

Contemporary interpretations and traditional understanding of Nirvana

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The ultimate goal of Buddhism is the attainment of Nirvana in the present life, a state often described as the cessation of rebirth. However, many followers and scholars argue that achieving Nirvana in this lifetime is something unattainable. Keown has argued that Nirvana should not be understood as a form of absolute annihilation or the complete dissolution of the self. This research comprehensively examined the concept of Nirvana in Theravada Buddhism and aimed to validate its significance empirically. Utilizing both qualitative and quantitative methods, a content analysis of *Pāli* Canon sutras was conducted. Interviews and questionnaire surveys were conducted among Buddhist communities to gather data on contemporary ideas of Nirvana. The survival of Buddhism is believed to hinge on the attainment of Nirvana; yet achieving it remains a distant prospect in modern times. Tilakaratne (1993) suggested that Nirvana can be attained in the present lifetime. According to *Sutra Pitaka* studies, Nirvana is the eradication of all unwholesome traits—greed, hatred, and delusion- and it is the end of the cycle of birth and rebirth. The Four Focuses of Mindfulness and the Eightfold Noble Path are regarded as direct routes to Nirvana. However, empirical data revealed that, while followers believe Nirvana is achievable, they lack practical knowledge on how to attain it. In conclusion, Buddha's Nirvana can be attained within the present life, yet contemporary Buddhists often lack a comprehensive understanding on how to attain it. It is recommends that Buddhists should strive to at least become a stream-enterer (Sovān), which is the initial step towards Nirvana.

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