2018. Q7 - Examine the teachings about death + rebirth. Include an Examination of what causes a good rebirth.

Jiaxin

Buddhism believes in the idea of the "wheel of Dharma", which points out the truth in life and how cause to save all sufferings. Following the teachings passed down by Siddartha, the Buddhist believers follow the teachings of the 4-noble truths and the 8-Fold path in hope to escape their cycle of Samsara. Hence, in Buddhism, followers understand life as cycles of reincarnation, birth into this realm of suffering. Hence, in order to escape from such, they must find the truth in life and see past all desires and fears. The understanding of death and rebirth in Buddhism is different between the different branches such as Theravada and Mahayana buddhism. They believe that actions in life affects what is to come next, which is the idea of karma. But ultimately, although the two different branches have different ways to practice and approach this idea and enter nirvana, all buddhist view death and rebirth as an inevitable challenge that they must overcome.

perfect start!

In Theravada buddhism, believers read and learn from Pali canon. The sacred text teaches Theravada Buddhist the rules to living a monastic life. The goal of carrying out such a life style is for the individual to let go of their egotistical self and their boundless desires. Hence, one important practice for Theravada Buddhist monks is to go on morning walks with offering bowls. They do not ask from others, instead people must choose to voluntarily donate. The people who offers will accumulate good deeds that will help them in the after life. Hence, the Theravada Buddhism's idea of death and rebirth is very individualistic, focusing on self-discipline and actions Karma. Therefore, the goal is to achieve prajna, wisdom, in life to become an arhat and escape from the endless cycle of challenges in Samsara.

Excellent!

On the other hand, Mahayana Buddhism believes in the

great analysis

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emphasis of karuna (compassion) equal to prajna. The idea of rebirth is, again, a part of human life on Earth, being in an endless cycle. However, different from Theravada buddhism, Mahayana buddhist seeks a different goal in life, which is to become a bodhisatva, instead of focusing on an individual enlightenment, the Mahayana buddhist still believe in escaping samsara. However, compared to the "orthodox Theravada buddhism", Mahayana buddhist believe in the possibility of all beings to enter nirvana. Therefore, circling behind the idea that karma and the universal free will cause actions to come back to you. Hence, through practicing puja, selfless service, Mahayan Buddhist can collect good deeds in their life and eventually achieve a state of enlightenment, finding truth through self-less love and actions. Therefore, Mahayana buddhist can eventually overcome their fear of death and this cycle of rebirth through, anatta, impermanence. Excellent

One special aspect of Mahayana buddhist is that after mass prayers and meditation, they would say "I offer this prayer to all sentient beings;" hence, practicing the form of letting go of selfish prayers, meeting Mahayana buddhist's goal of escaping samsara a powerful and selfless collective force. Wonderful →

Therefore, although both practices of Buddhism have different approaches to understanding death and rebirth, they ultimately understand life's cycle of sufferings can only be ceased through finding, anatma, a self-less state that let go of tanha and dukkha. Interestingly, another branch of Buddhism, Vajrayana buddhism in Tibet believe that death is a new beginning to a new life after rebirth. Although the end goal is to return to the one big Atman through finding nirvana, the Tibetan buddhist have a special approach in their practices. vajrayana buddhist, following the secret teachings have special, advanced texts that allows individual practitioner to find nirvana during their life on Earth, in the present. Through practices such as visual mantras and sand mandala, the Vajrayana buddhist Excellent

practices calling and visualizing the forces of diseases and using that to find immediate enlightenment. The sand mandala, puts the mind of the practitioner into a state of utmost concentration, but in the end they must let go by destroying the mandala and releasing grains into ocean. Almost like a ritual of practice before death, this tradition is preparing the mind of the practitioner and that life is temporary and death is inevitable. Therefore they should not fear it, instead, they should focus on letting go of possessions and desires in the heart in order to be truly enlightened about death being part of life.

Wonderful

In conclusion, in all 3 brands of buddhism, the teachings of death is that it is inevitable and rebirth is a circle into suffering. The way to approach death is to be ready and fearless. Through letting go of ego and the self, one can achieve to escape the illusions that the samsara is pressing on people. Therefore, though the 3 ways of knowing, the practices of Buddhist teachings in their interpretation of death and rebirth is to have faith. Through faith, and understanding that nothing lasts forever, therefore death is a challenge to overcome self-desires. Therefore, in buddhism, the ultimate concept of rebirth and cycle of suffering on earth is all a big challenge and learning process for humans to learn how to escape from selfish ego.

Perfect

Wow! Absolutely perfect essay!
I could not have written better myself.
This is amazing work.

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Vivian Weng

Q: To what extant can Wesak be considered the most important Buddhist festival in the calendar year?

Wesak, the celebration of Buddha's birth, enlightenment and death, could be considered the most important Buddhist festival in the calendar year for both Theravada, Mahayana, and Vajrayana Buddhists, but in different ways. → expand analysis a little more at start

The Buddha is a historical figure born as Siddartha Gautama. Gautama was a prince that has never suffered, and was confined in the palace but after negotiating with his parents, he gained the freedom to explore the world outside of the palace. He encountered several instances of suffering, and started to contemplate the cause of such suffering. After meditating under a bohodi tree for 40 days, Gautama became the Buddha, or the enlightened one. After his revelation, he preached his findings in what was known as the First Serma. He presented the Four Noble Truths, which was dukkha (suffering) is inevitable, dukkha stems from tanha (desire), there is a way to escape dukkha through nirvana (enlightenment), and that the way to achieve nirvana is to follow the Eightfold Path. The Eightfold path is an instruction manual of sorts to achieving buddhahood, including 8 steps such as Right Concentration and Right Mind.

For Theravada Buddhists, Wesak is important as they consider themselves to be the most authentic branch of Buddhism, as can be seen in their name, which means The Way of the Elders. Their holy text is the Pali Canon, otherwise known as the tripakata, which means three baskets. Each basket is a section of the text, with the Four Noble Truths and Eightfold path being in the sutra Pitaka, which contains the teachings and sermons of the Buddha. As Theravada Buddhists consider the Buddha and his words to be the ultimate philosophy and role model, they consider his birth and enlightenment to be very important. During Wesak, Theravada Buddhists

Wonderful!

excellent!

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will decorate the stupas (temple like architecture in Buddhist culture) and other temples in their area, as well as walking around the circumference of the stupas repeatedly.

wonderful analysis!

For Mahayana Buddhists, although the birth and enlightenment of the Buddha is also important, the most crucial part of Wesak is the celebration of Buddha's death. Mahayana means "the Great Vehicle", which offers a sense of how important community is to Mahayana Buddhists as everyone travels on the Great Vehicle together. ★ One crucial difference between Mahayana and Theravada Buddhism are the goals for each branch. For Theravada Buddhists, they want to gain prajna (mystical wisdom) in order to become an arhat and leave the cycle of samsara. However, for Mahayana Buddhists the goal is to gain both prajna and karuna (compassion), so that they can become bodhisattvas, who are enlightened people that decide to stay and help everyone else. For example, Tara vowed to be reincarnated as a human girl until all sentient beings have reached enlightenment. For Mahayana Buddhists, it is crucial that the Buddha stayed on this Earth (to spread his teachings) after reaching enlightenment. The fact that the Buddha experienced death (or parinirvana, where an enlightened person passes away) is one of the strongest arguments for Mahayana Buddhism, as the historical Buddha himself seems to have been a bodhisattva. Mahayana Buddhists believe in the Trikaya, or different stages of Buddhanature. There is the earthly level in which we are all on and where the historical Buddha remained, a heavenly level where all the enlightened buddhas and bodhisattvas live, and the final level where the Buddhanature is everything and anything. When the Buddha passed away, it is believed by Mahayana Buddhists that he transported from the earthly level to the heavenly level. As can be seen, the festival of Wesak is important to Mahayana Buddhists primarily due to its celebration

parinirvana

Tri-kaya

6 perfections paramitas

10 stages

excellent

wonderful!

Vivian Weng

Excellent - but I think now you must also say what are Mahayana rituals just as important as 'wesak'
- such as in Taiwan - daily chanting to bodhisattva "Amitabha"
- or Tzuchi volunteer work to become a bodhisattva

of the Buddha's death.

☆ In the Lotus Sutra, for example, it is stated that all sentient beings are in One Great Vehicle together, thus karuna should be practiced to benefit all.

Yes. can you explain more Mahayana texts.

For Vajrayana Buddhists, Wesak is important as it celebrates the Buddha's life. Vajrayana means Thunderbolt, which embodies the Vajrayana faith that enlightenment is achievable in one lifetime. The Buddha's life can be seen as proof that nirvana is attainable in one life time. OK

In conclusion, the festival of Wesak can be considered as the most important festival in Buddhism, as in Theravada Buddhism, the Buddha's birth and life is venerated, in Mahayana Buddhism, the Buddha's death is venerated, and in Vajrayana Buddhism, the Buddha's life is venerated. Since Vesak celebrates the birth, life, and death of the Buddha, which embodies crucial beliefs of each sect, Vesak can be considered as the most important festival in Buddhism.

This is very good.

I think this would get a perfect score 7! 7E

But follow my suggestions to make it even better.

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May Park B1 extend education renew Buddhism

Q: To what extent are the Theravada + Mahayana similar schools of Buddhist thought in regard to belief + practice?

Buddhism emerged from the teachings of Siddhartha, with all sects having the common goal of attaining Nirvana, or enlightenment. Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism share this goal to an extent; however, Mahayana Buddhism also stresses the importance of developing karuna (compassion) in addition to prajna (wisdom). OK ✓

Both Theravada and Mahayana Buddists value the cultivation of prajna. The Pali Canon, or the Tripitaka, is used by both schools. It outlines the 4 Noble Truths, which states that Dukka is the truth of the existence of suffering, Tanha is the truth to the cause of suffering, which are desires and one's personal ego, Nirvana is the truth that there is a way out of this suffering, and the 8-Fold Path, which is the way to Nirvana. Because the cause of all suffering and dissatisfaction is desire, both schools of Buddhism agree on the importance of non-attachment. The 8-Fold path also emphasizes prajna. In Zen Buddhism, which is a type of Mahayana Buddhism, practicioners are given Koan, or surreal problems. Once they have an answer, they receive Sanzen, which is a consultation meditation where their answers are either validated or rejected. This is one of the many ways which a Zen Buddhist can attain Satori, or an awakening. Perfect structure! excellent

However, many beliefs and practices of Theravada Buddism is expanded upon by Mahayana Buddism, leading to differences in the ultimate goals of these 2 sects. While Theravada requires non-attachment completely, Mahayana only values it to an extent, as a Mahayana Buddist's final goal is to become a bodhisattva, an individual who is capable of attaining Nirvana but delays doing so to return and assist others on their journey, and perfect both prajna and karuna. In Theravada, however, one's goal is to become an Arhat, an individual who has perfected prajna and thus attained Nirvana, and leave this world behind. This difference in views on non-attachment is most likely due to Mahayana containing many more sacred texts, including the Heart, Lotus, and Diamond Sutra. The Lotus Sutra emphasizes the role of bodhisattvas, specifically Avalokiteshvara the bodhisattva of compassion. An important celebration in Theravada Buddhism is Vesak, which good perfect

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commemorates the birth, enlightenment, and death of the Buddha. Many gifts of flowers and candles are presented, as flowers fade and candles burn out, symbolizing Annica, or the doctrine of impermanence. In contrast, Tzu Chi, a branch of Mahayana in Taiwan, values volunteer work more than any other rituals. Charity requires attachment to the world and to people, which directly goes against the 8-Fold path.

Expand Mahayana rituals more?

The names of both schools also give insight to their differences. Theravada means "the way of the elders", as it presents itself as the authentic teachings of Siddhartha and sticks strictly to the Pali Canon. It is also known as "Hinaya", which means small vehicle- this emphasizes how one's journey to attain Nirvana is a very individualistic process. The Sangha, or the monastic order of monks and nuns, is separate from the laity. Mahayana, by contrast, means "great raft", which shows its value of community. The Sangha may also interact with the lay people, which is similar to the role of bodhisattvas, where assistance is permitted and available.

The ultimate goal in regards to Samsara, or the cycle of birth, death, and rebirth is also different between each school. The goal of Theravada is to be liberated from this cycle and thus entering Nirvana. In Mahayana Buddhism, as one's goal is to become a bodhisattva, one must still return- perhaps the ultimate goal is not to be liberated from Samsara, but to be aware of Dukkha and Tanha so one can assist others in attaining Nirvana. In Vajrayana Buddhism, a branch of Mahayana, the goal is to attain Nirvana within a single lifetime. To Are, one must realize the 4 Noble Truths and escape Samsara within a lifetime.

In conclusion, though Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism share the same roots, as both stem from the teachings of Siddhartha, they differ in their ultimate goals. Theravada only values developing prajna, whereas Mahayana values developing both prajna and karuna and also the sense of community.

You explain main ideas + differences WONDERFULLY!
This is a 7/7 essay for sure.
My 1 recommendation is explain Mahayana rituals more. If possible

Nathan Lin

May 2019 Exam #7

Explain the importance of group religious experience.

Group religious experience differs in terms of importance in different branches of Buddhism. For example, in Theravada Buddhism, group religious experiences does not appear to be very important in their studies of the Buddha. In Mahayana Buddhism, group religious experiences are extremely important as their goal is to escape the samsara all at once. (together)

very good

For a Theravada Buddhist, there is alot of emphasis of non attachment in the original teachings of the Buddha, as the name "Theravada" means "the way of the elders". There is a strong emphasis on no attachments as seen in the 4 Noble Truths, which talks about the tanha, one's greed and ego, being the main cause of the Dukkha, the suffering in life as well as the way to defeat the Dukkha through the practice of the 8 Fold Path. The 8 fold Path contains 8 steps to which one must fulfill to ultimately escape the samsara, the infinite cycle of life death and rebirth, and reach Nirvana, the ultimate state of mind. Through these emphasis on no attachments, Theravada Buddhist monks do not tend to interact with outsiders and others are not allowed to interact with them either, further showing the decreased importance of group religious experiences as no attachments or interactions should be made with other people. The main text that the Theravada Buddhists follow is the Pali Canon or the Tripitaka. The Tripitaka contains 3 sections that outline the original teachings of Buddha, all of which talks about one's duty in becoming an arhat through themselves and not through others. Thus,

great Explanation! Give a specific practice too. "Buddhist bowing? outside"

excellent

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the sacred texts represents the insignificance of group religious experience as one can only find Nirvana through themselves. However, the Wesak, an important festival which would involve the Sangha, monastic communities, getting to celebrate the life, enlightenment and death of the Buddha. By celebrating the holiday as a community, it shows that Theravada Buddhism does not completely disregard the concept of group religious experience.

good point!

But even here monks + nuns can't be touched

On the other hand, in Mahayana Buddhism, group religious experience is highly encouraged as suggested in the meaning of its name "Mahayana", which means "the Great Raft"; "the Great Raft" is supposed to symbolize the escape of the samsara all together rather than 1 person becoming an Arhat. Instead of focusing on wisdom, the goal of becoming an arhat would change to becoming a bodhisattva through karuna. Karuna, which means compassion, is outlined through the Lotus Sutra, according to Avalokitesvara, a bodhisattva who had returned to the samsara multiple times to help other people reach Nirvana. As Mahayana Buddhism's main sacred texts are the Lotus Sutra, Heart Sutra, and Diamond Sutra, it shows that a Mahayana Buddhist would want to have both Prajna (wisdom) and have karuna to help other people and become a bodhisattva, returning to samsara to help other people. Furthermore, in Taiwan, Mahayana Buddhism is widely practiced and there is a non-profit organization named Tzu chi, that focuses on volunteer work. Tzu chi assists people in need and shows how group religious experience is very important for a Mahayana Buddhist as people are getting

Excellent

very good

good

together helping each other. Lastly, a more specific branch of Mahayana Buddhism, called the Vajrayana, or Tibetan Buddhism, also has a pretty strong emphasis on group religious experiences. For example, although conducting a sand mandala ritual is practicing no attachments, there are multiple people working together to complete the sand mandala. As there are multiple working together, a emphasis on a group religious experience is shown. During the invasion of Tibet by China, Tibetan monks band together along with other people, peacefully protested for their rights, which showed a sense of togetherness and really demonstrating the group effort of escaping the sufferings. Hence, Mahayana Buddhism shows an importance of group religious experiences.

Excellent

In conclusion, different branches of Buddhism will have a different view on the importance of group religious experiences. For a theravada Buddhists, they wouldn't see it as important as a Mahayana Buddhist would view it.

Spend a little more time on conclusion.

This would get a 7/7 score!

Excellent outline + explanations.

To improve check out my suggestions too.

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