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NIRODHA. See Four Noble Truths

NIRVĀṆA

The most common term used by Buddhists to describe a state of freedom from suffering and rebirth, *nirvāṇa*, is one of the most widely known Buddhist words outside Asia. It is found in dictionaries as an English word, *nirvana*, and has acquired a patina that makes many assume its meaning is obvious. Yet, it is a word about which Buddhists themselves have never reached agreement.

The term *nirvāṇa*

The quest for the real or original "idea of *nirvāṇa*" often masks our preconceptions about what is reasonable or desirable in religious doctrine and practice, or, for that matter, what we expect from Buddhism (Welbon). It may be that when we ask: "What is *nirvāṇa*?" we seek to answer the wrong question. Instead we need to ask: How have Buddhists used the term? With what polemical or apologetic purposes? What human aspirations might these uses reveal?

The word's etymology already reveals the concept's ambiguity and polysemy. The Sanskrit term *nirvāṇa* is an action noun signifying the act and effect of blowing (at something) to put it out, to blow out, or to extinguish, but the noun also signifies the process and outcome of burning out, becoming extinguished, cooling down, and hence, allaying, calming down, and also taming, making docile. Technically, in the religious traditions of India, the term denotes the process of accomplishing and experiencing freedom from the unquenchable thirst of DESIRE and the pains of repeated births, lives, and deaths.

The word contains a problematic metaphor, an image of denial that only suggests what *nirvāṇa* is not (fire, heat, ardent craving, and repeated pain), but offers only limited clues as to what might be the term's referents or discursive contexts. Furthermore, the se-

mantic overlap between "extinguishing" and "cooling down" does not solve the question of what are the exact means and the end result of putting out this fire. These uncertainties encapsulate much of the doctrinal debates over *nirvāṇa*.

The religious uses of the term *nirvāṇa* perhaps precede the beginnings of Buddhism, and may have been imported into Buddhism with much of its semantic range from other śramaṇic movements. It has had wide currency in Indian religions as a more or less central concept among the Jains, the Ājīvikas, the Buddhists, and certain Hindu strands. In different religious traditions its meanings range from composure in calm detachment (or in *samādhi*) to liberation from suffering, and from "escape from this world to a world of bliss" to the utter "rest" of dying out (e.g., as in Jain ritual suicide). *Nirvāṇa* can also be associated in the same breath with an impersonal absolute and a personal deity (as it is in the *Bhagavadgītā*).

Early definitions

For the most part, definitions found in Buddhist scriptural literature emphasize the cooling down of craving, aversion, and unawareness (*Suttanipāta* 4, 251–252). In a typical scriptural passage a nun puts out an oil lamp and characterizes the act as a *nibbāna* (the Pāli equivalent of Sanskrit *nirvāṇa*): "As I pull down the wick-pin and put out the flame of the lamp, ah, indeed, it is like my mind made free!" (*Therīgāthā* 116). The canonical explanatory metaphor speaks of a flame that is blown out, or of a fire that burns out when it runs out of fuel or is denied its fuel. However, in this context extinction means relief, calm, rest, and not the annihilation of being. In an Indian setting, fire is mostly hot and uncomfortable, or it is associated with a raging destructive forest conflagration during the dry months before the monsoon; it is not a symbol of life, but a symbol of painful desire.

A passage depicting an encounter between the Buddha and the wandering ascetic Vacchagotta explains that a buddha (here called a *tathāgata*) is liberated when "all cogitation, all worry and rumination, all me-making and mine-making as well as the penchant to conceit are extinguished, no longer desired, stopped, abandoned, no longer grasped" (*Majjhimanikāya* 1, 486). When someone is liberated in this way one cannot say that *he will* reappear or that *he will not* reappear after DEATH. It is like a fire that dies out; it does not go anywhere (*Majjhimanikāya* 1, 486–487). In the same way the Buddha is free "from those bodily forms and sensory images which a per-

son seeking to characterize him would use to recognize [him as a] Tathāgata. They are cut off at the root, . . . so that they will not rise again in the future. The Tathāgata is free from any representations of bodily forms and sensory images, he is profound, immeasurable, unfathomable like the ocean” (*Majjhimanikāya* 1, 487–488). Needless to say, the same is declared about the other four constituents of the human person: sensations, thoughts, habits, and consciousness—that is, all five SKANDHA (AGGREGATES) have been uprooted by the TATHĀGATA.

As is often the case, here the question is what a buddha is after death. The connection of nirvāṇa to death is central to understanding the term, and one of the most common contexts for its usage. The Buddha’s death is one of the defining moments of his life and person—one of the earliest events in the biography to be recorded, and the signal moment in the liberation from REBIRTH (and redeath). Especially with reference to the Buddha or persons regarded as having led an unusually holy life, *nirvāṇa* is synonymous with death, needless to say, a death that is peaceful and liberating. When a saint dies he “puts out the fire” (*parinirvāṇi* or *parinirvāyati*).

In other contexts, terms expressing profound, stable calm or mental concentration may be synonymous with *nirvāṇa*. In both cases the word suggests an ideal and desirable state of detachment and the paradoxically powerful presence of that which is absent: the dead saint or a serene demeanor. Thus, *nirvāṇa* is suggested by both a tranquil demeanor and the presence or miraculous appearance of relics, or by a reliquary mound (STŪPA). Such monuments, like images of the reclining Buddha that serve as models for the way a monk must lie—ready for death and liberation—remind us of how real the absence that is *nirvāṇa* can be and how close it is to relaxed sleep.

Within this broader context, one must locate a range of meanings in the metaphor of “blowing out,” which suggests a number of different kinds of extinction, cooling down, or freedom from the turmoil and raging fires of human existence. It is freedom from rebirth by virtue of the *extinction* of everything that defines the person as subject to birth, death, and suffering (that is, the skandhas). Yet, this extinction can be understood as cessation or relinquishment, or both. Additionally, the encounter with Vacchagotta suggests that it is a freedom from a way of thinking, a type of self-definition and self-consciousness (and freedom from the attitudes generated by this way of thinking).

Hence, “extinction” could also be freedom from the turbulence of the mind, from the fire generated by churning ideas of self and possession. This conception of *nirvāṇa* as extinguishing a form of knowing one’s self (the fuel) overlaps with the notion of freedom from desire and aversion (the heat of the fire). Finally, *nirvāṇa*, like the extinguished fire, cannot be imagined: Such is the ineffable state of a liberated buddha, and the mysterious condition of being absent in death yet present as the tathāgata. The tradition will waver between all these meanings, sometimes integrating them, at other times preferring one over the other.

Some of the most important components of the metaphor appear in what is arguably one of the earliest strata of textual Buddhism, the *Aṭṭhakavagga* of the *Suttanipāta*. Here, the preferred Pāli term is *nibbuti*, a synonym for *nibbāna* that is usually rendered in Sanskrit as *nirvṛti* (extinction, perfect rest, and contentment). This word may be a distortion of *nivṛti* (to put a lid on, to arrest), but is most likely a transformation of *nivṛtti* (stop turning around, bring to rest), a form attested in the scholastic literature. A poem in the *Aṭṭhakavagga* (*Suttanipāta* 915 ff.) links *nibbuti* to the state of peace (*santipadam*) attained by the person who cools down (*nibbāti*—perhaps “blows out his own fire”). The poem also describes the goal as a state of detached solitude (*viveka*) in which one gains a special insight (*Suttanipāta* 915), and one no longer dwells in or holds on to (*anupādiyāno*) anything in the world.

Specifically addressed at monks, the poem advises that they mindfully dedicate themselves to the practice of putting away or taming (*vinaya*) the thirst within, uprooting the conceptions and mental fabrications (*papañcasamkhā*) that depend on one’s ideas about oneself (*Suttanipāta* 916). The text describes the practice that leads to peace as remaining mindful and discerning the dharma. Significantly *dharma* in this poem is not some conception of truth or reality; it is rather a practice: observing with detachment common ideas about one’s self (being better or inferior to others, being equal to others) and being mindful of the life of the world-renouncer.

The connection with MINDFULNESS (*smṛti/sati*) reminds us not only of the close connection of *nirvāṇa* to ideas of mental cultivation, but also signals the fact that *nirvāṇa* is also a term for the calm demeanor of the awakened or of those on the way to awakening. The young Gautama is said to be *nirvṛta* (*nibbuto*) in contexts describing his appearance or demeanor, and not his attainment of liberation. In such contexts, the

word means not only that he is “calm,” but also that he appears to be “serenely content.” This usage suggests the common Buddhist metaphor of the wild elephant or the elephant in rut that, once tamed, becomes calm and acquires the grace that derives from training.

Tradition offers more than a definition by negation (i.e., what *nirvāṇa* is not). Extinction is not only a state of absence of sorrow and absence of desire; it is bliss. But it is also an active process: a coming to rest, a stopping (*nirodha*), and a cooling down. Definitions by negation can be understood as apophatic moves, attempts to speak of the unknowable, the ineffable. One cannot speak of the Tathāgata after he has left behind the conditions of rebirth, one can only say that he is not born and that he does not die, and so on. Finally, some descriptions come closer to telling us what *nirvāṇa* is: It is the unchanging (*Udāna* 80–81); it is the unconditioned, the true, the auspicious, the secure, the refuge, the pure state of health (*Suttanipāta* 4, 369–373). This range of perceptions corresponds to the ambiguity of the original metaphor, and, needless to say, becomes fertile ground for much speculation. One is always at liberty to try to imagine in what sense any given human being or human activity is closer to or further away from *nirvāṇa*.

Theories of *nirvāṇa*

In a constant struggle to understand the unfathomable state of the liberated Buddha, the tradition develops a number of theories. According to a classical view, “thirst” (*tṛṣṇā*, the insatiable craving for existence and sensual satisfaction), is completely eliminated with *BODHI* (AWAKENING), and thus the root cause for future rebirth is destroyed. When this happens, the person experiences “*nirvāṇa* with residual attachment factors” (*sopadhīṣeṣanirvāṇa*); that is, freedom from desire has been attained and freedom from rebirth is assured, but the person must still remain in the world of suffering until the moment of death, when he will be free from any possibility of further rebirth. In other words, awakening causes the extinction of thirst and thus removes the causes for future rebirth, but does not remove the preexistent causes that continue to propel the individual in his or her present existence until the moment of death. Some caveats apply to the idea that final *nirvāṇa* is assured after awakening because one may bring a potent cause, a karmic condition that has not matured yet and will cause further rebirth until this cause bears its fruit. Hence, a person may achieve awakening and still be reborn once more in this world or in one of the *HEAVENS*.

However, when death occurs for a person who has achieved this first level of *nirvāṇa*, the *nirvāṇa* with residual factors, it is almost a foregone conclusion that there will be no more rebirth—at the moment of death this person will attain “*nirvāṇa* with no residue of attachment factors” (*nirupadhīṣeṣanirvāṇa*). In Western literature, this final state is sometimes called *parinirvāṇa*, but this special usage of the term may be relatively recent (Thomas).

Full awakening implies, by necessity, the first level of *nirvāṇa*, yet *nirvāṇa* and awakening (*bodhi*) are not exact synonyms. Although the tradition itself at times blurs the distinction, one may separate the two as follows. *Nirvāṇa* is the affective, soteriological, and eschatological dimension of buddhahood: It is release from passion, desire, agitation, anger, birth and death, and any future rebirth. *Bodhi*, on the other hand, is the cognitive dimension of the experience: It is insight, perfect understanding, freedom from the veils of desire, aversion, and confusion, and, in some interpretations, omniscience. Despite their importance, throughout most of the history of Buddhism the concepts of awakening and *nirvāṇa* have been neither the sole nor the orienting goals of Buddhist doctrine and practice. At times they appear as defining principles, in tandem or competing with each other, but often they occur as placeholders and signs of orthodoxy or as a background to complex webs of doctrines and practices.

Turning provisionally to related scholastic formulations, one of the central concerns appears to have been the connection between the absolute or uncaused goal of *nirvāṇa* and the practices that constitute the *PATH* (necessarily a chain of causes and effects). Expressed abstractly, if *nirvāṇa* is not caused, then how can it be attained? If it is the absence of birth and death, is it the absence of life? If it is not a form of existence, then, how can it be bliss? The *MILINDAPAÑHA* attempts to address some of the problems, arguing that there is no cause for the arising of *nirvāṇa* (it is *ahetuja* like empty space), but its attainment is the fruit of following the path (*Milinda* 267–271). Similarly, the *Abhidharmakośa* (II.55) goes to great lengths to argue that *nirvāṇa* has no cause and no effect: It is the saint’s attainment of *nirvāṇa* that is caused by the practice of the path.

The *Abhidharmakośa* (IV.8 and II.55) argues that liberation in *nirvāṇa* is the supreme good (*śubhaḥ paramataḥ*) and yet is not an entity (*abhāvamātra*—“not a thing in any way”). It is a conscious or inten-

tional cessation, and yet it is somehow the goal of all the virtues and goodness of a buddha. Moreover, the *Abhidharmakośa* (II.55) seems to distinguish the cessation (*nirodha*) of dharmas that is the result of an intentional process (nirvāṇa proper) from other forms of cessation or nonexistence (such as that of a burned out fire).

The tendency to conceive of nirvāṇa as a nonstate or a state that is not within the sphere of that which exists is also suggested by the classical Indian notion that a yogin in meditation can achieve a cessation of life (a subtle state of death, as it were) called *nirodhasamāpatti* (Griffiths). Although such mental states are not the same as the final liberation of nirvāṇa, they are considered “analogous” to nirvāṇa (*Abhidharmakośa* II.44). This tallies well with common Indian ideas about the nature of samādhi as an alternative reality or a state that is outside the normal parameters of being and life. A parallel association can be seen in the contemporary custom of calling the tombs of Hindu saints their “samādhi.”

Despite the apparent synonymy of *nirvāṇa* with the calm of meditation, the Buddhist tradition generally seeks a liberation that is for all time (or timeless) and not only a temporary state of serenity in samādhi. Thus, an early distinction separates liberation of mind (*cetovimukti*—perhaps liberation [only] in the mind) from liberation through insight (*prajñāvimukti*). Technically, the first is experienced by an ARHAT during the phase of traversing the path, and the second is attained at the moment of attaining the fruits of arhatship. This implies a distinction between an inner peace achieved during transitory states of mental recollection, and nirvāṇa proper, which is only possible after complete liberation through insight.

Further developments and polemical issues

However, the neatness of scholastic speculation may hide the disarray of competing views of nirvāṇa. Although an exact chronology is not possible, a later summary of conflicting concepts of nirvāṇa is found in a list of “mistaken ideas” in the LAṄKĀVATĀRA-SŪTRA, which criticizes those who conceive of nirvāṇa as:

A state in which thought and mental states are no longer active because the skandhas, *dhātus* and *āyatana*s have ceased . . . or when one is no longer aware of past, present, or future, just as when a lamp is extinguished, . . . or when a fire runs out of fuel; others say liberation is going to another place or state when one stops discriminating sense objects, as when a wind stops blowing; others . . .

say it is the destruction of the view that there is a knower and a known . . . ; others imagine nirvāṇa to be the destruction of the self, the living thing, the person . . . ; others, the extinction of merit and demerit, the destruction of the afflictions by means of knowledge . . . ; others, seeing the true nature of things as they are in their self-nature, such as the many colors on the peacock, variously formed precious stones. (pp. 182–187, § LXXIV)

A variety of interpretations of nirvāṇa can be attested historically as well, especially in MAHĀYĀNA. But, arguably, major differences appeared at an early stage in the development of *nikāya* Buddhism (the so-called HĪNAYĀNA schools). Buddhists advocating teachings like those of the Lokottaravāda, for instance, assumed that a buddha’s nirvāṇa not only continues to exist beyond or after temporary states of samādhi but that it exists *before* time and existence, in an atemporal state, attained as it were since beginningless time.

Echoes of this view appear, for instance, in the so-called TATHĀGATAGARBHA doctrine, whose proponents argued that the Buddha’s perfect nirvāṇa was already present in every sentient being. Buddhas exist in a permanent state of bliss, a nirvāṇa free from the self only in the sense that it lacks the negative qualities of selfhood. This state is the opposite of the impermanent, the impure, and the painful, and embodies the innate purity of a buddha-seed or buddha-nature present in most (if not all) SENTIENT BEINGS (an important polemic being fought over the presence or absence of this capacity in a particular group of people, the ICCHANTIKA).

Nirvāṇa also becomes the focus of polemical attempts to define Mahāyāna by contrast to a purported Hīnayāna. Mahāyāna apologetes distinguished the nirvāṇa of BODHISATTVAS from that of śrāvakas. The views of the latter are present in a polemical caricature to serve as the straw man for the promotion of Mahāyāna ideals: Śrāvakas are portrayed as aspiring to an imperfect and selfish state of peace. While they seek release from suffering only for themselves, the bodhisattva seeks awakening for the sake of all sentient beings.

This turn is arguably the beginning of a major shift in the position of nirvāṇa within the Buddhist conceptual edifice. One sees this shift in Śāntideva’s resolution: “Nirvāṇa means to renounce all things, and my mind is set on attaining nirvāṇa; if I must renounce everything, it would be better to give it all to other sentient beings” (*Bodhicaryāvatāra* III.11).

At times this polemical stance is expressed by suggesting that bodhisattvas value awakening and compassionate engagement far more than their own

liberation in nirvāṇa. But, another formulation, perhaps stemming from a different polemic, states that in some sense SAṂSĀRA and nirvāṇa are the same. This is usually traced back to aphoristic statements of NĀGĀRJUNA (ca. second century C.E.), but it may be treated as another one of those background concepts that appear in many other formulations of Mahāyāna doctrine. The identity encapsulates both an ontology and a SOTERIOLOGY. As an ontology, it may be taken to imply that liberation from suffering takes place in the world (hence freedom from attachment to nirvāṇa), but in a world transformed by an awakened vision (hence detachment from saṃsāra). The stage of such vision and freedom is liberation (hence, a “higher” nirvāṇa).

Yogācāra scholastics proposed that the bodhisattva’s nirvāṇa is a “nirvāṇa that has no foothold” (*apratīṣṭhitanirvāṇa*) in either nirvāṇa (perfect peace, rest) or saṃsāra (the turmoil of transmigration). This doctrine may be historically a spin-off of early ideas of the bodhisattvas’ activity in saṃsāra or ontological reflections on the bodhisattva vow, but doctrinally it can be conceived as a development of the principle of the identity of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa, and also it seems to be linked to the idea of nirvāṇa as an act of generosity proposed by ŚĀNTIDEVA (ca. 685–763).

The idea of nirvāṇa with no foothold is also extended to buddhas, whose compassion could not conceivably allow them to “depart into nirvāṇa” while other sentient beings continue to suffer. As expressed succinctly by CANDRAKĪRTI (ca. 600–650) in one of the concluding verses to his *Madhyamakāvatāra* (XI.51): “With a mind to liberate those in pain, you have made the world the object of your compassion. Blessed, Compassionate One, out of love, you turn away from your own nirvāṇa forsaking its peace.” The passage could be interpreted as an exhortation to forsake certain notions of nirvāṇa: doctrinal and practical conceptions of peace and relief from suffering that entail world-denial.

Another common, perhaps background, Mahāyāna conception, which may in fact have ancient roots in *nikāya* Buddhism, is the doctrine of “innate or natural” nirvāṇa (*prakṛtinirvāṇa*), according to which all things are already, and have been since beginningless time, in perfect peace. The world as it is and has always been is not polluted or polluting, does not cause our attachments and fettered relationships, does not cause suffering. This is taken to be synonymous with saying “all things are empty.” This doctrine may be

implicit in early canonical teachings about the natural luminescence (*prakṛtiprabhāsvaratā*) of the tranquil mind.

However, many of the above ideas also overlap with so-called mind-only theories of liberation (sometimes subsumed under the rubric *Yogācāra*), with their historical interconnections remaining obscure. The mind-only approach to liberation and reality is epitomized in a statement of the *Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra*:

The all-knowing [buddhas] describe nirvāṇa as a turning back or stopping (*vyāvṛtti*) of the functions of consciousness, occurring when one understands that there is nothing but what appears as thought itself, when one no longer clings to external objects, existent or nonexistent, . . . when one sees the condition of things as they are . . . with the mind dwelling in neither subject nor object. (pp. 184–185, § LXXIV)

The conundrum implicit in the metaphors of extinction has not been avoided, for the same text describes the Buddha’s liberation with another metaphor of the same family:

[All functions of consciousness] are active (*pra-vṛt-*) or cease (*ni-vṛt-*) impelled by the wind of sense objects, which are appearances in thought itself, like waves on the ocean. Therefore, when the mind consciousness (*manovijñāna*) has been turned back or stopped, all seven forms of consciousness are stopped. . . . When a flooded stream subsides and dries out, no waves arise; in the same manner when the multifarious manifestations of consciousness cease [consciousness] is no longer active. (p. 127 and stanza 181, § LIII)

Mahāyāna doctrine in India contributed to the intellectual underpinnings of tantric theories of the process and goals of liberation. One can express the connection syllogistically, if not historically, by stating that, if all things are inherently or naturally already in nirvāṇa, then the body and the passions perhaps are in some way expressions of liberation, embodiments of peace. Doctrinally, tantric views of nirvāṇa fit within the range of Mahāyāna doctrines described above. Sometimes it is proposed that the bodhisattva, like a skillful magician, knows that the world is a magical apparition and hence is not tainted by the world, and, furthermore, can interact with the world in some way like a magician or wonder-worker. At other times, it is emptiness and compassion that define the bodhisattva’s and the yogin’s liberation, with compassion and a skillful use of liberating strategies (UPĀYA) eclipsing the renunciation and liberation as world denial. At

other times, the body as such is the location for nirvāṇa, so that a homology between the body, speech, and mind of the practitioner and that of the buddha becomes the basis for ritual and meditation, and emptiness replaces concepts of the serene ineffable.

Whether the acceptance of the world and the passions is seen as a skillful use of liberating strategies (*upāya*) or as a redefinition of nirvāṇa (as the peace of accepting the passions without clinging to them), a redefinition of traditional Buddhist ascetic views of the body took place, and some of the older ideas of nirvāṇa had to shift position within the puzzle of Buddhist doctrine. Such shifts in emphasis and perspective find expression today among a few pockets of Buddhists in Nepal, in Tibetan communities (in Tibet and in exile), and among East Asian Buddhists.

Summary interpretation

One may argue, by way of conclusion, that nirvāṇa is one of those shifting foundations that believers see as solid rock, but history reveals as shifting sands. And yet, one must wonder how else it could have been with a concept that attempts to make intelligible so many questions about human presence and awareness, passion and serenity, and passion and death. Abstractly, one may say that the idea of nirvāṇa has had three distinguishable, though overlapping, functions in the development of Buddhist belief and practice. First, nirvāṇa appears to be the defining fulcrum for understanding the path as a way to peace through calm abiding. Second, nirvāṇa is the placeholder for various attempts at understanding a liberation that is peace and calm as something more than a temporary psychological state: liberation, timeless felicity, but, above all a deathless state that is nevertheless often associated with saintly death or the last moment in the holy path. Last, but equally important, nirvāṇa served as a stable reference point, as placeholder, for the tradition as it struggled to define its own identity against competing Buddhist and non-Buddhist communities of belief. Thus, even if one's main hope is rebirth in a paradise, that paradise must exist to facilitate nirvāṇa. More generally, *nirvāṇa* is one of those words that also embody the struggle to understand the possibility of perfection, of inner peace, and of freedom from the turmoil of our own desires and conflicted views of ourselves. It is not surprising that for all the many attempts to understand nirvāṇa as a psychological state or a state of body or mind, most traditions continue to give a special value to death in nirvāṇa or nirvāṇa in death, for the enigmas of full freedom and unending bliss seem to push

imagination to a realm beyond the normal range of the experience of living humans.

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NIRVĀṆA SŪTRA

The core text of the Mahāyāna Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra was completed in Kashmir around 300 C.E., but over the next century additional material enlarged it to three or four times its original length. Today only fragments remain of the original Sanskrit text, but we have a complete Chinese translation of the extended sūtra by Dharmakṣema. Finished in 421, it became one of the most influential religious texts in East Asia. Tibetan translations appeared later (P. 788, D. 120), but this scripture had relatively little impact in Tibet.

Echoing and at one point even citing the LOTUS SŪTRA (SADDHARMAPUṆḌARĪKA-SŪTRA), the *Nirvāṇa Sūtra* affirms that the Buddha's death or *parinirvāṇa* did not mean his destruction, but occurred to illustrate that the true body of a buddha (*buddhakāya*) is uncreated (*asaṃskṛta*) and eternal, and to provide relics for veneration. Arguing against the Yogācāra categorization of SENTIENT BEINGS by their differing spiritual potentials, the *Nirvāṇa Sūtra* asserts that all sentient beings equally possess the same potential for buddhahood. Rendered in Chinese as *buddha-nature*, this far-reaching doctrine implies that the