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THE WAY OF THE ULTIMATE GOAL (NIBB NA) IN MANGALA SUTTA



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Short Profile

Chandadhika is a Ph.D., Research Scholar at Department of Philosophy in Ramakrishna Mission Vivekananda College (Autonomous), Mylapore, chennai. He has completed Ph.D.



ABSTRACT:

The Mangala sutta that the Gotama Buddha preached not only will benefit in the life; it will benefit them for all the future lives to come. Its reasonable system is capable for bringing peace and comfort to all who follow his Dhamma. Buddhists who are subject to the woes of in his modern day society will find the system so pleasing, acceptable and comforting to any one taste and mood there are recipes for every occasion that people face in their daily lives. His Dhamma shows proper way for everybody to follow. The perfect happiness that one gains by practicing his way of the Dhamma in the present existence, then progressing to higher nobler stages will be presented. The Buddhist's Three Dhamma practices — Sila (morality), Samadhi

(concentration) and Panna (wisdom) are applicable to both poor and rich, men and women, young and old, might and down trodden, to gain the ultimate goal of Nibb na.

KEYWORDS

Ultimate Goal, Mangala Sutta, society, Nibb na.

1 .INTRODUCTION

Introducing his work, Johanson says “It is a well known fact that nibbāna is the summum bonum of Buddhism and that a person who has attained this ultimate goal is called Arahant. But here the agreement ends.” The reason for this, according to him, is that “different scholars have started from different strata of the extensive literature and then often generalized their findings and supposed them to be valid for other strata as well. Buddhism has often been considered much more homogeneous than it really is Invalid generalizations seem to be one of the cardinal sins of scholarly works.” Hence, he sets himself to the task of “collecting and describing all the evidence in the Pali Nikayas as objectively as possible and if possible let it explain itself and not force any extraneous explanations upon it.”

DEFINITION

The Pali word Nibbana (Sanskrit *Nirvana*) is composed of “Ni” and “Vana”. Ni is a particle implying negation. Vana means weaving or craving. It is this craving which acts as a cord to connect one life with another. “It is called Nibbana in that it is a ‘departure’ (ni) from that craving which is called *Vana*, lusting.”

As long as one is bound up by craving, one accumulates fresh Kammic forces which must materialize in one form or other in the eternal cycle of birth and death. When all forms of craving are extirpated, Kammic forces cease to operate, and one attains Nibbana escaping the cycle of birth and death. The Buddhist conception of Deliverance in this escape from the everrecurring cycle of life and death which is not merely an escape from sin and hell. Nibbana is also explained as the extinction of the tire of lust – *Lobha*, hatred – *Dosa*, and delusion – *Moha*.

There are two ways to define Nibbana: by negation and by affirmation. We can also develop a sense for Nibbana from looking at how it is explained in the sutras.

1. Defining Nibbana by negation—The *Dharma-skandha-pada* defines Nibbana by means of forty-three ways of negation. It speaks of Nibbana as being, “without form, without limit, without outflow, without beginning, without attachment, without end, without arising, without clinging” The *Catuhsatya-nirdesa* defines Nibbana using sixty-six forms of negation, such as, “without decay, without loss, without equal, without obstacles, without want, unparalleled, immeasurable, without affliction”

2. Defining Nibbana by affirmation—The *Dharma-skandha-pada* also describes Nibbana by means of fifty ways of affirmation, such as, “absolute reality, the other shore, being wondrous, serene, permanent, secure, ultimate, and hard to come by.....” The *Catuhsatya-nirdesa* uses forty-six forms of affirmation to characterize Nibbana, such as, “liberation, transcending all, unparalleled, most perfect, pure, ultimate, the truth, suchness”

3. Other depictions of Nibbana —In the sutras, the following approaches have been used to explain Nibbana :

1. The *MahapariNibbana Sutra* equals Nibbana with Buddha nature.
2. The *Avatamsaka Sutra* calls Nibbana the inherent nature of all dharmas.
3. The *Lotus Sutra* equals Nibbana with Buddhahood.
4. The *Prajnaparamita Sutra* explains Nibbana as the wisdom that knows what reasoning cannot know, the wisdom that sees the nature of all things.

5. The *Surangama Sutra* explains Nibbana as the "end of all reasoning and the quieting of all disturbances."
6. The *Vimalakirti Sutra* calls Nibbana "the path of non-duality of the ten stages of mind development."
7. The *Srimala-devi-simhanada Sutra* describes Nibbana as the Tathagatagarbha (the birthing ground of all phenomena) or the pure, original nature.
8. The Ch'an school of Buddhism calls Nibbana original face.

While all these descriptions may be different, the meaning is still the same. What they are all essentially saying is that Nibbana is "our pure, original nature and our true, original being." The Buddha, through his teachings, shows us the way to become free of delusions and attain Nibbana by rediscovering our true nature.

According to Mahayana teachings, the being who has reached Nirvana is not blotted out or extinguished: there is the extinction of the impermanent and suffering-prone "worldly self" or ego, but not of the immortal "supramundane Self" of the inner Buddha. The Buddha states in the "Mahayana Mahaparinirvana Sutra" (Tibetan version): "Nirvana is deathless ... Those who have passed into Nirvana are deathless. I say that anybody who is endowed with careful assiduity is not compounded and even though they involve themselves in compounded things, they do not age, they do not die, and they do not perish."

What is it Nibbana

Now-a-day we often discuss Nibbana. What is Nibbana? While we often hear references to how wonderful and joyous the state of Nibbana is, most of us do not have the slightest inkling of what Nibbana truly is. Some people even mistake Nibbana as a euphemism for death. Some ascetics consider Nibbana as simply annihilation or dissolution. They say, "The termination of the physical body and the exhaustion of one's merit is the state of Nibbana." The Sautrantika School also looks at Nibbana as the dissolution of the five aggregates. One particular Theravada text says, "Nibbana is the complete exhaustion of the aggregates, like a fire that is burnt out or winds that are stilled." These views of Nibbana are one-sided and perhaps even misleading; in actuality, Nibbana and annihilation are as different as day and night.

We have all read at one time or another story of Prince Siddhartha meditating under the Bodhi tree. Deep in meditation, he gazed up at the starry sky, and in a flash of insight he saw the true nature of things and became a fully enlightened Buddha.

This awakening to the truths of life and the universe is what we call Nibbana. He saw through the duality of me versus them, transcended the limitation of time and space, and entered into the boundless realm of dharmakaya.

Why should we be concerned with Nibbana? If we pause and take stock of our lives, we'll see that human existence is limited in terms of both time and space. Life spans no more than a few decades, and the body extends no more than a few feet tall. Nibbana frees us from such limitations and allows us to break out of our shell of delusion.

In Nibbana, life permeates all space, "traverses the three realms of existence and spans the ten directions." In Nibbana, life pulsates through all time, "extends from antiquity to the present without change, lives through myriad Kappas and is forever new." In such a state, "the mind encompasses the entirety of the universe, traversing realms as numerous as there are grains of sand." When we see that self and the material world resonate in harmony and when we understand self and other as one, then

there is no impulse to jealousy and no room for hatred or discrimination. To put it simply, by rediscovering our original nature, we dwell in Nibbana and are once more able to see through the duality of subject versus object or the limitation of time and space.

Though human language and the human brain are limited and hardly conducive to understanding Nibbana, we should, nevertheless, give it a try. In the following few pages, we'll first start off with an overview of Nibbana, then we'll talk about in what it is grounded, how it can be realized, and finally what the realm of Nibbana is like.

[An Overview of Nibbana](#)

The word Nibbana and the "cessation of suffering" of the Four Noble Truths are one and the same. Cessation of suffering does not mean the annihilation of suffering; it means becoming free from the suffering brought on by the deluded belief in duality and discrimination. It also refers to the ensuing state of bliss, harmony, and being at ease with the world around us.

[Understanding Nibbana](#)

In more concrete terms, the *Agamas* give us four ways to gauge our progress towards realizing Nibbana.

1. Nibbana is sweeping clean the mind of greed.
2. Nibbana is sweeping clean the mind of hatred.
3. Nibbana is sweeping clean the mind of ignorance, delusion, and erroneous views.
4. Nibbana is sweeping clean the mind of affliction.

Take a minute and rate yourself for each of these criteria. Be honest with yourself. How do you fare? If you fall short of even your own standards, perhaps you should double your efforts wherever there is room for improvement.

The Vibhava Sastra gives a similar explanation of Nibbana. It describes Nibbana as "the eradication of all sorrow, the extinguishing of the three fires, and the severing of the attachment to the three notions, and the disassociation from all realms of rebirth." The three fires are greed, hatred, and delusion. The three notions are the notion of life and death, the notion of Nibbana, and the notion of non-discrimination. As unenlightened beings, we all tend to endow these constructs with a sense of substantiality which keeps us from Nibbana. Having the notion of Nibbana keeps us from Nibbana, even the attachment to non-discrimination is discrimination in itself.

When Venerable Huang-tsang returned to China from India, he translated the term Nibbana as "complete and serene." Complete means encompassing all there is, and serene refers to the state of being uninitiated and unperturbed.

We often hear people talk about the impermanence of life, but it is within this very impermanence of life that we find the unchanging nature of Nibbana. We also hear Buddhists talk about suffering in this world and Nibbana as the ultimate happiness. When we say all sufferings are rooted in the concept of self, we are referring to the usual connotation of self as a permanent.

And separate unit of identity that exists independently of others. When we speak of Nibbana as the ultimate happiness, we are still talking about a self which feels this happiness. The self in the context of Nibbana is the true self and is different from the day to day connotation of self that we talked about earlier. This self is grounded in oneness and in total harmony with all causes and conditions.

Is Nibbana Nothingness?

To say that Nibbana is nothingness simply because one cannot perceive it with the five senses, is as illogical as to say that light does not exist simply because the blind do not see it. In the well-known fable the fish that was acquainted only with water arguing with the turtle, triumphantly concluded that there existed no land, because he received 'no' to all his queries. The turtle, though acquainted with both sea and land, could not explain to the fish the real nature of land. The fish too could not grasp what land was as it was acquainted only with water. In the same way the Arahants, who are acquainted with both the mundane and the supramundane cannot define exactly what supramundane is by mundane terms, nor can a worldling understand the supramundane merely by mundane knowledge. It is a supramundane state which is to be realised by one's own intuitive knowledge.

What Nibbana is not, one can definitely say. What it precisely is, one cannot adequately express in conventional terms. It is for self-realization.

Where is Nibbana?

"Just as fire is not stored up in any particular place but arise when the necessary conditions exist, so Nibbana is not said to be existing in particular place, but is attained when the necessary conditions are fulfilled."

In the Rohitassa Sutta the Buddha says: – "In this very one fathom-long body, along with its perceptions and thoughts, do I proclaim the world, the origin to the world, the cessation of the world, and the path leading to the cessation of the world." Here world means suffering. The cessation of the world, therefore, means the cessation of suffering, which is Nibbana.

One's Nibbana is dependent upon this one-fathom body. It is not something that created itself, nor is it something to be created. Nibbana is not a sort of heaven where a transcendental ego resides, but an attainment (Dhamma) which is within the reach of all.

What attains Nibbana?

This question must necessarily be set aside as irrelevant, for Buddhism denies the existence of a permanent entity or an immortal soul. As right now and here there is neither a permanent ego nor an identical being, it is needless to say that there is no 'I' in Nibbana.

The *Visuddhi Magga* state-

"Misery only doth exist, none miserable;
Nor doer is there,
Nought save the deed is found;
Nibbana is, but the man who seeks it;
The path exists, but not the traveler on it."

The chief difference between the Buddhist and the Hindu conception of Nibbana lies in the fact that Buddhist views their goal without an eternal soul and creator, whilst Hindus do, This is the reason why Buddhism can neither be called Eternalism nor Nihilism. In Nibbana nothing is eternalized, nor is

anything annihilated.

As Sri Enwin Arnold says:-

"If any teach Nirvana is to cease,
Say unto such they lie.
If any teach Nirvana is to live,
Say unto such they err.

When you attain Nibbana, there is nothing more to do because there is no more rebirth, decay, disease, death, craving, hatred, delusion and illusion. Nibbana is peaceful, everlasting. However, many materialistic people like something to do at every moment. Someone once asked me, "Venerable Sir, when we attain the Nibbana, what shall we do?" Another person asked, when I arrive in Nibbana can I have a cigarette? Given the explanation that there is nothing else to do, they responded that they would not like Nibbana because their hobby is to always do something. Because of their emotion level some people do not understand that Nibbana is very good.

Nibbana is a very secure and safe place, free from all kinds of defilements and suffering. There is no more danger (birth, decay, disease and death) and no more enemies (greed, hatred and delusion). It is real and everlasting happiness. The final peace of Nibbana, this is our goal.

CONCLUSION

I have tried to mention the way of the ultimate goal (Nibbana) by Mangala-Sutta. Here, I have also tried to explain about Nibbana between Mahayana and Theravada Buddhist aspects. In Mahayana Buddhism, calling Nirvana the "opposite" of *sa? sara* or implying that it is separate from *sa? sara* is doctrinally problematic. According to early Mahayana Buddhism, Nirvana and *sa? sara* can be considered to be two aspects of the same perceived reality. By the time of Nagajuna (second century C.E.), the identity of Nirvana and *sa? sara* are alleged. In certain Mahayana teachings of the Buddha, Nirvana is said to be the sphere or domain ("visaya") of the True Self, and in the Mahayana Mahapari Nirvana Sutra in particular, as well as in a number of other important Mahayana sutras, Nirvana is seen as the state which constitutes the attainment of that which is "Eternal, Self, Bliss, and Pure". Nirvana thus becomes equivalent to the ineffable, unshakeable, blissful and deathless nature of the Buddha himself—a mystery which no words can adequately reach and which can only be fully known by an Awakened Being directly.

The Yogachara school of Buddhism speaks of four kinds of Nirvana: Nirvana of pure original nature, Nirvana with remainder, Nirvana without remainder, and Nirvana of non-abiding.

The Theravada school makes the dichotomy of *sa? sara* and *Nibbana* the starting point of the entire quest for deliverance. Even more, it treats this antithesis as determinative of the final goal, which is precisely the transcendence of *sa? sara* and the attainment of liberation in *Nibbana*. Where Theravada differs significantly from the Mahayana schools, which also start with the duality of *sa? sara* and Nirvana, is in not regarding this polarity as a mere preparatory lesson tailored for those with blunt faculties, to be eventually superseded by some higher realization of non-duality. From the standpoint of the Pali Suttas, even for the Buddha and the Arahants, suffering and its cessation, *sa? sara* and *Nibbana*, remain distinct.

If I say as last, they who have fulfilled these (Thirty-Eight Ma?galas) are invincible everywhere; they dwell in happiness and safety anywhere. These are the highest auspiciousness (Ma?galas).

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