

*Pravṛtti* and *nivṛtti* in Candrakīrti's commentary on Āryadeva's *Catuhśataka* VIII.8-12

The conceptual pair *pravṛtti* and *nivṛtti* define two distinct types of religious behavior in classical Indian texts. The *pravṛttimarga*, a routine religious path of ritual and meritorious behavior that has heavenly pleasures as its reward, is contrasted with the *nivṛttimarga*, a spiritual disengagement from the world that transcends pleasure and pain. Vyāsa's explanation of these two Vedic paths (Mbh XII.233, 327) suggests divine intervention in the choice of these alternative paths but in Aśvaghoṣa's *Buddhacarita* (VII.48) it is the bodhisattva who chooses to leave the brahmins' forest *āśrama* because their dharma is directed toward heaven and not liberation. In *Catuhśataka* VII 8-12, Āryadeva also emphasizes that preferable to any engagement in meritorious action aimed at rebirth is the disengagement from action that brings about the peace of liberation from *saṃsāra*. *Pravṛtti* is associated with mundane teaching (*laukikī deśanā*) but *nivṛtti* is related to discourse about the ultimate (*paramārthakathā*). Candrakīrti's commentary points out that these provisional distinctions exist on the level of conventional truth and ordinary language and have practical value in introducing people in gradual stages to the ultimate. Whatever philosophical problems there might be with respect to Candrakīrti's characterization of conventional and ultimate discourse, ordinary language and provisional instruction are necessary for conveying ultimate truth. He defends the teaching of emptiness (*śūnyatā*) against the charge of nihilism and maintains a fundamental commitment is to this teaching and its soteriological implications.

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