

Trungram Gyalwa Rinpoche
The Power of the Third Moment Method
Week Two: “Breaking the Cycle of Karma”
January 8, 2018



Hello everyone. In this dharma talk series we are learning about the Third Moment Method. In the last talk we learned why the Third Moment Method is important and compared emotions to clouds.

In this talk we will explore the role of causes and conditions, how emotions set the stage for our experiences, what karma is, and how we can break karma’s vicious cycle.

The first thing to talk about is feeling. Whenever we have experiences we also have feelings. These feelings are not random—all of our experiences stem from conditions and their causes. One event in our life could have a number of conditions. It's not that one event has one cause and one condition. Each event has a number of them. It’s just like a whirlpool—there’s a wide open area at the top but the space narrows and becomes a single point.

For a single experience we have a number of conditions that all boil down to one thing. To understand this we need to understand the meaning of “coexist.” Coexistence means that everything and everyone is connected at a certain level. Look at your experience and you can tell that you are shaped by other people. For example, we are not born with names; your name was given to you by somebody else. Similarly, you’ve been to schools and hospitals, which are built by many people. Some people found them, some people build them, others fund them, and some people work in them. They all do it for students [and patients], working with the intention to help people. When we use a school or hospital we are connected with the people who built it and work in it. The same is true when we help create something. Whatever we create can connect us with future generations.

We, as individuals, are not really individuals but instead the product of many others. In the same way, we influence others. This teaching shows why we need to be compassionate and loving to each other. Knowingly or unknowingly, intentionally or unintentionally, the fact is that we are connected.



[Next we must understand that] nothing happens without cause. We see this when we look at beings with conscious minds, or even landscapes, trees, vegetables, and weather systems. Take a fruit, for instance. Each fruit has its own tree and its own seed. A particular seed is the cause of a particular fruit, such as an apple. A cherry seed cannot create an apple. An apple seed won't create a cherry. Similarly, a good action cannot bring a bad result and a bad action will not bring a good result. This is the cause and effect of karma. The cause is the karma itself and the effect is known as the karmic result or effective karma.

[There are conditions] between karmic cause and karmic result, just like [those between the seed and] the fruit of a plant. From seed, to seedling, to plant, to a big tree that can bear fruit, [a fruit] needs a lot of things: sunlight, water, fertilizer, and good soil.

Karma is moral cause and effect but it is based on life and rebirth, which makes it difficult to understand. [We must understand that] not seeing the cause doesn't mean the cause doesn't exist. Not seeing something is not proof that it doesn't exist. A blind person cannot see, but it doesn't mean that things are not there. Not being able to see the causes of our experiences [is like this].

We must also understand what the root cause of our negative emotions is. Buddha has taught that the real cause of our suffering is ignorance. Even your good heart can cause problems for others. An unwise parent or leader can cause a lot of negative experiences for themselves and others.

Destructive emotions and negative experiences have a direct connection with karma. They are the result of karmic action. If we can free ourselves from these emotions, we can break the cycle of karma, which is also known as samsara.

So what is karma? Karma is intended action. One type of karma is old karma, which was created by actions that already happened. You have either already experienced the result of that karma or the result has yet to occur, but the karma itself already exists. We cannot do much about it.

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The results of old karma can serve as conditions for us to create new karma. If the old karma is from a negative action, it brings a negative experience. That negative experience pushes us to do more negative things, and that's the beginning of the cycle of karma. One experience encourages us to do something similar. If you don't really think but just react you continue the negative karma.

When we have an experience we usually judge whether it's good or bad and either accept it or reject it. That creates karma. When you accept or reject, you are acting. You're engaging in the creation of karma. If someone says a bad thing and you start disliking that person, you are creating karma.

There's an analogy that I want to give here. Karma operates like a key ring. The key ring seems solid and you can move your key seamlessly around the circle, yet there is actually a start and end point—there's a gap. Similarly, our earlier karma creates our experiences, and our reactions create new karma, but in between the two there is a gap. If you use the right practice at the right moment, you can extricate yourself from the cycle, just like you can remove the key if you know there's a gap in the circle. Doing this can bring inner peace and connect us to the nature of mind.

In our next talk we'll learn about the three moments: sensing, arising, and reacting. We'll learn how they work and how we can connect to the essence of mind. Thank you.