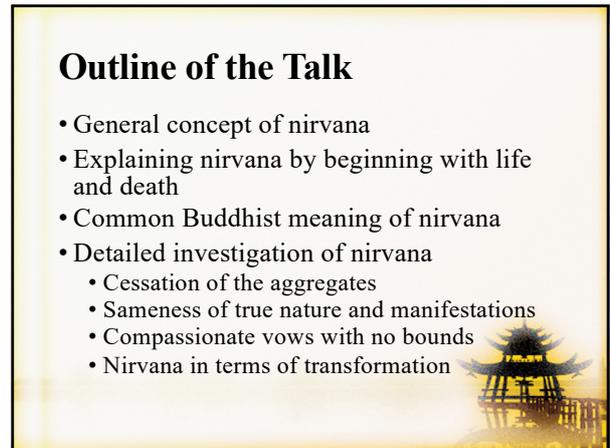
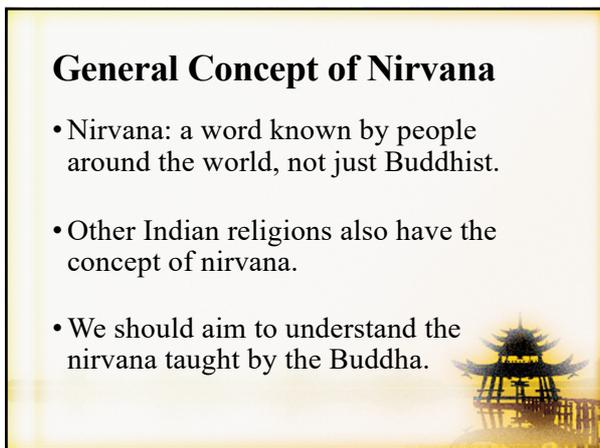


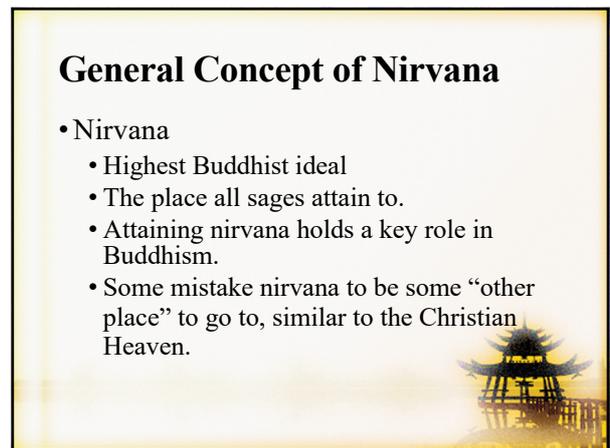
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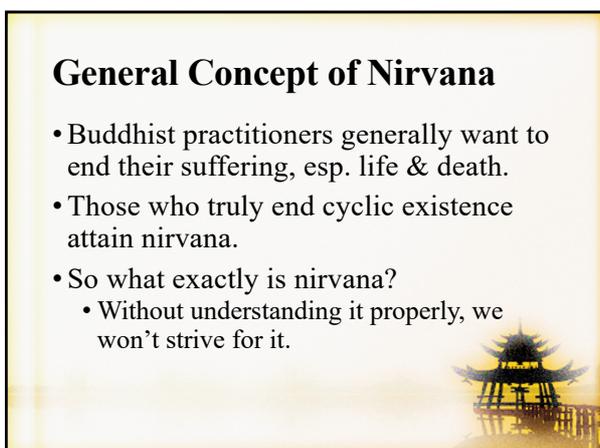
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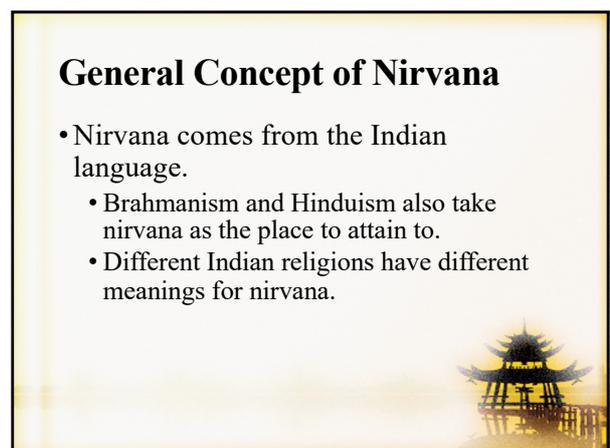
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5

General Concept of Nirvana

- Nirvana
- Basic definition means satisfaction from material enjoyment.
- Some define it as cessation of breathing or mental activities.
 - Such states are meditative realms.



6

General Concept of Nirvana

- Buddhism's nirvana
 - Has the meaning of "negation" and "dissipation."
 - Ancient Chinese translations are "elimination" or "eradication" and contains the meaning of transcending.
 - Venerable Xuanzang translates it as "complete cessation."



7

General Concept of Nirvana

- Buddhism's nirvana
 - Negation, dissipation, transcending, complete cessation.
 - Freedom, comfort, happiness that transcends worldly happiness.
 - **Wholesome state of equality, freedom, and happiness.**



8

Explaining Nirvana by Beginning with Life and Death

- Nirvana is the dissipation of life and death.
- Life and death brings suffering.
- Transcending life and death brings happiness.
 - Like brightness overcoming darkness.



9

Explaining Nirvana by Beginning with Life and Death

- E.g. Human life
 - Conception in the mother's womb, the birth, growing up, aging, then death.
 - Manifested process of life and death.
- What's the problem with life and death?
 - Ans: Death IS NOT the absolute end.



10

Explaining Nirvana by Beginning with Life and Death

- Buddha-dharma's view
 - Humans have sentient bodies and consciousness.
 - After birth there will be death
 - After death there is another birth.
 - Our present life arose from a previous death.
 - Just like the sun rising in the east and setting in the west continually.



11

Explaining Nirvana by Beginning with Life and Death

- Most religions believe in an after-life.
 - E.g. Christianity's eternal life in Heaven or Hell.
 - But there is no focus on a past life.
- Buddha-dharma teaches about a past, present and future life: cycle of lives.
- This cycle is a major problem!



12

Explaining Nirvana by Beginning with Life and Death

- This cycle of lives is a BIG problem!
 - Like a country going through peace then war then peace and war again and again.
 - E.g. failed or broken cease fires and peace talks in the Middle East. It is the people who suffer.
 - Life is similar, life after life, some are more pleasant, some more suffering...



13

Explaining Nirvana by Beginning with Life and Death

- Ideal to have lasting peace and order.
 - In life there is always suffering:
 - We strive for material comforts but not all wishes are attained.
 - There are agreeable and disagreeable people.
 - Our bodies get sick and die.
 - **Suffering doesn't end when the body dies.**



14

Explaining Nirvana by Beginning with Life and Death

- In some lives we are born in the heavenly realms and life is good.
- In other lives we regress, and life is bad.
- Roller coaster of ups and downs over endless lives.
- **Life and death is a BIG problem!**



15

Explaining Nirvana by Beginning with Life and Death

- In this life we can have achievements and then lose everything.
- Even the present life is a roller coaster of joy and suffering.
- When we really see this vicious cycle, then we will want lasting freedom/peace.



16

Explaining Nirvana by Beginning with Life and Death

- People generally fear dying, but is it that scary?
- People fear what they don't know and cannot control.
- Death is scary, but the life afterwards is even more scary.



17

Explaining Nirvana by Beginning with Life and Death

- A new life means more suffering.
- Confucius says:
Without understanding life, how can one understand death?
- Buddha-dharma pays close attention to what happens after death.



18

Explaining Nirvana by Beginning with Life and Death

- We must recognise there is suffering in all aspects of life.
 - Illness and good health
 - Achievements and failures
 - Wealth and poverty
 - Stability and instability in a country
 - All six realms, upper and lower realms have suffering.



19

Explaining Nirvana by Beginning with Life and Death

- Underlying nature of human existence includes pain and suffering.
- Cycle of life fundamentally is one of pain and joy, tears and laughter.
- The aggregate of the body and mind and the process of life and death is the true vexation.



20

Aggregate of Body and Mind

- Most religions split the person into the body and a soul.
 - Body dies but the soul remains.
- Indian language
 - Soul = Self or *atman*
 - Originally free and happy, but somehow came to Earth and began to experience suffering.



21

Aggregate of Body and Mind

- Indian religions generally think that if the *atman* finds liberation from this world, it regains freedom and happiness.
- Some ask:
 - If there is no *atman*, who or what cycles through life? Who or what ends cyclic existence?



22

Aggregate of Body and Mind

- Buddha-dharma says that the view and attachment to “Self” are the fundamental causes leading to cyclic existence.
- Buddhism teaches selflessness/non-self
 - The aggregate of the body and mind is a continuous phenomena.



23

Aggregate of Body and Mind

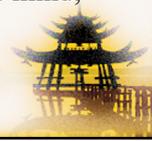
- With wisdom Buddha observed
 - Five aggregates (form, sensation, perception, volition, consciousness),
 - Six elements (earth, water, fire, wind, space, mind),
 - Six sense organs.
- Sentient beings are a combination of body and mind activities, which then creates the notion of a “Self”.



24

Aggregate of Body and Mind

- Buddha-dharma teaches
 - *One sees only Dharma where there is no intrinsic “Self”.*
- Conception/birth = start of body and mind activities.
- Death = dispersion of body and mind, start of a new combination.



25

Karma

- Results/outcomes arise from karma
- Karma arises from defilement.
- Wholesome/unwholesome activities leave behind latent forces.
- Karma: action or latent force of past action.



26

Karma

- Latent karmic forces reside deep in our bodies and mind.
- Karma affects each being profoundly.
 - E.g. When we think about a past deed (good or bad) it can still affect us.



27

Karma

- Unwholesome karma can obstruct us from becoming good in this life.
 - E.g. if one gets involved with the wrong crowd, it is hard to leave.
- Good karma counteracts bad karma.
- Good karma yields happiness.
- Bad karma yields suffering.



28

Karma

- Generally, people are encouraged to do good.
- But why should we do good?
- Who experiences the strongest effect of our actions?



29

Karma

- Humans have many different circumstances in terms of health, wealth, fame, lifestyle, relationships etc.
 - All such differences are due to our karmic forces.
 - “Results arise from karma”
 - E.g. Why are some people born blind?



30

Karma

- Our wholesome and unwholesome karmic forces determine the results we experience.
- We cannot eradicate karmic forces.
- What do we eradicate to stop karmic forces from fruiting?



31

Karma

- What is defilement?
 - The many unwholesome and impure elements in our minds.
 - Wholesome karma is also inseparable from defilements.
 - Esp. Ignorance: not knowing emptiness.



32

Karma

- Unwholesome and wholesome karma are driven by defilements.
- Wholesome karma can change to become unwholesome.
 - E.g. Volunteer working at a charity can become attached to their job and not want to share it with others.



33

Karma

- It is good to volunteer at charities but remember to practice selflessness, reflect on one's defilements etc.
- All our activities are inseparable from the influential power of self-attachment, i.e., all actions are inseparable from defilement.



34

Karma

- Self-view is like a force that draws things together and causes people, matters, society and countries to establish a connection based on their self-view.
- Self-view makes things merge to become one.
 - Individual, family, society, country



35

Karma

- Self-view develops into a mental strength and has the function of aggregation.
 - E.g. a young couple marries and creates a family. Later there may be a divorce and the family disperses. When conditions arise new families are created.



36

Karma

- After separation there is aggregation due to the body and mind's attachment to a self.
 - This applies to countries, tribes, families and even individual beings.



37

Karma

- As one ages and dies, this mind and body breaks up.
- Attachment to self-view causes new karma to result in a new body and mind.
- Only when the aggregation force from this self-view is absent, then there is liberation from the cycle.



38

Karma

- Sages who end defilements still carry out actions. Such deeds are not defiled.
- When they pass away (enter parinirvana), there is no longing for existence, no self-view.
 - Hence no more becoming.



39

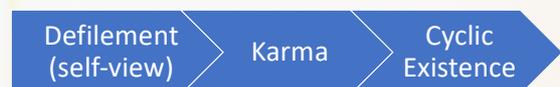
Karma

- All sentient beings long to last forever.
 - Taking impermanence to be permanent.
 - *Desire for a future existence.*
- Until one has ended defilements, we should create wholesome karma so future lives are pleasant.



40

Karma



- The special characteristic of nirvana is the ending of cyclic existence.



41

Ending Defilement is Attaining Nirvana

- Cultivating meditation to develop wisdom can end defilement.
 - It is possible to experience nirvana in this life.
 - When self-view ceases, all actions thereafter are not motivated by selfishness and defiled karma is not created.



42

Ending Defilement is Attaining Nirvana

- Lofty claims of worldly people
 - *To be totally impartial*
 - *Work for the greater good of all beings*
- Unavoidably, such “good” actions are influenced by each person’s preferences.
 - E.g. Covid vaccine distribution in the world.



43

Ending Defilement is Attaining Nirvana

- Ending defilement requires profound wisdom to awaken oneself and eliminate self-view.
- People who can end their defilement are called sages in Buddhism.
 - They possess the highest virtue.



44

Ending Defilement is Attaining Nirvana

- There is a misunderstanding that nirvana is attained after death.
- Sages can attain nirvana while still alive.
 - They experience liberation, freedom from worries.
 - *Joy and sorrow do not move the heart*
 - *Being carefree anywhere.*



45

Ending Defilement is Attaining Nirvana

- Buddhism’s original intent emphasized personal experience of nirvana in this life.
- But now, not many Buddhists seem to seek nirvana in this life.
- We can attain nirvana by practicing diligently to end the defilement of ignorance.



46

Ending of Karma and Results is Entry to Nirvana

- Our physical bodies are a result of past karmic forces.
- Once this body is formed and born it becomes a manifested reality and there will be shortcomings and suffering.
 - Even Buddha suffered back pains and food poisoning.



47

Ending of Karma and Results is Entry to Nirvana

- Focusing on changing this body (the result) or eliminating karmic forces will not end cyclic existence.
- Where there is defilement, defiled karma will be created.
- Cutting off defilement is what can deactivate karmic forces.



48

Ending of Karma and Results is Entry to Nirvana

- Teachings on karma say
 - Where there is karma there will be results.
 - Karmic forces cannot be destroyed
- People misunderstand these teachings and think it is impossible to end cyclic existence due to countless creations of karmic forces.



49

Ending of Karma and Results is Entry to Nirvana



- Soybeans need right conditions to grow.
- Karmic forces need defilements to yield results.



50

Ending of Karma and Results is Entry to Nirvana

- When the teachings says ending of karma and its results is entry to nirvana,
 - This is NOT referring to elimination of karmic forces.
 - This is referring to deactivating karmic forces by ending defilement.



51

Ending of Karma and Results is Entry to Nirvana

- All sentient beings have affection.
 - Parent-child, partners, siblings, friends and so on. All are **conditional love**.
 - Only self-desire is unconditional.
 - *The greatest love is for oneself (Samyuktāgama).*
- Beings crave existence, even when terminally ill.



52

Ending of Karma and Results is Entry to Nirvana

- Some fear the word death.
 - What is there to fear?
 - Fear the “I” will disappear along with all of one’s possessions, family, fame etc.
- Craving of self-desire causes one to perpetually experience the results of cyclic existence.



53

Ending of Karma and Results is Entry to Nirvana

- Overcoming self-desire ends cyclic existence.
 - Once this body dies one enters nirvana.
- At the point of realizing the truth one attains nirvana.
- Nirvana is a deep personal experience.



54

Ending of Karma and Results is Entry to Nirvana

- **Nirvana with residue** (before death)
 - Attaining nirvana when alive, one still feels physical suffering. Sages still age and get sick, but the physical pain does not bring forth other suffering.
- **Nirvana without residue** (after death)
 - Ending of karma and its results
 - Entry into nirvana



55

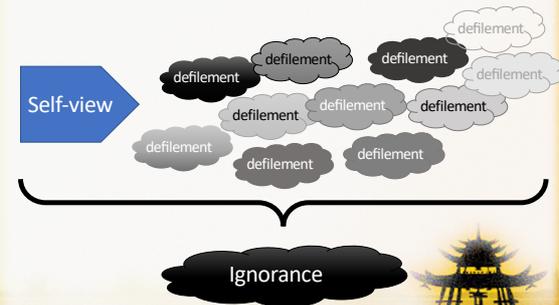
Detailed Investigation of Nirvana

- Cessation of the aggregates
- Sameness of true nature (emptiness) and manifestations (notional existence)
- Compassionate vows with no bounds
- Nirvana in terms of transformation
 - From defiled to pure
 - From deluded to awakened



56

Nirvana: Cessation of Aggregates



57

Nirvana: Cessation of Aggregates

- Sages in Buddhism have proven that nirvana can be attained.
 - Arhats
 - Buddha entered complete nirvana at 80 years.
 - Buddha rarely discusses what it is like after entering nirvana. He focuses on teaching how to attain it.



58

Nirvana: Cessation of Aggregates

- The state after entering nirvana is unfathomable.
 - Just like a person born blind will never comprehend what it is like to see. But if they accept treatment, once they gain vision they will know.



59

Nirvana: Cessation of Aggregates

- The state after entering nirvana is unfathomable.
 - Being caught in cyclic existence, we have never experienced nirvana, hence we cannot imagine what it is like.
 - As long as we follow the Buddha's guidance and practice well, we can personally experience nirvana.



60

Nirvana: Cessation of Aggregates

- The state after entering nirvana is unfathomable.
 - Flame simile: when a flame is put out, where does the flame go?
 - Water simile: When ice melts, where does that ice go?
 - It is not possible to reference sentient beings with their previous bodies in nirvana.



61

Nirvana: Cessation of Aggregates

- Fundamental error
 - Some people think entering nirvana there is a separate being moving around but with a more mystical/sublime body.
 - Such thinking means one is still attached to a self-view and applying it to nirvana.
- When water of the world's rivers run into the sea, can you still identify which water is which?



62

Nirvana: Cessation of Aggregates

- Why can't sentient beings be liberated from cyclic existence?
 - Ans: Attachment to an individual self.
 - Ans: Fear of losing self identity.
- Those attaining liberation are like individual ice melting and merging in the ocean—harmonious and equal.



63

Nirvana: Cessation of Aggregates

- *Sūtras* say, "*those who attain cessation are unfathomable.*"
- Nirvana = cessation, which is immeasurable, without time and space.
- Ocean of true nature cannot be understood like ordinary worldly objects.



64

Nirvana: Cessation of Aggregates

- Heretic who can see sentient beings' next life but not arhats'.
 - After entering nirvana there is no more cycling through lives.
 - We cannot infer nirvana with reference to a self.



65

Nirvana: Cessation of Aggregates

- Entering nirvana, the body and mind dissipates, becomes still.
- Dissipate, still, cease ≠ obliteration
- Realizing the true nature of all things the relativity between separate objects fall away.
- So what next?



66

Nirvana: Cessation of Aggregates

- Śrāvakayāna practitioners think there is nothing left to be done.

*Destroyed is birth,
the holy life has been lived,
what had to be done has been done,
there is no more for this state of being.*

Samyutta Nikāya 46.30 Bhikkhu Bodhi



67

Nirvana: Cessation of Aggregates

*Rebirth is ended,
the spiritual journey has been completed,
what had to be done has been done,
there is no return to any state of
existence.*

Samyutta Nikāya 46.30, Bhikkhu Sujato



68

Nirvana: Cessation of Aggregates

- Śrāvakayāna practitioners think there is nothing left to be done.
- Mahāyāna teaches that after entering nirvana there are further practices to be undertaken.
 - Realizing sameness between manifestations and the truth.
 - Boundless compassionate vows.



69

Realizing the Sameness between Manifestations and True Nature

- When śrāvaka's awaken to emptiness all signs of manifestation also cease.

“With the wisdom eye what that sage sees is beyond manifested forms.”

Mahāprajñāpāramitā Sūtra

- Such experiences form the basis of Śrāvakayāna doctrines that explain cyclic existence and nirvana.



70

Realizing the Sameness between Manifestations and True Nature

- When bodhisattvas awaken to emptiness they thoroughly understand true nature is inseparable from manifestations.
 - And so bodhisattvas continue practicing.
- Emptiness does not obstruct phenomena
 - Middle Way



71

Realizing the Sameness between Manifestations and True Nature

The wisdom eye sees nothing and yet sees everything.

Mahāprajñāpāramitā Sūtra

- Mahāyāna doctrines are based on such experiences
 - Non-duality between true nature and manifested phenomena
 - Sameness of cyclic existence and nirvana



72

Realizing the Sameness between Manifestations and True Nature

- On the Mahāyāna path such realization is called “non-abiding nirvana.”

- One does not loathe cycle existence or attach to nirvana.
- Bodhisattvas attain the nirvana universal to all three vehicles and then goes further.



73

Realizing the Sameness between Manifestations and True Nature

- Three vehicles (bodhisattva, śrāvaka and pratyekabuddha paths) can lead to liberation. The nirvana attained are describe using the simile of three animals crossing a river.
 - A hare, horse and elephant cross a river, only the elephant knows the true depth.



74

Compassionate Vows with No Bound

- Śrāvakayāna practitioners
 - When they experience nirvana, all other consciousness do not arise.
 - Have awareness of emptiness but not the middle way.
 - Simile of a swimmer at sea with only the aim of getting to safety.



75

Compassionate Vows with No Bound

- Mahāyāna practitioners
 - Develop great compassion and vows.
 - Aspire to develop the skills and strength to be able to save others.
 - Simile of life savers who run into the ocean to save people.
 - Bodhisattvas continue to help beings after they gain awakening.



76

Compassionate Vows with No Bound

- Pain and suffering experienced by bodhisattvas while benefiting beings is perceived as the greatest peace and joy.
 - Lifeguards experience aches, pains and injuries while on duty, but they don't feel sorrow, they feel peace knowing people are safe.



77

Compassionate Vows with No Bound

- Bodhisattvas abide in nirvana but still manifest wondrous functions to help beings.
- After attaining nirvana, the deeds of saving beings are unlike worldly deeds.
- Their ability is not limited to one place at one time.



78

Compassionate Vows with No Bound

- The complete nirvana realized by buddhas is beyond time and space.
- Buddhas manifest in various forms to present the Dharma based on sentient beings and their wholesome karma.
- Such abilities arise spontaneously without needing intention or effort.



79

Compassionate Vows with No Bound

- Parinirvana/complete nirvana is like sunlight that shines everywhere.
 - Sunlight enters a home based on the shape of the window.
 - The Dharma is taught based on each beings' spiritual capacity.



80

Compassionate Vows with No Bound

- The Buddha's life: birth, renunciation, Buddhahood, spreading the Dharma and entering parinirvana.
 - This is his transformation body (nirmanakaya), manifested in response to the needs of beings.



81

Compassionate Vows with No Bound

- If we perceive buddhas as separate individuals that come and go in the same way as ourselves, then we do not properly understand nirvana (in the Mahāyāna sense).
- To understand and awaken to complete nirvana, we must overcome subtle self-view.



82

Compassionate Vows with No Bound

- Nirvana has no relativity. To comprehend this, we start with dismantling cyclic existence, strip away at the separate bodies arising from self-view.
- Nirvana is where everything is perfect, no additions or subtractions, no improvements needed.



83

Compassionate Vows with No Bound

- Nirvana is also happiness that is void of suffering. Such happiness is not relative to suffering.
- Nirvana is freedom without any restraints, worry or obstructions.
- Nirvana is most pure.



84

Compassionate Vows with No Bound

- Sūtras say that nirvana is “permanent, happy, ‘self’ and pure (常樂我淨).”
 - “Self” means true freedom.
 - Some misunderstand it from the self-view perspective and so will never attain liberation.



85

Compassionate Vows with No Bound

- It is hard to understand nirvana with our worldly consciousness.
 - Simile of shading in clouds to reveal the moon.
 - Use of negation to explain nirvana.
 - “Neither born or ceasing, emptiness, still,...
 - Some think nirvana = no self and become scared. Others think it is annihilation and dislike it.



86

Compassionate Vows with No Bound

- Some people doubt and slander the Buddha-dharma, which is pure, righteous and true.
- To cater to beings that attach to a self, there are alternate teachings.



87

Nirvana in Terms of a Transformed State

- “Transformed state” is unique to Mahāyāna Buddhism.
 - Transformed state = nirvana
 - Nirvana expressed as transformation of the body and mind to transcend worldly state.
 - Explaining nirvana from the aspect of manifestation.
 - Two ways to explain “state”
 - Mind
 - Nature of emptiness



88

Nirvana in Terms of a Transformed State

- “State” in terms of the mind.
 - Defiled and pure state
 - Samsara and nirvana depends on the mind.
 - Transformation of the mind from defiled to pure is the transformation from cyclic existence to nirvana.
 - Such teachings are the focus of the Consciousness-only school.



89

Nirvana in Terms of a Transformed State

- “State” in terms of emptiness/the nature of all dharmas.
 - Deluded and awakened state
 - Delusion towards this true nature yields manifestation of cyclic existence.
 - Awakening to this true nature reveals the virtuous nature of all dharmas—nirvana.



90

Nirvana in Terms of a Transformed State

- Process of the state’s transformation reveals the virtues and functions of nirvana.
- This is the unique element of Mahāyāna teachings that adopt some notion of existence or self.
 - Caters to those who attach to a self.



91

Transformation from Defiled to Pure

- Defilement = afflictions, karma and resultant sufferings of ordinary beings.
- Purity = morality, meditative concentration, wisdom and other such virtues of the sages.
- All defilement and purity depend on the mind (*ālāya*).



92

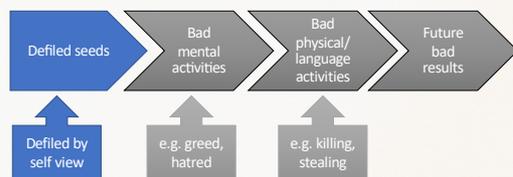
Transformation from Defiled to Pure

- Mind is also called *ālāya* consciousness.
- *Ālāya* is the most subtle form of mental consciousness and the pivotal point between samsara and nirvana.
- Defiled seeds → suffering of existence
 - Seeds have potential to give rise to afflictions, karma, results.



93

Transformation from Defiled to Pure

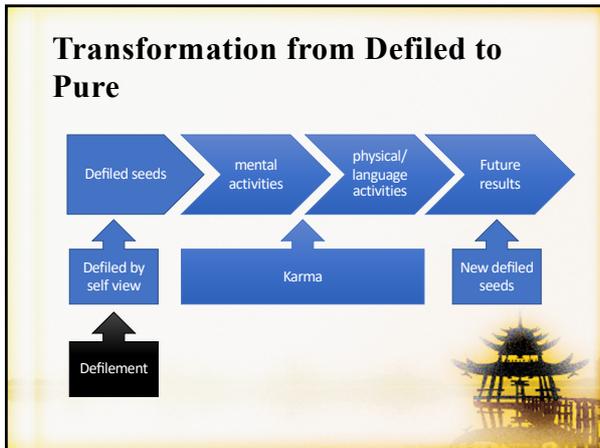


94

Transformation from Defiled to Pure



95



96

Transformation from Defiled to Pure

- Ālāya = defiled mind that accumulates defiled seeds.
- Karma aspect: in terms of karma and results, ālāya is the main body that experiences results.
- Ālāya = Retribution consciousness

97

Transformation from Defiled to Pure

- Self-view aspect: ālāya is what is attached to as “Self”.
 - Ālāya is the object erroneously attached to as a self.
 - Ālāya can combine everything into one and is continuous. Hence erroneously taken as permanent and individual.

98

Transformation from Defiled to Pure

- Ālāya continually produces defiled seeds, manifested activities etc.
 - Is it impossible to end this cycle? NO!
- Ālāya also has pure seeds
 - We are not 100% unwholesome/defiled.
 - But ordinarily our defiled seeds outnumber and bury our pure seeds.

99

Transformation from Defiled to Pure

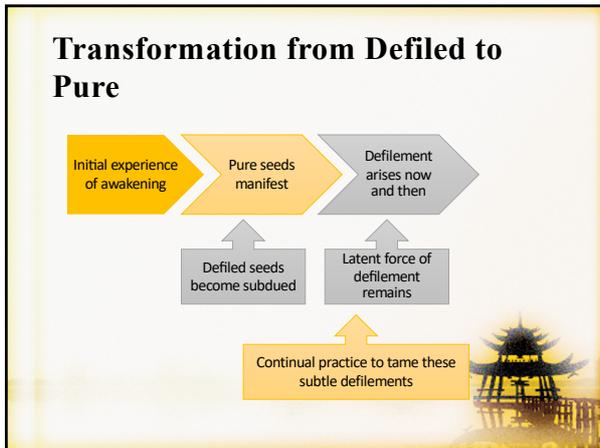
- Manifestation of defiled seeds, karma, and suffering prevents us experiencing liberation.
- We must cause the pure seeds to manifest and become active to experience liberation.
 - Developing faith in Triple Gem
 - Learning Dharma, precepts etc.

100

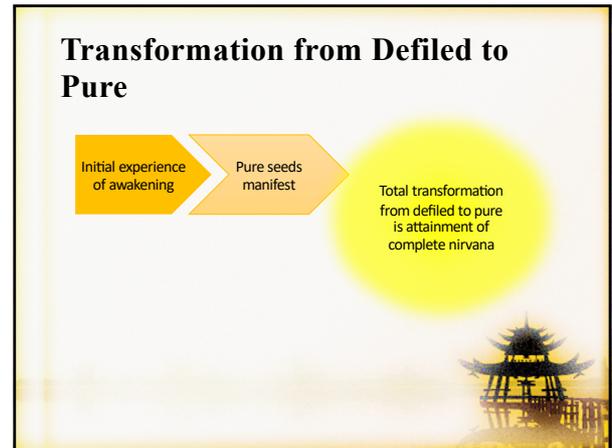
Transformation from Defiled to Pure

- Practicing Buddha-dharma increases pure seeds (potentials) and reduces defiled seeds, relatively.
- Practice subdues defiled seeds and allows pure seeds to manifest (wisdom, virtues etc).
- Complete transformation of defiled mind to pure is at Buddhahood.

101



102



103

Transformation from Defiled to Pure

- Practices to attain nirvana
 - Morality → meditative concentration → wisdom
 - Six pāramitās & four all-embracing virtues
- Complete transformation overcomes all defilement and accomplishes boundless virtues.
 - Mahāyāna nirvana does have wondrous functions.

104

Transformation from Defiled to Pure

- After complete transformation
 - Pure mind is not the same as the defiled ālāya.
 - In the ālāya, discriminations accord with defilement.
 - In nirvana there is wisdom and no discriminations.
 - Transcendental wisdom has functions that can benefit sentient beings.

105

Transformation from Defiled to Pure

- *Ekottarikāgama*
 - Śāriputra enters nirvana (pass away). His disciple and Ānanda feel sad at the news.
 - Buddha asks
 - *Has Śāriputra's virtues disappeared?*
 - *If he has ended cyclic existence and his virtues remain, why feel sad?*
 - Indicates nirvana has virtues.

106

Transformation from Defiled to Pure

- Transformation from defiled to pure state (mind) emphasizes virtues gained from practice.
- Hence attaining Buddhahood allows one to help sentient beings without limits.
 - Sages respond to beings based on causes and conditions, manifesting in many forms to teach sentient beings.

107

Transformation from Defiled to Pure

- DO NOT apply self-view to parinirvana!
- Transformed state of buddha's nirvana has great bodhi as foundation
 - Thorough awakening to the truth makes all buddhas truly equal and harmonious.
 - Non-self has no discrimination.
 - Suffering due to discriminations, relativity etc ceases.



108

Transformation from Deluded to Awakened

- Teachings on transformed state are for people who cannot grapple with emptiness.
- Another transformation is from a deluded to awakened state.
- Aspect of true nature.



109

Transformation from Deluded to Awakened

- True = not false
- Nature = without duality
- True nature → empty nature of all things.
 - Universal characteristic of all things.
- Ignorance about true nature → karma → cyclic existence.
- Awakening to true nature yields liberation.



110

Transformation from Deluded to Awakened

- True nature is non-dual
 - Neither increases nor decreases for sages and ordinary beings.
- *Heart Sūtra*

The empty nature of all dharmas neither rise nor fall, is not defiled or pure, does not increase or decrease.



111

Transformation from Deluded to Awakened

- True nature/emptiness has and always is as such.
 - Pure, luminous, complete with virtues.
- We have been blinded by ignorance, defilement etc.
 - Like dark clouds covering the clear sky.
- Such teachings help people who fear emptiness/non-self.



112

Transformation from Deluded to Awakened

- Ordinary people hold to a permanent, real and pure self (soul, atman etc).
- Some teachings says that beings permanently abide in true nature. This helps some to have faith in nirvana.
 - Without faith, there is no motivation to learn and practice.



113

Transformation from Deluded to Awakened

Heretic: *World Honoured One! Your teachings are all good except for one aspect, and that is the aspect of 'non-self.' This aspect is scary and very hard to believe and accept.*

Buddha: *I also teach about the existence of a self.*



114

Transformation from Deluded to Awakened

- *Lankāvatāra Sūtra,*
 - *Sentient beings fear non-self*
 - *For the sake of embracing the heretics that attach to a self*
 - Therefore the *tathāgatagarbha* is taught as a skilful means.
- Awakening to *tathāgatagarbha*, one attains nirvana (permanent, pure...)



115

Transformation from Deluded to Awakened

- IMPORTANT
 - *Tathāgatagarbha* was a special teaching used by the Buddha to teach heretics that attach to a self.
 - *Tathāgatagarbha* is true nature or non-self or emptiness presented in a skilful way.



116

Transformation from Deluded to Awakened

- Nature of emptiness is the same for sages and worldly beings.
 - Like space is the same everywhere.
 - Ordinary beings are shrouded by defilement and this body, like clouds covering the clear sky.
 - With bodhi vow and practice we can remove the shrouding.



117

Conclusion

- Cyclic existence is a major problem.
 - Arises from attachment to a self.
 - Only non-self/true nature can free us from this cycle.
- Ordinary beings attach to a self and create obstructions.
- Sages realize non-self and are completely free.



118

Conclusion

- After entering nirvana there is no restrictions, contradictions, fear, suffering etc.
- Everything is peaceful, free and pure.
- Nirvana is attained by awakening to emptiness/non-self.



119

Conclusion

- Both Śrāvakayāna and Mahāyāna describe nirvana as:
 - Without suffering and discriminations, being unfathomable, still, equal...
 - Without relativity/duality between beings through insight into non-self.



120

Conclusion

- Mahāyāna has unique teachings on nirvana.
 - Emphasis on the functioning of compassion and wisdom as a single pure virtue.
 - Hence after entering nirvana bodhisattvas and buddhas can still respond to sentient beings based on causes and condition.



121

Conclusion

- Nirvana is not really something we can describe or imagine properly.
- It can only be properly known with personal experience.
 - To do so we must practice and gain the wisdom to penetrate non-self.



122