4 KARMA – CAUSE AND EFFECT

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SECONDARY SCHOOL L EVEL I

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SECONDARY SCHOOL L EVEL II

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KARMA – CAUSE AND EFFECT

According to the Buddhist view, karma is not synonymous with fate, but the basis for personal freedom and responsible, meaningful action.

The term "karma" literally means "action, deed or activity" and refers to the law of cause and effect. According to Buddha, neither a creator god, a force of destiny, nor an external cause are responsible for our experiences. Past actions, words and thoughts became our present world. We are constantly sowing the seeds for our future.
The explanations about cause and effect offer a basis to shape one's life in a self-responsible and meaningful way. One learns to understand connections and applies the insight that one can consciously decide in everyday life.

According to Buddha, the experience of the world arises from one's own mind.
Through "basic ignorance" one considers to be real the idea of an independently existing "I" and an external world separate from it. One is not aware that words, thoughts and actions lead to corresponding experiences with the same feeling content in one's own stream of consciousness. Instead, one experiences oneself as separate from the world around one and thinks one's experiences are caused from the outside. This is called the dualistic view in Buddhism. The result of these misconceptions are disturbing feelings and actions that cause suffering.

Buddha explained that everything we do, think and say is stored in the mind, and how patterns of speech and action subsequently arise from the impressions stored in the mind, i.e. mental habits. Positive actions produce positive results, negative actions produce negative results.
The simple example of the seed shows that the seed turns into a seedling and the fruit ripens based on the information stored in the seed and in turn forms new seeds. An apple seed becomes an apple tree when the necessary conditions such as warmth, nutrients and moisture come together in sufficient quantities. Comparably, karmic causes come to maturity as an effect under appropriate conditions.

Because the effects can often show themselves even in a longer period of time, the connections of cause and effect are not always immediately recognizable. Karma can extend over many lifetimes. After death, the body dissolves, but not the mind with the impressions stored in it. The stream of consciousness continues from birth to birth as one "digests" and dissolves old impressions and places new impressions in the mind's memory in each life situation. Strong habit patterns are formed. However, there is usually some room to change these habits. Therefore, a good understanding of karma brings more freedom.

According to Buddha, the karmic impression is strongest when these four conditions come together. This is true for both positive and negative actions:

- One grasps the situation clearly.
- One wishes to change something.
- One does it or has it done by others.
- Afterwards, one is satisfied with the result.

If one is aware of these four factors, one can specifically strengthen the effect of positive actions.

If one has acted in a way that causes suffering, one can also counteract it. This is done through four stages of attitude.

- One recognizes that one has brought suffering.
- One wishes to remove what is disturbing.
- One makes a firm resolution not to do it again.
- One consciously acts positively.

To train awareness, meditation is an important Buddhist method. Here, one removes the seeds of constricting and sorrowful experiences stored in one's mind before they come to maturity. One gets the necessary distance to disturbing feelings and gains clarity. In this way, meditation frees one from compulsive and unconscious entanglement and confusion.

If one understands these connections, one does not let oneself be discouraged by difficult situations, but uses them as learning processes. And one gains the insight that it is always worthwhile to put positive impressions into the mind by developing good habits. One can make a conscious decision to do this.

INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS

COURSE OF LESSON – SECONDARY LEVEL I

OBJECTIVES

The students will be able to:

- distinguish between fate, divine influence, coincidence and karma (= cause and effect).
- explain the term "karma" from a Buddhist point of view.
- reflect on the consequences of actions.
- reflect on whether and to what extent everyone is responsible for his or her own luck and life.

SECURING KNOWLEDGE	"Everyone is the architect of his own fortune?" What do you think about this statement?	**Material 3** Students also discuss and reflect on the Buddhist perspective
TRANSFER	Where is the interplay of cause and effect readily apparent?	Students collect examples Students examine a context in more detail
DEEPENING	How karma matures? "Seed and Fruit" A Buddhist analogy of cause and effect	**WS 2** **Variations A, B, C** with different levels of difficulty Students understand the analogy **Answers to WS 2**
EXERCISE 2	What is Karma? The Buddhist explanation on cause and effect	**Material 2** Students complete table from **WS 1** Students collect results **Answers to WS 1**
EXERCISE 1	Is there a force that guides the world? God, fate, chance,...	**Material 1** **WS 1 and Answers to WS 1** Students find definition, examples and scope for action Students collect results
INTRO	"Everyone is the architect of his own fortune"	Students deal with proverb

BASIS

What might interest the students about the topic:

- Is there a force that directs the world?
- How much influence do I have?
- Can I do anything at all to change what is happening around me?

INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS

DIDACTIC REFERENCES – SECONDARY LEVEL I

OBJECTIVES

The students will be able to ...

1. distinguish between fate, divine influence, coincidence and karma (= cause and effect).
2. explain the term "karma" from a Buddhist perspective.
3. reflect on the consequences of actions.
4. reflect on whether and to what extent everyone is responsible for their own luck and life.

NOTES

The concept of karma is clearly separated from the concept of fate in Buddhism. According to Buddha, neither a creator god nor an external cause is responsible for our experiences. Karma is the principle of cause and effect: Our deeds, words and thoughts (karma literally: "deed, action or activity") - also from previous lives - are the causes for what we experience now. What and especially how something is experienced depends on the stored impressions from before, and at the same time new seeds are constantly being sown. When one understands that every action has consequences for oneself and the environment, one takes responsibility and is not discouraged by difficult situations. One gains the insight that it is always worthwhile to put positive impressions in one's mind. To this end, one can make a conscious decision.

INTRODUCTION

Impulse:
"Everyone is the architect of his own fortune".

- The students first discuss the correctness of this proverb in partner work. The range of answers is from "Yes, everything is possible" to "Not in every case" to "Very rarely".
- There are different belief systems, ideas about life and role models. This is collected in plenary.

EXERCISE 1

The students work in groups with **Worksheet 1** and **Material 1** to develop a definition and an example of the three terms "God, fate, chance". In a further step, they are asked to assess the respective scope of action for humans. In the class discussion, the results are recorded in the form of a table on the board or whiteboard, see **Answers to WS 1**.

EXERCISE 2

In this step, the Buddhist model of karma - cause and effect is introduced. The students receive **Material 2** and read the text. They now complete the table on **Worksheet 1** on the term "karma" and answer question 5 on the basic Buddhist attitude. This can be done in partner work, the result is clarified in plenary and recorded on the board or whiteboard, see **Answers to WS 1**.

NOTES

Karma (cause and effect) works even when the connections between the two are no longer recognizable - for example, when numerous causes overlap or a lot of time passes. Cause and effect does not mean constriction, but freedom. In fact, it allows us to shape both the present and the future at any moment through actions, words, and thoughts. The responsibility for the experience of happiness lies with everyone unreservedly.

DEEPENING

For understanding karma, the doctrine of cause and effect, Buddha drew on the analogy of seed and plant from nature.

Variation 1 with a high level of demand

The students find the parallels between the development of plants (from seed to fruit) on the one hand and the maturing of karma (according to cause and effect) on the other hand. For this purpose, **Worksheet 2 A** serves as a template, the filling in of the columns is done in partner work. The students understand the analogy and explain the results in the plenary on the board/whiteboard, cf. **Answers to WS 2**.

Variation 2 with intermediate level

On **Worksheet 2 B** the development of plants is given. The second column on the maturation of karma is completed in partner work and discussed in plenary. The results of the work are compared on the

board/whiteboard, see **Answers to WS 2**.

Variation 3 with easy level of demand

The students receive **Worksheet 2 A** as a template. They work out the analogy between the development of plants (from seed to fruit) and the ripening of karmic impressions (cause and effect) by sorting the cut-out text modules from **Worksheet 2 C**. This can be done in partner work. The results of the work can be compared on the board/ whiteboard, see **Answers to WS 2**.

These three variants can also be used for simultaneous differentiation within very heterogeneous groups.

KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER

In class discussion, the pupils look for examples where the interplay between cause and effect is easy to see!

Possible examples could be:

- doing nothing for others - being unpopular
- smoking - smoker's lung/lung cancer
- drug addiction - early death
- traveling a lot - openness to other people
- helpfulness - being liked
- aggressiveness - one is rejected
- healthy lifestyle - one is fit
- regular learning - good school performance
- frequent lying - others become suspicious of you
- honesty - the others trust you

It is also useful here to examine an example more closely for its connections: e.g., "I'm unpopular, nobody likes me!" By the resigned attitude and too little active friendly actions one strengthens the cycle. Liberating would be a fundamental attitude change with the decision to become positively active oneself and then to do so.

SECURING OF KNOWLEDGE

Finally, the it comes back to the initial statement "Everyone is the architect of his own fortune". **Material 3** is offered for this purpose. On the one hand, it is about reflecting the Buddhist point of view, but also about respecting the personal opinion of the students.

MATERIAL 1

TERMINOLOGY

FATE

1. a higher power that is imposed on someone, that happens without any visible human intervention, that decisively determines someone's life
2. higher power that determines and directs life in a way that cannot be influenced

COINCIDENCE

1. something that was not foreseen, that was not intended, that happened unexpectedly
2. (outdated) suddenly occurring seizure

GOD

1. (in the monotheism, particularly in the Christianity) highest supernatural being, that as a Creator cause of all happening in nature, the fate of humans steers, judge over their moral behavior and their salvation bringer is
2. (in polytheism) cultically worshipped superhuman being as a personally conceived force of nature, moral power

A **god** (depending on the context also goddess, deity) is within different mythologies, religions and beliefs as well as in metaphysics a supernatural being or a higher power. In the doctrine and practice of many religions, a god or several gods are accorded special veneration and attributed special qualities; among other things, being the first origin or creator or shaper of all reality.

Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/God

WORKSHEET 1

IS THERE A FORCE THAT GUIDES THE WORLD?

EXERCISES

1. Define the first three terms using **Material 1**.
2. Find examples of how this power is manifested and how it affects people.
3. Think about the scope of action that the individual has in each case.
4. After reading **Material 2**, fill in the last column.

	GOD	FATE	COINCIDENCE	KARMA
DEFINITION				
EXAMPLES				
SPACE TO ACT				

5. What does the statement "behave like a Buddha until you become a Buddha" mean?



ANSWERS TO WS 1

IS THERE A FORCE THAT GUIDES THE WORLD?

EXERCISES

1. Define the first three terms using **Material 1**.
2. Find examples of how this power is manifested and how it affects people.
3. Think about the scope of action that the individual has in each case.
4. After reading **Material 2**, fill in the last column.

	GOD	FATE	COINCIDENCE	KARMA
DEFINITION	God determines how things happen.	Fate, as an unknown power, influences a person's life in a predetermined way.	An event occurs unexpectedly and unintentionally. It is not predictable.	Everything is based on cause and effect: The deeds, words and thoughts (also from previous lives) are the causes for what the person experiences.
EXAMPLES	After death, you go to heaven.	A fortune teller prophesies wealth.	A roof tile falls on my head.	I often fib and lie and nobody trusts me anymore.
SPACE TO ACT	I live in a way that pleases God, who rewards or punishes me. I give thanks for good fortune or ask for good circumstances in life.	I can accept or reject my fate, but I cannot change it.	Cannot be controlled by humans. It does not matter how I behave.	Every thought, every word and every action has an effect. Thereby I influence my future life. I can decide to perform positive thoughts, words and actions.

5. What does the statement "behave like a Buddha until you become a Buddha" mean?

One is mindful, clear and has the necessary distance; one no longer takes things personally and has inner freedom; one behaves auspiciously and acts sensibly for the best of beings.



MATERIAL 2

A SHORT EXPLANATION ABOUT KARMA – CAUSE AND EFFECT

Karma translates as deed, activity or action (with body, speech and mind).

Karma is the doctrine of cause and effect. From a Buddhist perspective, everything we think, say or do leaves an impression on our mind. These impressions give rise to the world we experience. Negative deeds, words and thoughts lead to difficult or unpleasant situations; positive thoughts, words and actions, on the other hand, lead to pleasant experiences.

These impressions are like seeds stored in the consciousness which, when the conditions are right, produce a corresponding fruit.

No one would expect to sow cacti, for example, and then harvest sunflowers in that field. A wise gardener selects the seeds carefully and tends the plants until he can harvest the fruit. He ensures good growing conditions.

This example from the plant world shows that it can take a long time for a seed to develop into fruit. The same applies to impressions in the mind. Sometimes it takes even longer than a lifetime for an impression in the mind to unfold its effect. For this reason, we do not always recognise the causes of what we experience. So we sometimes ask ourselves: "Why me?" We are not aware that we ourselves have laid the causes for these experiences through our own actions, words and thoughts in earlier times.

When confronted with unpleasant situations, Buddhists accept the challenge in order to improve the situation as much as possible. This can also be done through inner attitude if nothing can be changed externally. They take responsibility because they understand that they are now sowing the seeds for the future.



The fundamental attitude and motivation are very important; goodwill and compassion are the basis of action. In order to experience happiness and bring it into the world, one consciously decides to act positively and avoid harm. In Buddhism, one is very mindful of one's words, deeds and thoughts, because every moment is a conscious shaping of future experiences.

As a Buddhist, one also uses the effective tool of meditation to specifically remove negative impressions from the mind and build up positive ones, just as a gardener weeds out unwanted plants and thus promotes the growth of the desired ones. The resulting peace of mind gives one the necessary distance from disturbing feelings and brings greater clarity. You become increasingly conscious and can decide to let go of what causes suffering and behave in a way that brings happiness. You no longer take things personally and, thanks to the freedom this brings, you are able to act meaningfully and powerfully for the benefit of all beings. You behave like a Buddha until you become a Buddha.

WORKSHEET 2A

HOW KARMIC IMPRESSIONS RIPEN

Work assignment for partner work
Find the parallels between the development of plants (from seed to fruit) and the maturing of karmic impressions (cause and effect). Enter your thoughts in the table.

	
DEVELOPMENT OF PLANTS (FROM SEED TO FRUIT)	**MATURING OF KARMIC IMPRESSIONS (CAUSE AND EFFECT)**

WORKSHEET 2B

HOW KARMIC IMPRESSIONS RIPEN

Work assignment for partner work
Find the parallels between the development of plants (from seed to fruit) and the maturing of karmic impressions (cause and effect). Enter your thoughts in the table.

 **DEVELOPMENT OF PLANTS (FROM SEED TO FRUIT)**	 **MATURING OF KARMIC IMPRESSIONS (CAUSE AND EFFECT)**
Seeds are sown.	
You sow what you want to harvest. A particular seed becomes the corresponding fruit.	
The fruit needs time and the necessary conditions (soil, sun, water, fertilizer) to mature.	
From the seed grows the plant and this brings forth fruits. In these new seeds ripen.	
Growing conditions can be improved.	
Seeds can be removed, weeds can be weeded, and plants can be pruned into shape. For this one needs knowledge and must be able to distinguish.	

WORKSHEET 2C

HOW KARMIC IMPRESSIONS MATURE

Work assignment for partner work
Buddha gave the analogy of seed and plant. Cut out the text blocks and sort them into the two columns of the table, arranging them in logical order.

You sow what you want to harvest. A particular seed becomes the corresponding fruit.

Seeds are sown.

From the seed grows the plant and this brings forth fruits. In these new seeds ripen.

The fruit needs time and the necessary conditions (soil, sun, water, fertilizer) to mature.

Growing conditions can be improved.

Seeds can be removed, weeds can be weeded, and plants can be pruned into shape. For this one needs knowledge and must be able to distinguish.

The impressions in the mind are like seeds and with appropriate triggers and stimuli (one is triggered) they are activated.

The causes one sets have corresponding effects. Positive deeds lead to happiness, negative ones to suffering.

Causes have effects. Experiences are made. And accordingly one acts again.

Impressions arise in the mind through thoughts, words and deeds.

Through meditation, a conscious attitude and positive deeds, positive impressions are increased in the mind.

Negative impressions can be removed in the mind through appropriate meditations before they mature. One consciously decides not to do anything negative.

DEVELOPMENT OF PLANTS (FROM SEED TO FRUIT)	MATURING OF KARMIC IMPRESSIONS (CAUSE AND EFFECT)

ANSWERS TO WS 2A+B+C

HOW KARMIC IMPRESSIONS MATURE

WORK ASSIGNMENT FOR PARTNER WORK

To WS 2 A
Find the parallels between the development of plants (from seed to fruit) and the maturing of karmic impressions (cause and effect). Enter your thoughts in the table.

To WS 2 B
Add to the right column of the table how karmic impressions (according to cause and effect) mature, comparable to the growth of plants.

To WS 2 C
Buddha gave the analogy of seed and plant. Cut out the text modules and sort them into the two columns of the table, arranging them in a logical sequence.

DEVELOPMENT OF PLANTS (FROM SEED TO FRUIT)	MATURING OF KARMIC IMPRESSIONS (CAUSE AND EFFECT)
Seeds are sown.	Impressions arise in the mind through thoughts, words and deeds.
You sow what you want to harvest. A particular seed becomes the corresponding fruit.	The causes one sets have corresponding effects. Positive deeds lead to happiness, negative ones to suffering.
The fruit needs time and the necessary conditions (soil, sun, water, fertilizer) to mature.	The impressions in the mind are like seeds and with appropriate triggers and stimuli (one is triggered) they are activated.
From the seed grows the plant and this brings forth fruits. In these new seeds ripen.	Causes have effects. Experiences are made. And accordingly one acts again.
Growing conditions can be improved.	Through meditation, a conscious attitude and positive deeds, positive impressions are increased in the mind.
Seeds can be removed, weeds can be weeded, and plants can be pruned into shape. For this one needs knowledge and must be able to distinguish.	Negative impressions can be removed in the mind through appropriate meditations before they mature. One consciously decides not to do anything negative.

MATERIAL 3

EVERYONE IS THE ARCHITECT OF HIS OWN FORTUNE

"EVERYONE IS THE ARCHITECT OF HIS OWN FORTUNE?"
WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT THIS STATEMENT?

