

Hindu and Buddhist

Terms

Compiled by

Campbell M Gold

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Hindu and Buddhist Terms

Atman - In Hinduism the internal essence of the single individual.

Atman can also be used to refer to the universal-self, the source of all other selves.

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Buddhism - The four Aryan or Noble Buddhist Truths are:

- 1) Pain Exists.
- 2) The cause of pain is "Birth Sin". The Buddhist supposes that man has passed through many previous existences, and all the sins accumulated in these previous states constitute man's "Birth Sin".
- 3) Pain is ended only by Nirvana.
- 4) The path that leads to Nirvana is the "Eight-Fold Path":
 - 1) Right faith.
 - 2) Right judgement.
 - 3) Right language.
 - 4) Right purpose.
 - 5) Right practise.
 - 6) Right obedience.
 - 7) Right memory.
 - 8) Right meditation.

Earlier Theravada or Hinayana (Ceylon) Buddhism emphasised personal salvation.

Later Mahayana (Central Asia, China, and Japan) Buddhism developed and promised salvation for all.

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Buddhist Teachings - The fundamental teachings of the Buddha, briefly stated, consist of the four noble truths, which were revealed to the Buddha in the "great enlightenment":

- 1) The truth of pain, as manifest in birth old age, sickness, lamentation, dejection, and despair.
- 2) The truth of the cause of pain, viz., craving for existence, passion, pleasure, leading to rebirth.

- 3) The truth of cessation of pain, by ceasing of craving, by renunciation.
- 4) The truth of the way that leads to the cessation of pain, viz., the middle path, which is the Eight-Fold Path consisting of:
 - i. Right Views
 - ii. Right Intention
 - iii. Right Speech
 - iv. Right Action
 - v. Right Livelihood
 - vi. Right Effort
 - vii. Right Mindfulness
 - viii. Right Concentration

In addition to these teachings, the Buddha set forth certain other moral injunctions:

- Not to Kill
- Not to Steal
- Not to Speak Falsely
- Not to be Unchaste
- Not to Drink Intoxicating Liquors

Nonviolence and a respect for all life are also strongly enjoined.

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Caste - The Five Great Hindu Castes are:

- 1) The Brahmin (The Priestly and Meditative Order)
- 2) The Shatriya or Kshatriya (Soldiers and Rulers)
- 3) The Vaishya (Husbandmen and Merchants)
- 4) The Sudra (Peasants and Labourers)
- 5) The Dalits (The Untouchables or Outcastes, to whom the religious books are sealed. They are held cursed in this world, and are without hope).

The word "Dalit" comes from the Marathi language, and means "ground", "suppressed", "crushed", or "broken to pieces". The word was first used by Jyotirao Phule in the 19th Century, in the context of the oppression faced by the "untouchable" castes of the twice-born Hindus.

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Hinduism - See - Upanishads.

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Karma - "Action, fate".

In Buddhism and Hinduism, Karma is the name given to the "results" of action, especially the cumulative results of a person's actions in one life-cycle as controlling their descent in succeeding life-cycle(s).

Among Theosophists the word "Karma" has a rather wider meaning, namely: *"The unbroken chain of cause and effect; each effect link being, in its turn, the cause link of the subsequent effect."*

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Nirvana - "Blowing out, Extinction".

In Buddhist teaching, Nirvana is a complete annihilation of the three main ego drives:

- 1) Ego drive for Money/Wealth
- 2) Ego drive for Fame/Identity
- 3) Ego drive for Immortality

Nirvana also signifies enlightenment, and the deliverance of the self from transmigration, because annihilation of the ego-drives destroys past Karma and does not create new Karma. See also: "Karma".

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Upanishads - The Upanishads are the core of Indian theology.

The pantheistic conception was subsequently developed with great subtlety in the Upanishads, and forms the core of all subsequent Indian religious thought, and is the foundation upon which Hinduism is built.

The main teachings of the Upanishads are summarized as follows:

- 1) **Brahman** is the absolute, the eternal universal essence, the all-pervading force permeating the universe.
- 2) As a part of this world force is its **Atman**, to which all individuals belong.
- 3) As individual souls living in a world of the senses, we think we exist apart from the **One-Soul** - but this is **Maya**, or **Illusion**.

As long as individuals exist in this world, they are kept from the desired goal of absorption into the absolute, into Brahman.

- 4) While living in this state of illusion, of separateness from the one soul, the individual places his faith in things that Are Meaningless, Transitory, and Unsatisfactory.

As long as such earthly goals such as Pride, Power, and Material Success are sought, the result must be Pain and Sorrow.

Deliverance and **Emancipation** can only be attained by **Moksha**, the **ultimate absorption and loss of self into Brahman**.

The essence of the Upanishad thought is escape from illusion.

- 5) This **Release** from the meaningless state of earthly existence, and its attendant MAYA is part of a cosmic and complicated process of reincarnation. The individual soul must go through a long series of wanderings - of earthly reincarnations from one body to another. A man's status at any particular point in time is not the result of a fortuitous lot, but depends upon his soul's actions in previous cycles of earthly existence.
- 6) Gradually Hinduism gave the **Caste** system a religious significance by linking it to the process of **Reincarnation**.

In effect, caste became the essential machinery for the educative process of the soul as it went through the infinitely long succession of rebirths from the lowest categories in caste to

that of the **Brahmin**, who presumably is near the end of the cycle.

7) **Karma** is the inexorable law of **Caste** and **Salvation**.

A man must accept whatever caste he is born into. There is no favouritism in the universe, for a man brings his karma into the world and everything that happens to him springs from this fact. "Just as he acts, just as he behaves, so he becomes".

If, and as long as karma is defied, the soul is condemned to an infinite number of earthly existences, and denied escape from the sufferings of MAYA. Central to Upanishad teaching is the belief that death is only a single, essential incident in the foreordained cycle of rebirth.

In summary, the basic Upanishad contributions are:

- 1) The idea that the supreme Godhead, because it is completely without attribute, is incommunicable, but is "realizable".
- 2) The individual self is also the "universal self", but is unaware of this.
- 3) The phenomenal world of appearances exists on the relative plane of the lower truth and appears to be real without being so.
- 4) Yoga, or physical and spiritual "discipline", is necessary for realising the nature of, and achieving the union between, Atman and Brahman.

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