**Reviewing the Mind Conditioners—Part 2**

**UNWHOLESOME CETASIKAS**: The following 14 mind conditioners are regarded as unskillful, afflicted disturbances of the mind. They may accompany the ethically malleable Universal cetasikas and some of the Particular mind conditioners, as described in the notes from the previous talk on August 31, 2022. The unwholesome cetasikas are at the core of each moment of dukkha--distress and confusion—in human existence. Unwholesome mind conditioners have more potency than wholesome ones because fear, desire and ignorance are more primitive, instinctual drives; they can be regarded as the “default mode” in the organizing of everyone’s personality and are the cause for all human-generated problems in the world. I propose that the cultivation of ethical/spiritual values such as generosity, kindness, and the power of wise discrimination in the mind as described in all the current world religions are the “leading edge” of human evolution. I believe that the practice of mindful introspection and self-discipline emphasized in Buddhist teachings provides an effective way to actually live by the values that spirituality presents.

The first four cetasikas in this aggregate, ignorance, shamelessness, recklessness, and restlessness, cooperate to shape every moment of unwholesome consciousness:

1. **IGNORANCE**: This is delusion and is regarded as the "root of all immoralities". The Pali word is *moha* (moh-hah), and originally meant "*that which is empty, unreal, vain, useless, and foolish*". It underlies all the conditioning that obscures what is truly occurring-- a blindness that obscures or simply skims the surface of thought processes and becomes “enchanted” by any internal commentary through craving and clinging. It is not the same as lack of education or information—ignorance is a process that lacks insight into how our subjective experience is formed and disregards the destructive consequences of unwholesome beliefs and actions. Buddhist psychology describe levels of ignorance that range from mundane circumstances of deceit or cruelty all the way to the ultimate level of ignorance—not realizing the absence of an enduring/autonomous self.
2. **SHAMELESSNESS**: This is the absence of conscience or moral shame. The Pali word is *ahirika* (ah-he-ree-kah), This conditioning disallows remorse and indicates a lack of personal integrity. An example of this would be stealing something without anyone knowing and not feeling ashamed. The commentaries compare shamelessness to the way a pig wallows in filth rather than preferring a clean environment.
3. **RECKLESSNESS**: This is termed as not dreading the consequences of immoral acts. The Pali word is *anottappa* (ah-no-tah-pah). There is no concern for the effect of one's behaviors on others or oneself, even when there is a real chance of being caught in an immoral act. Other examples would involve ignoring the negative consequences of being resentful or of being greedy.
4. **RESTLESSNESS**: The Pali word is *uddhacca* (oo-dah-chah). This is not the conventional usage of the word, as in physical agitation. Rather, this universal unwholesome conditioning creates a turbulence and instability in mental processes. It is the functional opposite of tranquility. Restlessness is so prevalent and normalized in the mind that it is not easily noticed, and the absence of restlessness is often uncomfortable for meditators—because restlessness is “hard-wired” into the nervous system, the disciplined training that creates tranquility in the mind has to override the normality of restlessness. The antidote for this conditioner is *samadhi* (sah-mah-dee), the integrated functioning of wholesome mind conditioners through mindfulness of breathing meditation.

Unlike the previous four mind conditioners, the next 10 cetasikas are not found in every unwholesome moment of consciousness, but are coordinated with the universal unwholesome mind conditioners:

1. **desire**: Also termed as attachment or greed, this is one of the five hindrances. The Pali word is *lobha* (loh-bah). It is very powerful, acting in the way a magnet attracts iron, functioning to keep the mind “enchanted” by a pleasurable mental formation. It is seductive, creating motivation for lying, stealing, and so on. It is treacherous, conditioning the mind to believe that gratification of the desire has no consequences. Even when no harm is done through gratification, desire brings suffering as the mind is tormented by the experience of wanting, and vulnerable to sadness when the desired object is no longer pleasurable (Consider what it would feel like to eat so much candy it makes you sick!).
2. **WRONG VIEW**:The Pali word for this condition is *ditthi* (dee-tee). This is the opposite of Right View/Right Understanding, found within the Noble Eightfold Path. It is considered a major cause of suffering, as it combines with attachment to sustain the delusion of a permanent self, and discounts the reality and consequences of karma, i.e., the law of cause and effect. It manifests through craving and clinging to the belief that the five aggregates are reliable, controllable and permanent in the creation of oneself.
3. **CONCEIT**: the Pali word is *mana* (mah-nah). This can be called "comparing mind", as in “I am better than you”, or “I am worse than you”. It supports the delusional sense of separateness and duality. It is the product of imagination. We often think of conceit as self-aggrandizing, as it most often is, but it can also occur when the selfing story demands self-defense or self-gratification. When a person becomes identified with a very negative self-identity, that is also the product of conceit.
4. **AVERSION**: This mental state is a contraction of the mind away from an object and is termed *dosa* (doh-sah) in Pali. It can be prompted by unpleasant experience or by the threat of losing a pleasant experience. As with desire, aversion can operate like a magnet and often spreads around in the mind, so that one unpleasant experience creates a persistent, irritable mental filter that clouds otherwise pleasant objects of attention. It is one of the five hindrances.

The next three unwholesome sankharas: envy, stinginess and regret, can only arise in association with aversion.

1. **ENVY**: In Pali, this is *issa* (ee-sah), and functions the same way as jealousy. This self-state organization operates with the view that it cannot be satisfied without the property or status of another. It is the opposite of sympathetic joy, which is associated with lovingkindness, and takes delight in the happiness and success of others unselfishly. Sympathetic joy does not eradicate envy--only wisdom, that is, Right Understanding and Right Intention can do that.
2. **STINGINESS**: This is miserliness or covetousness, the opposite of generosity, and is termed *macchariya* (mah-chahr-yah) in Pali. As with envy, it is with an attachment to self, sustained by a delusional separation based on "having" something to define oneself in relation to others; in this way it is closely associated with greed. This sankhara does not just apply to material possessions; people often withhold knowledge, opportunities, and comfort due to stinginess.
3. **REGRET**: the Pali word for this is *kukkucca* (koo-koo-chah). This is the same as an unclear conscience, and is the fruit of unwholesome speech, action and livelihood. It has similar characteristics to the experience of worry but has a more ethical tone. It is typically associated with restlessness, and as such, is one of the five hindrances. On a more fundamental level, it results from ill-will associated with wrong view. Therefore, as in the case with envy, wisdom is the antidote for regret.

The last three unwholesome cetasikas, sloth, torpor, and doubt, are not always associated with aversion. Sloth and torpor are always co-arising. All three are part of the five hindrances.

1. **SLOTH**: "…has the absence of, or opposition to striving as characteristic, destruction of energy as function, sinking of associated states as manifestation…". In Pali, the word is *thina* (tee-nah), and represents dullness in the mind, a lack of clarity in mental focus due to mental inertia.
2. **TORPOR**: "…has unwieldiness as characteristic, closing the doors of consciousness as function, shrinking in taking the object, or drowsiness as manifestation…". This is *middha* (me-dah) in Pali, can be noticed as a non-responsiveness regarding the ability to pay attention to what is happening in the mind. The antidote for thina/middha is the Awakening Factor of *viriya* (veer-yah), the channeling of energy into the process of paying attention.
3. **DOUBT**: This is termed *vicikiccha* (vee-see-kee-chah) in Pali and is not doubt about the weather and such. It is "…doubt about realities [dhammas, i.e. facts], about nama [mind] and rupa [form], about cause and result, about the four Noble Truths, about the Dependent Origination. It cannot arise unaccompanied by the sankhara of ignorance. It manifests as indecisiveness, wavering, a lack of wise attention.” The antidote for this cetasika is the Awakening Factor of *dhamma vicaya* (dah-mah vee-chah-yah), *the investigation of mental phenomena*.

As mentioned at the beginning of these notes, the human personality, when not well-trained in the principles and practices of Buddhism, is strongly bound to dukkha—distress and confusion—as the normal way of life. Developing the insights and disciplines that emerge from mindfulness of breathing meditation and vipassana (vih-pah-sah-nah) practice at least cultivates a more wholesome and adaptive personality structure, which provides the foundation for spiritual development.

The three key factors that create dukkha, greed, aversion and ignorance, can operate in three ways: greed and ignorance, aversion and ignorance or simply ignorance. The ability to notice with clarity and detachment the transient and impersonal characteristics of these three mind conditioners is a fundamental goal for promoting the process of Awakening. Fortunately, Buddhism describes 25 Wholesome Mind Conditioners, and they will be reviewed in upcoming talks.