these principles an application of the general formula of Causal Conditionality?

**Answer (6):**

Yes, they are. The general formula of Causal Conditionality is explained in “Buddha –Dharma: Introduction - 2” (November *Golden Chain*):

When A is present, B is present;  
From the arising of A, B arises;  
When A is absent, B is absent;  
On the cessation of A, B ceases

As you noticed correctly, all the above examples of Causal Conditionality are the direct application of the general formula to each different phenomena in reality. The fact that Buddhists constantly take the Three Treasures means that they constantly see the reality of action and its reaction as much as it is and they utilize it in promoting happiness and in reducing unhappiness.

**Question (7):**

If so, isn't it interesting that Buddhism only describes the facts of reality without telling us what to do or what not to do?

**Answer (7):**

Indeed. In this regard, Buddhism is similar to medicine: The Surgeon General only describes the relationship between the illness and its causes. For example, she or he says, “Smoking by pregnant women may result in fatal injury, premature birth, and low birth weight” or “Smoking causes lung cancer.” She or he does not state, “Don't smoke.” Both the Buddha and the Surgeon General are the advocates of health matters: the Buddha advocates the Health of mind (*Nirvana*) and the Surgeon General advocates the health of body, and both do not state “should” or “should not.” They simply describe the Causal Conditionality of reality without value judgments. It is a person herself or himself who embeds a “value component” in the factual statement of “is,” when she or he finds value in it and takes it as an “advice” and “wisdom.”