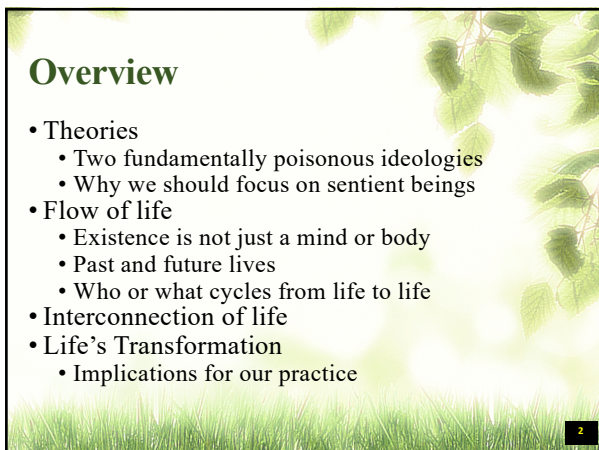


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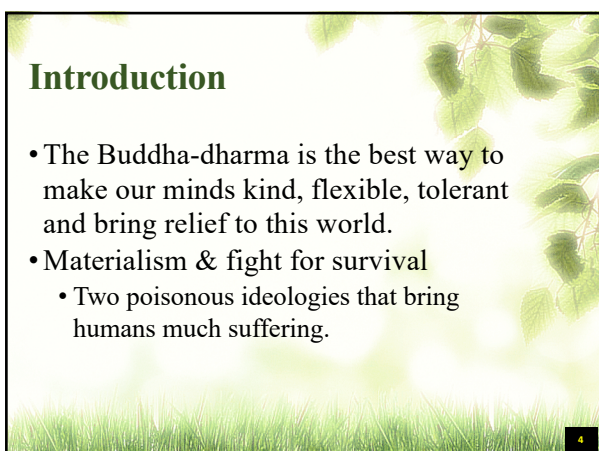
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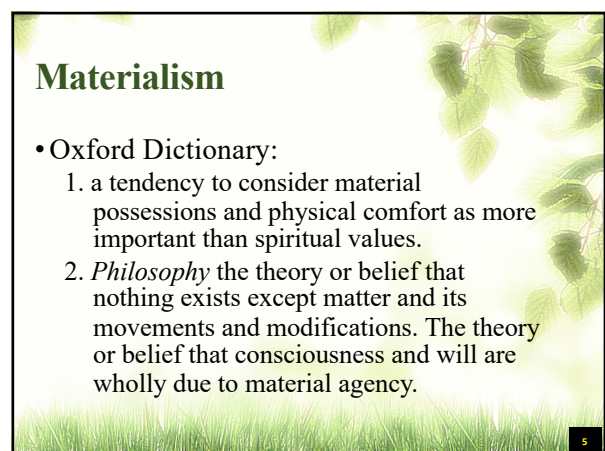
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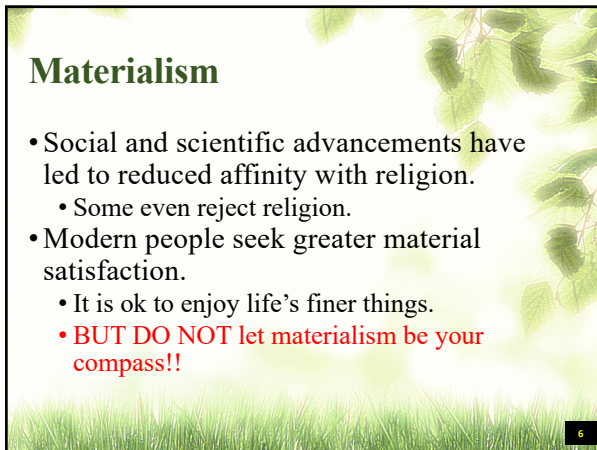
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5

Materialism

- Social and scientific advancements have led to reduced affinity with religion.
 - Some even reject religion.
- Modern people seek greater material satisfaction.
 - It is ok to enjoy life's finer things.
 - **BUT DO NOT let materialism be your compass!!**

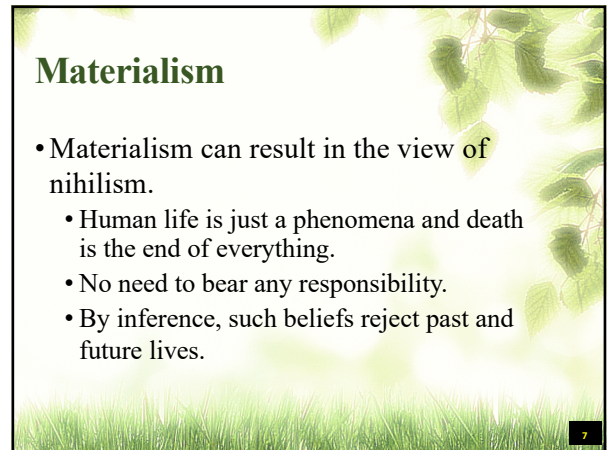


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6

Materialism

- Materialism can result in the view of nihilism.
 - Human life is just a phenomena and death is the end of everything.
 - No need to bear any responsibility.
 - By inference, such beliefs reject past and future lives.

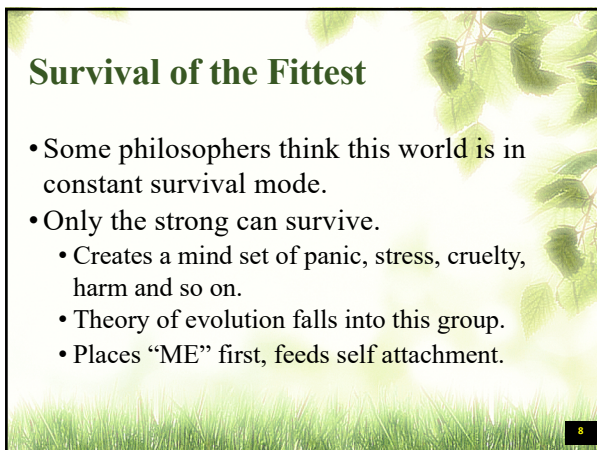


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7

Survival of the Fittest

- Some philosophers think this world is in constant survival mode.
- Only the strong can survive.
 - Creates a mind set of panic, stress, cruelty, harm and so on.
 - Theory of evolution falls into this group.
 - Places "ME" first, feeds self attachment.



8

8

Survival of the Fittest

- Not just about sustaining our daily life.
- In society it manifests in our social structures, institutions, interactions with others.
 - Competition, alliances, favoritism...
- We must be the dominant one.



9

9

Two Poisonous Ideologies


Materialism	+	Survival of the Fittest
Loss of spiritual inclination		Craving for life and material sustenance
Must be the conqueror, not the conquered.		
Death is the end, a permanent escape, no more responsibility.		



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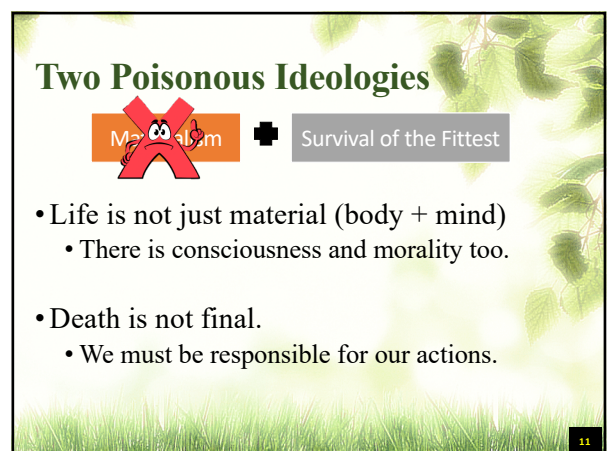
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Two Poisonous Ideologies



Materialism	+	Survival of the Fittest
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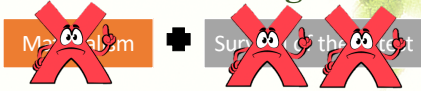
- Life is not just material (body + mind)
 - There is consciousness and morality too.
- Death is not final.
 - We must be responsible for our actions.



11

11

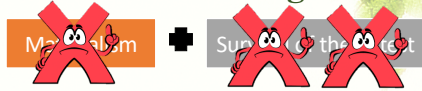
Two Poisonous Ideologies



- Ideal human existence is not to conquer.
- Nurture mutual assistance, respect, kindness and harmony.
- Peace cannot come from war.

12

Two Poisonous Ideologies



*The victor gains more enemies,
The defeated suffer poor rest.
Giving up victory and defeat,
One can sleep peacefully.
~Samyuktāgama, Sūtra 1,236~*

13

A Focus on Sentient Beings

- Life is an endless cycle, developmental, progressive, always renewing the old...
 - This concept is found in other religions and philosophies too.
- There are some common perceptions about such an endless cycle.

14

A Focus on Sentient Beings

- In terms of the universe, everything is alive
 - Humans, animals, flora, forests, mountains, rivers etc...
- In terms of human existence (society)
 - Civilization continually grows.

15

A Focus on Sentient Beings

- Focusing on the universe/society places the focus on external and common things and creates a sense of relativity to oneself.
- When we focus on the whole, we tend to neglect the individual.

16

A Focus on Sentient Beings

- Common groups
 - Minerals, flora, fauna (humans are sub-group)
 - Physical, physiological, psychological
- Dharma teachings on endless cycle is based on psychological activity.
 - A life is a manifestation of psychological activity.

17

A Focus on Sentient Beings

- Each life (psychological activity) continues from endless cycles of lives.
 - Flowing river
- **Sentient beings:** possesses consciousness and emotions.
- **That which lives:** karmic perspective that has a manifested cycle of existence.

18

A Focus on Sentient Beings

- Karma and its results arise from defilements.
 - When the Dharma talks about cycle of life it is about psychological existence (category of animals, incl. humans).
 - The groups of flora, mountains, rivers etc are not the central focus when talking about the cycle of life.

19

A Focus on Sentient Beings

- Sentient beings in the Buddha-dharma
 - Combination of physical, physiological, and psychological elements.
 - Not simply just the mind.
 - Buddha-dharma investigates sentient beings' endless cycle of life, not just humans.

20

River that Flows From Past to Future

- Buddhists should develop confidence in the view that life spans three cycles.
 - Past, present and future
 - Death is not the end of everything, but the start of the next life.
- Life is like a flowing river that runs continually.

21

River that Flows From Past to Future

- Major religions have some form of life continuation.
 - Two-life cycle: Christianity and Islam have life in heaven/hell after death.
 - Three-life cycle: Buddhism and some Indian religions believe in past, present and future lives.

22

River that Flows From Past to Future

- Two-life cycle
 - Doesn't really touch on why we are born.
 - God's plan and we just accept it.
 - Why is there a difference in the suffering and joy we experience?
 - Why are some smarter, richer, taller, etc...?
 - Rational thinkers find it hard to accept these differences are the will of a creator.

23

River that Flows From Past to Future

- Endless cycle of life = endless cycle of death
- Birth = beginning of life
- Death = beginning of the [next] life.
- Some view the cycle of life with a permanent soul/atman/agent that moves from one life to the next life.

24

River that Flows From Past to Future

- Better view is that life is like waves in the ocean: constantly in motion.
- When water flows over different areas it takes on different shapes, currents, rapids, eddies etc...
- Cyclic existence is the same, there are different experiences based on karmic causes.

25

River that Flows From Past to Future

- There is no unchanging permanent soul.
- There are endless transformations connecting the past to future lives.
- Whether we are smart/stupid, healthy/sickly, human/animal etc...all these differences are due to our past karma (past and present life).

26

River that Flows From Past to Future

- Present life is not brand-new arising from nothing.
- All we do in this life leaves behind a karmic force that affects our future.
- This flow of past causes giving rise to present/future results applies to individuals, families, communities, countries etc...

27

River that Flows From Past to Future

- Neglecting the three-life cycle can result in misunderstandings.
 - Liberation is pessimistic (ascetic arhats), passive (solitary dwellers), or a form of escape (arhats)
 - Lack proactivity to do good, making their future grim.

28

More than Just Mind and Body

Elements of Sentient Beings	Five Aggregates	Further groupings
Psychological (mind)	Feeling Perception Volition Consciousness	1. Six sense consciousnesses Mind consciousness covers all mental objects including past, present, future, internal, external, tangible and abstract. 2. Subtle mind consciousness
Physical (body)	Form	1. Skin, bones, flesh, blood etc 2. Sense organs and sense objects 3. Four elements: earth (solid), water (liquid), wind (motion), fire (heat)

29

More than Just Mind and Body

- Subtle mind consciousness is complex
 1. Perception of an individual and permanent self that underlies all other activities.
 2. Personality traits vary in each life but present as a cohesive character in each life.
 3. Preservation of experiences
 - *Manas* (7th consciousness) attaches to self
 - *Ālaya* (8th consciousness) stores experiences

30

More than Just Mind and Body

- Mental + physical elements manifest an appearance, function, identity, wholeness.
- Body and mind changes in each life, but there is still the appearance of oneness.
- Sentient beings cannot be separated from body and mind and when combined they are more than just body and mind.

31

More than Just Mind and Body

- Cannot find a separate “thing or soul” by departing from the activities of body and mind.
 - Simile of a house
 - Body and mind gives rise to character and function of a sentient being that is merged with life.

32

More than Just Mind and Body

- The body and mind develop mutual reliance and influence.
 - Perception of and behavior as an individual
 - View/inclination to benefit oneself at the cost of others.
- Buddha-dharma’s cyclic existence is from the angle of individuals. When individuals behave correctly, society naturally improves.

33

More than Just Mind and Body

- Life manifests as stages: conception, birth, childhood, youth, old age, death.
 - Conception/birth: body and mind promote growth and affect each other.
 - Aging: body and mind deteriorates and the ability to work together weakens.
 - Death: end of this life and preparation for the next life.

34

Past and Future Lives

- Cyclic existence is hard to comprehend.
- Some people can recall some of their past lives.
- Meditation can also allow one to see their past lives and others’ past too.
 - Meditation requires much effort.

35

Past and Future Lives

- Cyclic existence is hard to comprehend.
 - Buddha's example of a tree in the mountains.
 - If you follow Buddha's instructions, you can see that tree—three-life cycle.
 - If not, it is like a deaf person rejecting the existence of sound.

36

Past and Future Lives

- Materialist:
 - Believe in things they can see and touch.
 - Consciousness (to them) relies on matter/body.
- Buddhism:
 - matter is continually changing.
 - Ceasing/death = change in the way matter exists, not annihilation.

37

Past and Future Lives

- Material manifestations are constantly forming and decaying.
 - Matter is not destroyed.
- Consciousness is not produced by matter but relies on it to manifest its functions.

38

Past and Future Lives

- Confidence in cyclic existence:
 - Acceptance that matter is not destroyed.
 - Rejection of erroneous materialist views.
 - Understanding that the mind/consciousness does not end at death.
 - Without a body it does not manifest but it arises when a new body forms.

39

Past and Future Lives

- Existence and time are inseparable
 - Time = past, present, future/ before and after
 - Denial of past = rejection of time.
 - Consciousness and life also permeate the three periods of time.

40

Past and Future Lives

- Confidence in cyclic existence gives us a positive view of existence to create a better future.
- Cause and effect is generally accepted.
- Buddha-dharma's cause and effect is about past actions affecting future outcomes.
 - Karmic force

41

Past and Future Lives

- We know what we do/say/think, affects others (external).
- But there is also an internal affect on us.
 - Karmic force
 - We must take responsibility for our actions.

42

Continuation of Life

- Ponder the notion of moving from past to future lives.
- Young people do not think they will die.
- But those facing death will always look for signs of life/hope.

43

Continuation of Life

- Craving for existence is universal.
 - Different concepts of liberation, eternal afterlife, soul etc.
 - E.g. Chinese practice of ancestral offerings is not just about remembrance, it implies the ancestors are still alive in some form.

44

Continuation of Life

- Buddha-dharma teaches that life continues after death.
 - Ordinary people sometimes progress and sometimes regress in their different lives.
 - Sages continually progress in each life until Buddhahood.

45

Who Cycles Through Life

- After accepting life continues on, who or what experiences each life?
 - Some say a permanent agent: soul, atman, I
 - Buddha-dharma has worldly schools that teach of the “inexplicable I”, “true I”, or “true mind”.
 - Based on dependent co-arising, there is no permanent “I”.

46

Who Cycles Through Life

- Though impermanent and selfless, life continues on unbroken.
- Karmic forces of our past actions transform into future potential.
- Each life is different but inseparable from the past.
- Simile: a country endures as governing parties change.

47

Who Cycles Through Life

- Each life comprises a set of karmic forces while other karmic forces lay dormant.
- Death is the exhaustion of one group of karmic forces.
- Simile of a school: changes in staff and students

48

Interconnection of Life

- Worldly tendency is to focus on the species and not the individual, unless it becomes endangered.
 - At times certain animals are culled.
- Buddha-dharma focuses on each sentient individual.

49

Interconnection of Life

- Sentient beings have continued their existence since time without beginning.
- Each life arises according to the law of dependent co-arising.
 - Even though we manifest separate bodies, we are mutually related and inter-dependent.

50

Interconnection of Life

- Covid vaccine example
 - Why can vaccines be made so quickly?
 - Dependent on past centuries of research and development.
 - We now benefit from scientists whom we do not know even existed.

51

Interconnection of Life

- Our interaction with others over lifetimes produces a shared pattern of existence.



52

Interconnection of Life

- Things without consciousness are non-sentient: mountains, rivers, flora...
- The karma of sentient beings
 - Provide potential for future lives
 - Provide power to advance non-sentient things.
 - Non-sentient things manifest due to our karma.

53

Interconnection of Life

- If life is explained from the macro aspect of the whole universe and not the individual, then we focus on the external (material) rather than internal (morals).
- We focus on the whole and neglect the individual.

54

Interconnection of Life

- Buddhist should focus on the individual.
 - We reap what we sow.
- When all people have a joyous AND wholesome existence, then the world can manifest harmony and vitality.
- We improve the world by improving ourselves.

55

Life's Contradiction

- Life is an endless web of causes and results.
- Sentient beings experience more sorrow than joy.
 - Though life is full of sorry, we crave it.
- Facing the truth of life is not pessimistic!

56

Life's Transformation

- Buddha-dharma teaches us how to gain happiness and reduce suffering while in cyclic existence.
 - Cease all evils
 - Cultivate all virtues
 - Purify the mind
 - Transform imperfection to perfection—samsara can become a pure land.

57

Life's Transformation

- Having right view on cyclic existence:
 - Will influence and guide our behavior,
 - Support our learning/understanding of the doctrines on karma, impermanence, suffering.
- Learning Dharma should help us practically in our lives to be better.

58

Life's Transformation

- Life is suffering
 - Incorrect view → pessimism
 - A state of experience that results in the emotions of suffering, pain, etc.
 - Not everything in life is suffering, there are some joys too.

59

Life's Transformation

- Life is suffering
 - Impermanence, hence suffering.
 - This is the basis of Buddha's teaching that life is suffering.
 - Aims to awaken people to impermanence and hence work towards perfection and permanence.
 - Like the sick seeking a cure.

60

Life's Transformation

- Buddha-dharma
 - Points out that worldly life is suffering (first noble truth)
 - Explains the cause of suffering (second noble truth)
 - Reveals the ending of suffering (third noble truth)
 - Shows how life can be transformed (fourth noble truth)

61

Life's Transformation

- Buddhism is internally focused on training the body and mind, which flows through to our actions and interactions externally.
 - Not selfish or self-centred
 - Benefit others and oneself

62

Life's Transformation

- Transcendental practice of morality

Benefits me	Benefits others	Good or bad ?
X	X	VERY BAD!!!
✓	X	Bad
X	✓	Good
✓	✓	Very Good!

63

Life's Transformation

- Transcendental practice of meditative concentration.
- Meditation improves our mental discipline.
- Our mind guides our actions

64

Life's Transformation

- 慎獨存誠 shèndú cún chéng
 - Maintain righteousness and honesty even when alone—self discipline.
- 寧可在大廟裡睡覺，不在小廟裡辦道。
 - One would rather sleep in a large monastery than to practice in a small temple.

65

Life's Transformation

- Meditation in Buddhism is for the sake of developing transcendental wisdom.
- Wisdom is the dividing line between ordinary beings and sages.
- Practicing Buddhism aims to perfect our wisdom, with perfect wisdom there is liberation and Buddhahood.

66

Life's Transformation

- Wisdom is the key to ending cyclic existence.
- Wisdom is the skill for bodhisattvas to remain in samsara to help sentient beings.
- Learning and developing our wisdom will help us go through cyclic existence and cope better with challenges.

67

Qualities of Wisdom

- Developing wisdom includes the three essentials.
 - Confidence, compassion, wisdom
- True prajñā embodies confidence/faith, great compassion, tranquility and Truth.
- As wisdom develops one's faith also develops.

68

Qualities of Wisdom

- Wisdom guides compassion.
- True compassion aligns with selflessness and counteracts arrogance.
- Knowledge/rationality can lead to arrogance, incorrect views, attachments...
- Perfect wisdom possesses great compassion.

69

Qualities of Wisdom

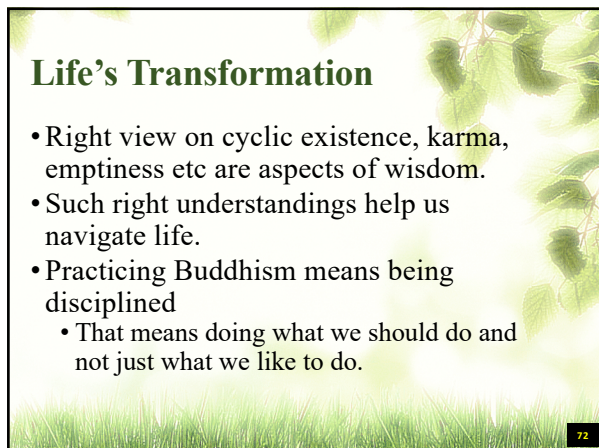
- Prajñā also possesses meditative tranquility.
- Foundation for cultivating wisdom.
 - Learning the Dharma
 - Contemplating the Dharma,
 - Practicing the Dharma (includes tranquility and insight meditation).

70

Qualities of Wisdom

- State of realizing the Truth transcends duality!
- *Avatamsaka Sūtra*
“There is no wisdom as subject that realizes the Truth, and no Truth as the object to be realized.”

71

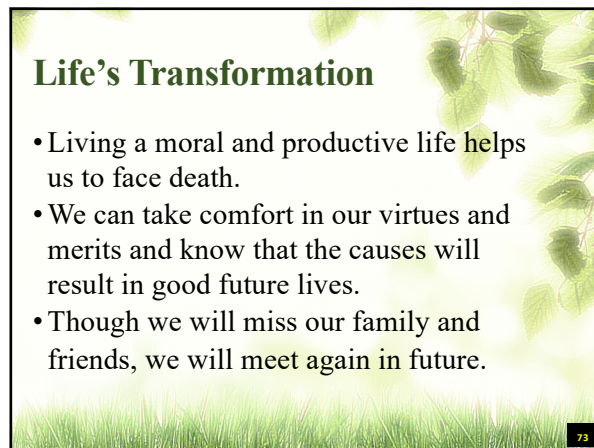
A slide with a green background featuring a field of grass at the bottom and leaves on the right side. The title "Life's Transformation" is in bold green text. Below it is a bulleted list of three points.

Life's Transformation

- Right view on cyclic existence, karma, emptiness etc are aspects of wisdom.
- Such right understandings help us navigate life.
- Practicing Buddhism means being disciplined
 - That means doing what we should do and not just what we like to do.

72

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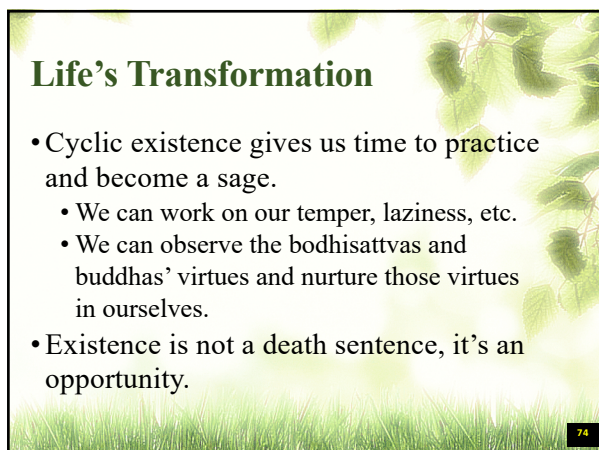
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Life's Transformation

- Living a moral and productive life helps us to face death.
- We can take comfort in our virtues and merits and know that the causes will result in good future lives.
- Though we will miss our family and friends, we will meet again in future.

73

73

A slide with a green background featuring a field of grass at the bottom and leaves on the right side. The title "Life's Transformation" is in bold green text. Below it is a bulleted list of three points.

Life's Transformation

- Cyclic existence gives us time to practice and become a sage.
 - We can work on our temper, laziness, etc.
 - We can observe the bodhisattvas and buddhas' virtues and nurture those virtues in ourselves.
- Existence is not a death sentence, it's an opportunity.

74

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