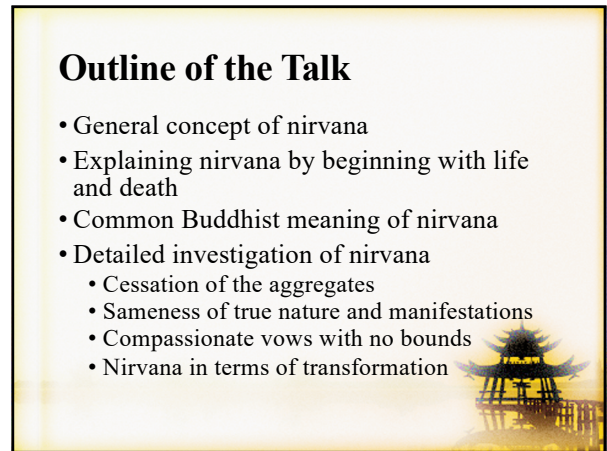
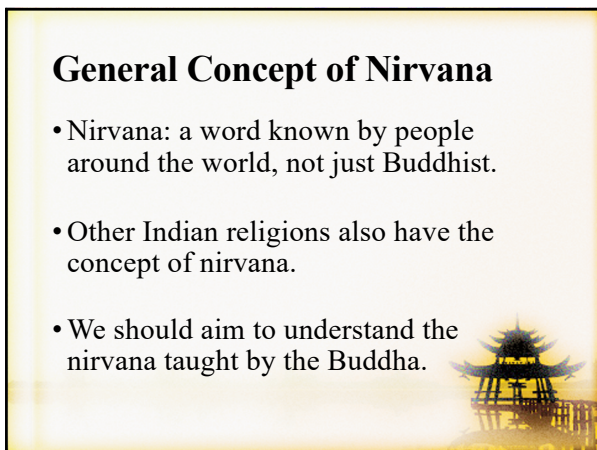


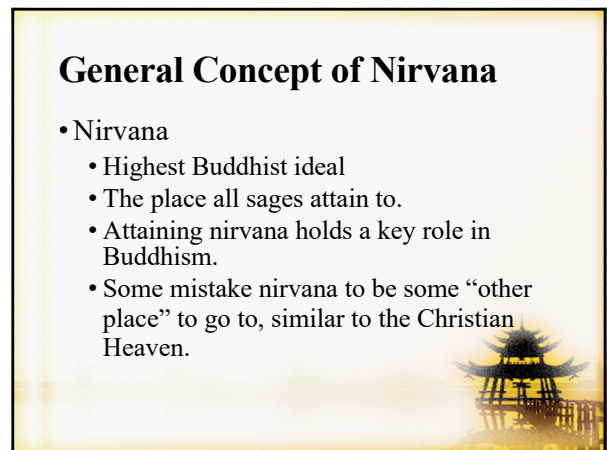
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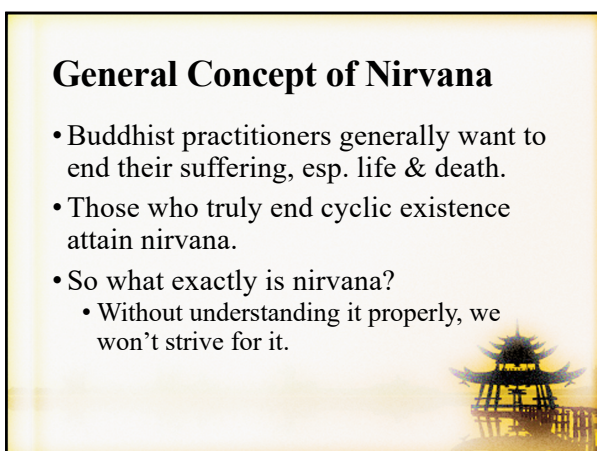
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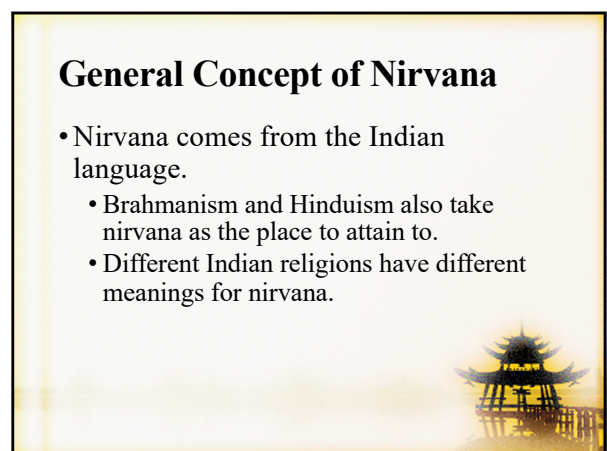
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5

## 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

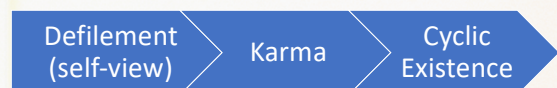
## Karma

- 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

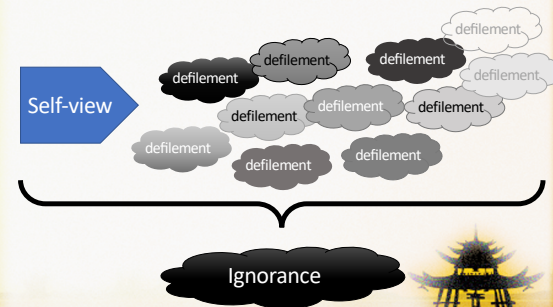
### Detailed Investigation of Nirvana

- 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?



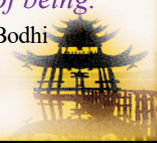
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### Nirvana: Cessation of Aggregates

- 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

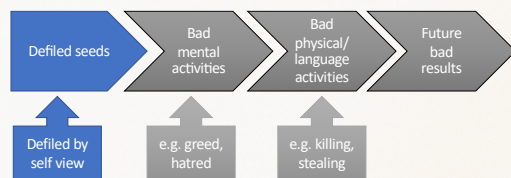
### Transformation from Defiled to Pure

- 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.



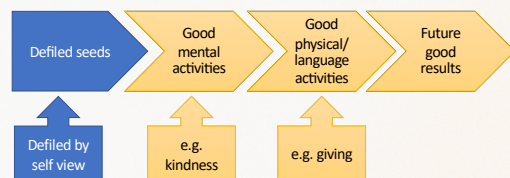
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### Transformation from Defiled to Pure



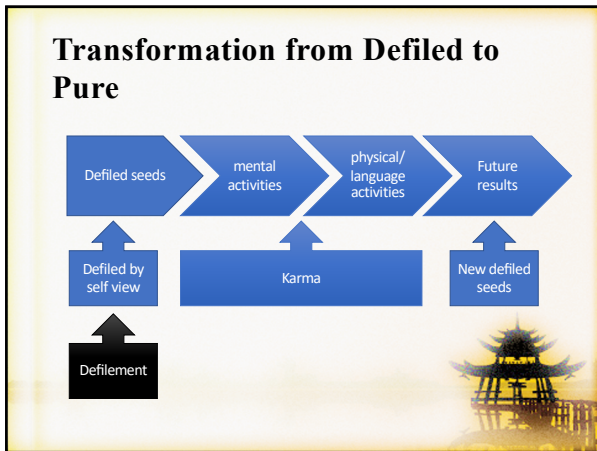
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### Transformation from Defiled to Pure



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

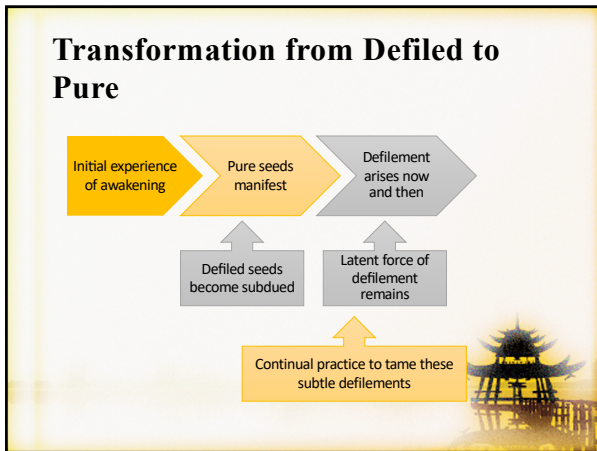
- Manifestation of defiled seeds, karma, and suffering prevents us experiencing liberation.
- We must cause the pure seeds to manifest and become active to experience liberation.
  - Developing faith in Triple Gem
  - Learning Dharma, precepts etc.

100

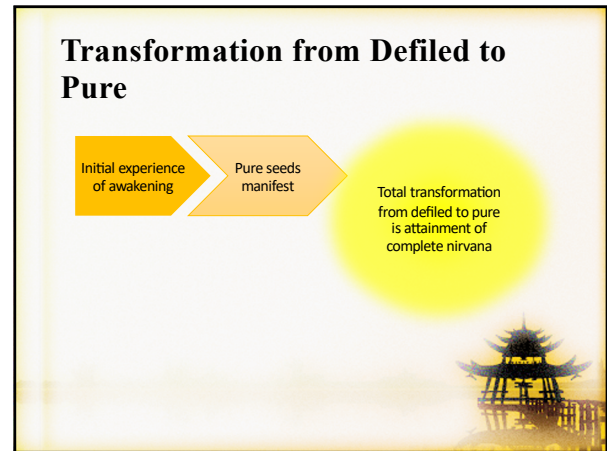
### Transformation from Defiled to Pure

- 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.

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### 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.

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### 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.

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### 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.

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### 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.

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### 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.



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### 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.



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### 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.



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### 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.*



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### 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.



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### 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.



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### 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.*



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### 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...)



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### 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.



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### 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.



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### 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.



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### 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.



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## 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.



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## 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.



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## 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.



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