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Course Name

Strategic Communication for Sustainable Development

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Lecture 08: Psychological Perspectives on Sustainability Communication

Welcome back to the class titled strategic communication for sustainable development my name is Aradhna Malik I teach at the Indian Institute of Technology in Kharagpur west Bengal India and I am helping you with this course in the previous classes we talked about sustainability communication sustainable development sustainability communication and in the very last class we discussed some sociological perspectives to sustainable development to sustainability communication in this class we are going to talk about the psychological perspectives to sustainability communication.

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Psychological aspects of sustainability communication (Knuse, 2011)

" ... the problem is how to influence & modify non-sustainable behavior patterns together with those factors on which they are based, such as values, attitudes, knowledge, motivation, habits, social norms, as well as the structural or contextual conditions of such behavior."

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Okay some psychological aspects of sustainability communication now when we talk about the psychological aspects we essentially discuss the problem of how we can influence and modify non-sustainable behavior patterns together with those factors on which they are based such as values attitudes knowledge motivation habits social norms as well as the structural or contextual conditions of such behavior now to give you an example let us take the example of you know many of us are in the habit of throwing toffee wrappers just candy wrappers on the ground when we have candy.

We many of us do not want to take the trouble of looking for a dustbin and throwing candy wrappers in the dustman what does this do to the environment and I am going to take a hypothetical example I am not I do not have the exact figures but approximate values but just to show you the volume of non-biodegradable trash that this can generate on the IIT campus we have approximately 20 to 25,000 people live on the IIT campus let us assume that out of those 25,000 people maybe 10,000 people like to have a piece one or two pieces of candy every day.

And out of those 10,000 people maybe 5,000 people end up throwing candy on the ground tiny candy wrappers just a toffee wrapper so I mean that is the number we are talking about 5,000

people throw candy wrappers on the ground so maybe you know and the other five thousand find a dustbin and throw these candy wrappers into the dustbin now these candy wrappers or toffee wrappers are non biodegradable they are made of material that does not get converted into the or it does not regenerate and form part of the soil it is made of plastic or some such material now.

So these five thousand people throw on an average about ten to fifteen thousand candy wrappers on the ground and you and let us assume that these candy wrappers are not picked up by the people who sweep now the attitude is that I will throw it on the ground the sweeper will come and the sweeper will clean it big deal so what now problem is that the candy wrapper is so small it is so tiny that many times it just gets buried underneath the soil you step on it gets dirty nobody notices it notices it.

It sort of keeps getting buried under the soil and it does not degenerate soon an average we are dumping about ten to fifteen thousand candy wrappers on different parts of the IIT campus just the IIT campus so maybe we are throwing them into the bushes we are throwing them on the ground we had not throwing them into the dustbins where they will be picked up from and disposed of in a manner that they will not harm the environment imagine the volume if somebody tells you if I come up and say if you are a student here who is throwing a candy wrapper on the ground and I say please do not do it what will your reaction be.

None of your business mam the dustbin is so far away I do not know where I can find a dustbin does not matter the sweeper will come and sweep it and they will take care of it, it is not my responsibility it is just a small candy wrapper I cannot change your behavior I cannot change the way you think about it but if I explain this whole thing to you I hope you're listening to this lecture very carefully maybe if you listen to this lecture you think about your community my community here is the IIT campus I live here a teach here I work here, so this is my home.

So wherever you are living in your own colony in your own school, college, workplace just imagine the volumes that are being generated only in your own personal environment now when I give you these numbers does not something some idea come to your mind do not you start feeling a little guilty for not taking care of your environment as you should I have not done

anything and if I go and tell you, you will not believe me but I give you if I give you all these numbers and figures and I ask you to just think of the volume that is being generated does something not click does something not make more sense that is what we are talking about in this lecture it is about finding out what influences people's behaviors you know everybody from a number of disciplines want to talk about sustainability we are all concerned about things we all want to do the best we can for our environment but what we are really.

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Psychological aspects of sustainability communication (Kruse, 2011)

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Not realizing is that in order to do something for the environment we need to get the environment involved we need to get the community involved, I can do only so much, I can inform my students, I can convince my students you know I can convince my family but that is where my nose ends in somebody else's begins and I can just tell them please do not do this and the number of people who will listen to me will also be limited.

But if by some way I can help the community understand, what I am saying and help the community internalize these principles and help the community make these principles a part of their culture, then the behaviors will changed our behaviors are governed by what we see in our

environments here in a place like India we see, people cleaning roads we see people doing different things.

So if I throw a wrapper on the ground somebody will sweep it somebody will put it into the dustbin I have grown up with that notion big deal one toffee rapper, but then when we think of these volumes when we think of these implications maybe it is not just want of ear Apple it is millions of tons of toffee wrappers that are going to harm my own earth that is going to affect my quality of life maybe 20, 30, 40 years from now, okay so that is what we are talking about here, okay.

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Concerns regarding psychological aspects of sustainability communication (Kruse, 2011)

- The discourse regarding sustainability is socially constructed
- The social construction of the discourse regarding sustainability is contextual and constantly changing and is rooted in different cultures
- The above mentioned discourse (patterns) are relatively new and as a result likely to evolve significantly
- "If everyday behavior patterns are to be changed, it is important to consider group and subgroupspecific constructions & mentalities."

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The there are some concerns regarding the psychological aspects of sustainability communication the discourse the discussions regarding sustainability are socially constructed who decides what is sustainable development ,who decides what sustainability communication is, who decides what development means, okay. So that is socially constructed then the social construction of the discourse or discussions regarding sustainability are contextual.

And constantly changing and rooted in different cultures, I am sitting here trying to explain the, the harmful effects of throwing toffee wrappers on the ground it is a small thing but it is not biodegradable it will not be absorbed into the soil you dig it out 50 years from now you will still find the same Toffee wrapper there, okay. So I am talking to you and if you have listened to me and if something it has made some sort of a difference to how you think about things.

If it has affected you in some small way if it has resulted in you being careful the next time you throw you know wrappers of packaged foods on the ground instead of a dustman the, then I have done my job and that is the social construction of reality.

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We are talking about social construction of the discourse you say I heard this and you know it seems to make a little bit of sense to me, so you talk about one person who listens to me talks to two other people they look at the lecture and out of those two even one person who goes around and tells to other people and slowly, slowly, slowly a number of people start believing in whatever is being said and they try and convince more people.

So the word spreads and the community itself starts believing that we needs to do whatever we can to prevent damage to our own environment it is not somebody else's environment it is the place where I am living it is my community, my home, my colony, my state, my country. So you know so we take ownership and that is how the word spreads.

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And so this is rooted in culture it is contextual it is constantly changing one person's experience contributes to the change in the environment and similarly that multiplied by the number of experiences that people have multiplied by the number of people there are in the environment is this the, the, the quantum of change that takes place in the environment. The abovementioned discourse patterns are relatively new.

And as a result likely to evolve significantly so the discussions I knew what sustainability means whether it is a environmental social economic you know what are we really talking about if everyday behavior patterns are to be changed it is important to consider group and subgroups Pacific constructions and mentalities we are talking about constructions of reality, constructions of meaning, what do the subgroups believe, what do communities believe, what do families believe?

So you know how we do things and that we have to first understand and then and how do we feel about changing our behavior and then we need to convince the communities to change their behavior in order to preserve in order to save their own environments, okay. So that is these are a

few concerns that people dealing with the psychological impact or with how our mental makeup effects the environment, okay.

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Challenges to the perception and evaluation of global environmental change one is the immediacy of impact many of these the first one the first point human beings lack the requisite sense organs for detecting many environmental conditions and changes our sense organs have limited capacities my eyes can only see so much my nose my ears can only hear so much my nose can only smell so much.

But my eyes over the course several decades have seen that the mountain range at the foothills of which we have our own home family home is now Baron it used to be a perennially white mountain range the Tortara mountains in Himachal Pradesh and they are why they used to be white, now they are grey we rarely get to see a completely white mountain range, you know at some point during the winter that is how I as a person have started understanding climate change that yes, global warming is taking place, because this mountain that used to be white all the time is no longer white it is becoming very hot in my hometown where we did not we, we barely needed fans now we need air conditioning.

So you know why is that and then I start looking into the reasons and then I start understanding no, I need to at least save what I can okay, so our sense organs are not equipped to see these changes they are slow. But then we understand these things from far away, for example ozone depletion I have read about it I have understood it but I do not see it, I do not feel it, I do not smell it and that is one limitation okay. Then climate the time between cause and effect slow release of pollutants into rivers and the death of fish some varieties of fish have completely disappeared, okay.

So I mean the, the cause and effect is so slow tree, cutting trees in Himachal Pradesh cutting trees in the environment has probably contributing contributed to the Tortara range not being white for so long and has probably started contributing to the, the problems we have with water supply. So that kind of thing that is what I'm talking about it, it is not immediate you will see it you will see the effects over a period of time like I was telling you the last time you know indiscriminate digging of bore wells you will say okay, today I have enough water I have had enough water in my home for say 8, 10, 20 years.

But slowly even that starts drying up why because the water table is going down and why is it going down because so many people are drilling, so it is not one person and you know it takes years and then slowly we start realizing what is happening and that is a concern and the physical distance between the effect and the people. Now people who have the resources will be comfortable no matter what, so even if the effect is there they will say, okay I will buy my comfort from somewhere else, but they have not the people who have limited resources are more prone to or have a higher chance of realizing this there you know the relationship between the cause and effect.

Because they are the ones who get affected first, okay so as long as we can afford our comfort we do not really realize these problems in the environment. They are affecting us but we are finding other ways to deal with them, but the people who do not have the means to deal with them are the ones who realize it. Okay, small damages to the environment or improvements are seen as a drop in the bucket in the growing stream accumulating over and, and the growing

stream accumulating over time is overlooked as is the dissemination of new behavior patterns to larger groups.

The example of the toffee wrappers, one toffee rapper what difference is it going to make? It does make a difference, it accumulates into tons of toffee wrappers over a period of time in one campus, okay. The above confound the understanding and interactions between the systems dealing with the above and interfere with decisions that need to be taken to deal with emergencies and those that are required for the longer term. So all of these problems start you know confusing us.

Where do I go, what do I do, oh my god so much of, impact is happening on the environment then or so much of problems are happening in the environment what do I need to do should I take immediate steps, should I pace out my steps, how do I change my behavior, so and who do I speak to how do the systems deal with each other it is not only the environment it is also the, the economy it is also the social fabric that is continuously changing we are becoming more and more aware of what is happening around us we talk to each other.

But then we also need to draw a balance between being overly sensitive to what is going on and being realistic in changing our behavior patterns over the course of time. So you know we, we, we need to find out which of our decisions or which of our behaviors need to be changed immediately to deal with emergency situations and which of our behaviors need to be spaced out and which of our behavior because if we change our behavior because of an emergency the likelihood, the likelihood of us losing that behavior when the emergency has been dealt with is very high.

But if we make something a part of our daily routine of our member of our regular routine behavior patterns the likelihood of those behavior patterns changing is, is reduced considerably. So all of these things are dealt with in this through this perspective, okay.

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Consequences of concerns regarding invisibility & remoteness of consequences

- Immediate experience regarding consequences is likely to be replaced by interpersonal communication and/ or media opinion, thereby confounding how people feel about these issues
- As a result of the above, the ability to connect the cause to the effect is hampered. Many times a medley of causes results in the effect. And that can only be experienced, and not explained in its entirety. And the quest for a few scapegoat causes can totally confound the understanding of issues.

Consequences of concerns regarding invisibility and remoteness of consequences so you know of consequences when we talk about consequences, consequences of the unsustainable behaviors. The first remoteness means the experiences or the results of indiscriminate unsustainable or behavior that does not support sustainability are too far away for us to even acknowledge them so that is the invisibility and I mean we do not feel them and remoteness is they are too far away invisibility is that they are so minuet that we do not feel them.

Immediate experience regarding consequences is likely to be replaced by interpersonal communication, here is where communication comes in again you will say, okay this is a class on communication where did communication vanish this is where it is immediate experience I cannot have immediate experience but now I am sitting here telling you that the dollar hard range is no longer right and then maybe you go and you talk you hear people from that region tell you the same thing several people tell you the same thing so you get information from people who have experienced things first hand and or media opinion somebody in that region covers it maybe National Geographic will cover it one day maybe they already have covered it.

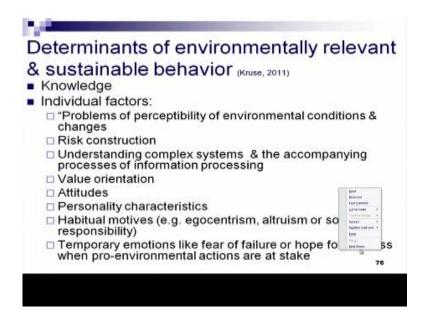
You know one of our Indian channels will cover it and then they will share it with you and then you realize okay maybe something is not right and media shares this there by confounding how

people feel about these issues again confusion start if you are not a direct stakeholder if you have not been affected directly then you will say okay why should I listen to it why should I pay attention it is not affecting me but maybe it is how much can I do how much should I do etc. Okay as a result of the above the ability to connect the cause to the effect is hampered if you are not a first-hand experience.

Or if you have not experienced things firsthand then your ability to understand the relationship between the cause and effect is, is affected many times a medley of causes results in the effect many times a number of causes result in the effect so but we want to categorize the causes so we start looking for one okay is It global warming is it indiscriminate cutting of trees okay let us start a policy let us implement a policy that no more trees are to be cut down and the entire state of Himachal Pradesh that is not it what else is happening is it industries okay we will pass a law that no more industries are to be set up in the state of.

Himachal Pradesh that is also not it we need to draw balance and a number of issues will be contributing to the problems that we are facing so we need to understand the issues in entirety but then our need to find a few scapegoat reasons or a few reasons that we can pin the blame on can found our judgment of an understanding of these issues.

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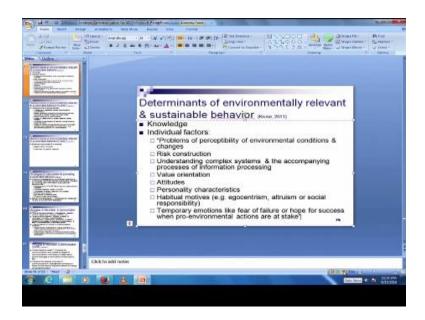


Some determinants of environmentally and relevant sustainable behavior how is our behavior influenced one is knowledge so what do we know the second is individual factors problems of perceptibility of environmental conditions and changes have told you this risk construction how do we perceive risk how do we understand risk understanding complex systems and the accompanying process of information processing how do we understand the systems the environmental systems the social systems around us and.

How do we process the information value orientation what are our values what do we what are not aware not do we our attitudes our personality characteristics am I even inclined to listen to these signals coming to me from the environment or not habitual motives for example egocentrism altruism or social responsibility I am what I am I do not care what happens to the environment that is egocentrism altruism is I will do everything in my capacity to help other people even at the cost of my own well-being and social responsibility is a balance yes I have irresponsibility to myself.

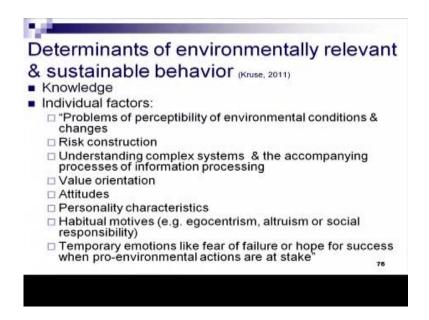
I also have a responsibility to my community and I need to draw a balance so what is what, what are our motives like what do we like to do you know what do we are what are we inclined to do on a regular basis and that is what influences how we perceive these things and I am sorry I forgot to close the inverted commas so I will do that as I am talking.

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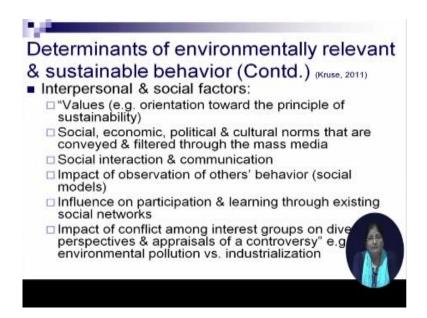
To you temporary emotions like fear of failure or hope for success when pro-environmental actions are at stake so you say okay I will do whatever I can but then is it really going to make a difference what if I fail I am going to you know join an activist group.

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I will go and try and change things in my environment but what will I get out of it what if my efforts fail so these are fear of failure or hope for success when pro-environmental actions are at stake maybe I will get a policy out what if you do not get that policy out so that will affect the way you think about these things.

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These are the individual factors then come interpersonal and social factors that affect how we change our behavior whether we change it or not values for example orientation towards the principle of sustainability what are our values are we even concerned as a society about sustainable development. The activists would say people in concrete jungles and big cities are not, I disagree with them a lot of people are concerned they do not know what to do about it, but and they say okay well if that was the case why would they have built you know cities that are now concrete jungle, so that is what we are talking about.



Orientation towards the principle of sustainability, the second one here is social economic political and cultural norms that are conveyed and filtered through the mass media, mass media has an immense role to play in this whole ideation, in this whole process of understanding what sustainability is what sustainable communication is. So what is the media telling us to do is the media propagating the idea that we need to conserve our environment or is the media not really paying any attention to it that is another question here.

Social interaction and communication impact of observation of others behavior, social models, what do we see in our environment, how do we see people behaving if I see my peers doing something my tendency to go and do the same thing will be higher, we learn from each other we see the value what others do brings to their environments and we, that motivates us to also become responsible ourselves.

So that is one influence on participation and learning through existing social networks and, you know how do we that is another determinant the what do the social networks do and do they encourage participation, do the encourage learning what kind of influence they have on

participation and learning for the communities that they serve, impact of conflict among interest groups on diverse on divergent perspectives and appraisals of a controversy.

For example, environmental pollution versus industrialization where do we draw the line, how do we balance it and that is one thing that we all deal with, you know when we are talking about environmentally relevant sustainable behavior that affects how we perceive our environments and what we do as a society to deal with these problems in our environments okay.

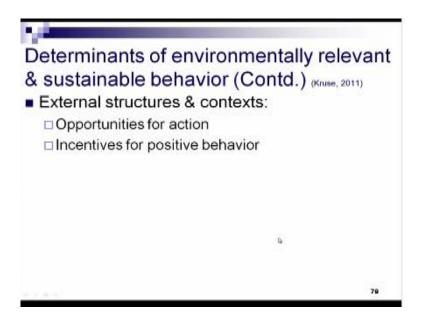
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External structures and context, the opportunities we have for action you may feel very strong about things, but then sitting in your own home you say what can I do incentives for positive behavior even if I start throwing toffee wrappers in the dustbin will I get an award for it no, you will not get an award for throwing your toffee wrappers and packages in the dustbin but the incentive that you will get is that.

You could motivate others to become socially responsible but you are not getting an award, you know so I mean that kind of thing. So what is the immediate benefit for me for indulging in positive behavior and that is the external structure, external context that influences our behavior.

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Okay.

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Strategies & instruments for promoting	
sustainable behavior (Kruse, 2011)	
"Cognitive strategies try to influence cognition & knowledge of environmental conditions & change by working with information & educational approaches."	es
 Characteristics of SMCR (Berlo) can be understood a managed 	and
□ "Concrete feedback" added to SMCR	
 □ "Antecedent strategy (Learning from models) □ Prompts (e.g. posters) 	
 □ Self-defined or adopted goals □ Private or public commitments 	
 Behavioral strategies – "Consequence measures reward & punishment/ feedback" 	s –

Some strategies and instruments for promoting sustainable behavior we have two types of strategies we have cognitive strategies, and we have behavior all strategies. So cognitive strategies try to influence cognition and knowledge of environmental conditions and changes by working with information and educational approaches and these are the you know characteristics of, you know these can be approached in various ways.

We have the one example is the is Berlo's source message channel receiver model now there is concrete feedback, now there is antecedent strategy etc so what I mean, you know all of these things have an impact on how we think how we learn about sustainability, but maybe we will cover this we will cover this strategies for promoting sustainable behavior.

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Principles of information & communication

(Kruse, 2011)

- "Who is the communicator?": Competence, credibility, personal appearance, prestige, affiliation, etc.
- "What is communicated?": Content & design of information. Accuracy, understandability, personalization, presentation, connection to beliefs, interests & knowledge of recipients & stakeholders, & ability to evoke emotion & stimulate action.
- "What is intention or function of a communication situation?":
 - □ Indirect request: "Presents facts, options, standards, & objectives, [and] model behavior or feedback with no intent to persuade or make calls for action"
 - Direct request: "Meant to convince individuals about facts, goals & present reminders, send appeals & encourage selfcommitment."

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And the principles of information and communication

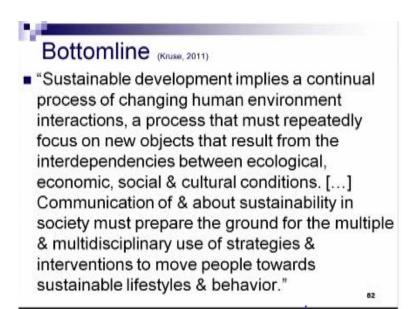
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Principles of information & communication (Contd.) (Kruse, 2011)

- "What media is used?": Purpose for communication and impact on target of communication; Individual or mass reach; Direct message or stimulation of discussion, etc.
- "What is the desired success of communication?" Assessment of impact in terms of noticeable long term behavior change or something else?

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In the next class but the bottom line here is sustainable development implies a continual process of changing human environment interactions. A process that must repeatedly focus on new objects that result from the inter dependencies between ecological, economic, social and cultural conditions, communication of and about sustainability in society must prepare the ground for the multiple and multidisciplinary use of strategies and interventions to move people towards sustainable lifestyles and behavior, we have to internalize these principles.

We need to understand what sustainability is we need to understand what sustainability will do for us in the future, we have to understand why we are having this discussion. And only then can we change our behaviors can we understand where we are going wrong and then change our behaviors appropriately. So we will cover the strategies and the principles.

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Principles of information & communication

(Kruse, 2011)

- "Who is the communicator?": Competence, credibility, personal appearance, prestige, affiliation, etc.
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And the instruments.

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- Principles of information & communication (Contd.) (Kruse, 2011)
- "What media is used?": Purpose for communication and impact on target of communication; Individual or mass reach; Direct message or stimulation of discussion, etc.
- "What is the desired success of communication?" Assessment of impact in terms of noticeable long term behavior change or something else?

In the next class.

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And we will take it we will take the discussion from here, so do think about the things that have been discussed and thank you very much for listening.