

[Buddhist and Hindu Dharmas Do Differ](#)

Category : [February 1998](#)

Published by Anonymous on Feb. 02, 1998

MY TURN

## Buddhist and Hindu Dharmas Do Differ

But these dissimilarities should not stop us from living in peace and harmony

the Honorable Yihua

What are the differences and similarities between Buddhism and Hinduism? Both originated from the same motherland, Bharat, from the same blood ties and culture. They are like twin sisters. Even today, it is difficult to tell the differences between them. But when you spend more time with them, examine them closely, come to know them, become good friends with them, you may be surprised to learn that though they do have many similarities, their natures and characteristics are indeed quite different.

Both Hinduism and Buddhism believe in the law of karma, cause and effect--"what deed you do, that you reap." This is the ancient law that long and forever governs. But Hinduism emphasizes the concept of Atman. That is, the Self, or the center "I." Due to ignorance, the Atman is abiding by its own deeds and taking rebirth again and again. Thus the law of karma is always entwined with the concept of an absolute Self.

But Buddhists feel that the concept of "self" or "I" is the main source of all suffering. From the concept of "I" there arises the idea of "mine," then "my house, my property, my enemies," etc. Then follows "I hate; I love; I want..." All this is a source of differentiation and defilement which goes on in an unending spiral.

According to Buddhism, the only door to liberation from this I-and-my consciousness is the realization of Non-self, knowing that all phenomena, including the concept of "I," arise as dependents. Not even dust can exist independently; nor does it have the self nature or awareness of its self existence. Thus non-absolute entities such as hatred, enemies and ignorance can be cleared away, since they do not exist permanently. Then the mystical door of Sunyata is finally found and the stage of Nirvana secured.

The term God, or Deva, appears in both Hinduism and Buddhism. God does exist in both religions, but to most Hindus, God is the Supreme Being, the Controller of the world--an Absolute Being who is worshiped and petitioned for merits and forgiveness. Though Buddhists do not deny the existence of God, to them God is not the Controller, not the Creator, nor the Only One. Whoever has accumulated enough good merit will have the chance to take birth with the status of a "Deva," or "God." Due to past merits, this "God" may have a lot of power, but still not have the right understanding of Sunyata. Having not yet given off the cravings of self, he is still just one of many sentient beings taking rebirth in the realm of samsara, albeit in a more advanced stage of evolution.

When Sakyamuni Buddha achieved full enlightenment beneath the Bodhi tree, He proclaimed, "All sentient beings have the 'Buddha Nature.'" That meant that a brahmin, a kshatriya, a vaishya and a sudra all have the same potential to achieve full enlightenment and become one of the future Buddhas. The Buddha Nature is the potential power of full understanding. All phenomena and things change. Therefore, even the most evil person, even the most ignorant person, can study and practice the Dharma and finally attain Buddhahood.

Whether Hindu or Buddhist, if everyone believes in the law of cause and effect--

following the righteous path that all the ancient sages practiced--then all the sentient beings, communities and societies will have less trouble and suffering and will bring greater peace and harmony to the world.

Yihua, of the Fokuangshan Buddhist Order in Kaushiung, Taiwan, studied the Hindu roots of Buddhism in India for over 10 years.