

Chapter Five

Conclusion

S. Radhakrishnan says that "Buddhism, in its origin at least is an offshoot of Hinduism." Guatama Buddha was himself a Hindu. He was born and brought up as a Hindu. He lived and left this materialistic world as a Hindu. Thus, all these are enough to justify that the concepts of Hinduism predates to that of Buddhism. It was during the later part of the Vedic Era, when Hinduism was on the verge of decline owing to the orthodoxy, superstitions and staunch practices, prevailing in the religion, when Buddhism with lesser complexities and rituals was accepted by the people of the Indian subcontinent. Later it expanded to other parts of the world. We can conclude the thesis with the view that, despite some differences, these two sects have a lot of things in common.

Both Hinduism and Buddhism emphasize the illusory nature of the world. They believe that karma (action) keeps people bound to this world and that has important role in the cycle of births and deaths. The Buddha says that desire is the root cause of suffering and, if we remove desire from our mind and heart, it results in the cessation of suffering. The Hindu texts such as the *Upanishads* and the *Bhagavadgita* mention that doing actions prompted by desire and attachment would lead to bondage and suffering. If people perform actions without desiring the fruit of actions, it would result in liberation. Both religions believe in the concept of karma, transmigration of souls and the cycle of births and deaths.

Both sects give focus on compassion and non-violence towards all living beings. Both sects deal with the existence of hells and heavens and also with higher and lower worlds. Both religious communities present the concepts of the existence of gods or deities but in different ways. Hindus have thousands of gods but Buddhists have only one god. Some Buddhists do not think of existence of god. Both sects persuade people for certain spiritual practices like meditation, concentration, cultivation of certain bhavas or states of mind. Both religious sects convince people for detachment, or renunciation of worldly life as a precondition to enter the spiritual life. The Advaita philosophy of Hinduism is very closer to Buddhism in philosophical thoughts and ritual practices. Both religions have their own versions of Tantra.

Hinduism has not been founded by any particular prophet. Buddhism was founded by the Buddha. Hindus have strong trust on the efficacy and supremacy of the Vedas. The

Buddhists do not have any belief in the Vedas or for that matter any Hindu scripture. Buddhists do not mention in their books about the existence of souls and God. Hindus believe that there is existence of Atman that is the individual soul and Brahman, the Supreme Creator. Later Hindu scriptures mention the Buddha as an incarnation of Mahavishnu, one of the gods of Hindu trinity. The Buddhists do not accept any Hindu god. They do not consider any Hindu god either as equivalent or superior to the Buddha. The original Buddhism as taught by the Buddha is known as Theravada Buddhism or Hinayana Buddhism. Followers of this do not worship images of the Buddha nor believe in the Bodhisattvas.

The Mahayana sect considers the Buddha as the Supreme Soul or the Highest Being. That soul is similar to the Brahman of Hinduism. They worship him in the form of images and icons. The Buddhists consider the world to be full of sorrow. They regard efforts for ending the sorrow as the chief aim of human life. The Hindus consider that there are four chief aims (arthas) in life which every being should pursue. They are *Dharma* (religious duty), *artha* (wealth or material possessions), *kama* (desires and passions) and *moksha* (salvation.). Hindus also believe in the four ashramas or stages in life. This is not followed in Buddhism. People can join the Buddhist order any time depending upon their spiritual preparedness. Buddhists organize themselves into a monastic order (Sangha). The Buddhist monks live in groups. Hinduism is basically a religion of the individual. Buddhism believes in the concept of Bodhisattvas. Hinduism does not believe in it. Buddhism acknowledges the existence of some gods and goddesses of Hindu pantheon, but give them a rather subordinate status. Buddha, the Sangha and Dhamma are the three cardinal requirements on the eightfold path in Buddhism. Hinduism offers many choices to its followers on the path of self-realization. Although both religions believe in karma and rebirth, they differ in the manner in which they operate and impact the existence of individual beings.

Buddhists believe in the process of reincarnation based on deeds or actions (karma) of the present life. Hindus also believe that everyone is a part of an impersonal world. Therefore, they say, a person's soul gets reincarnated into another body of any being, based on the deeds or actions (karma) of the present life. He has to work hard for the salvation by himself. He must not and cannot blame others for the same. The salvation depends on the good deeds or actions (karma) of a person. In Hinduism also, a person

attains salvation as per his own fate and deeds. According to the Hinduism, there are four paths or four yogas to attain salvation: *Karma Yoga*-Way of good works, *Bhakti Yoga* - Way of love and faith, *Jnana Yoga*-Way of knowledge, and *Raja Yoga*-Way of salvation.

Both Buddhism and Hinduism believe that there are many paths to attain enlightenment/knowledge. For that, both suggest that a person can overcome through his feelings and desires and control the six conscious senses. Buddhism has a major sect, 'Tantrayana'. This is mainly based upon the tantric practices. Tantric practices are also prevalent in Hinduism, especially among the worshippers of the Goddess Kali and the god Shiva. Like Hinduism, the Mahayana Buddhism believes that the original teachings of the Buddha are from the Hindu practices, including prayers and the concept of God. They even believe that the Buddha is incarnation of Hindu gods. Mahayana Buddhism also mentions the concepts of heavens and hells.

The original Buddhist philosophy does not mention any godly figures, though the later Buddhist sects write about some Godly figures. The Hindu rituals are more complex. Besides, priests play important role in all Hindu rituals. There are four major sub-sects in Buddhism, but none of them follow the caste system like Hindus. There are a number of castes and sub-castes among Hindus. They follow their caste systems rigidly. Buddhism rejects extreme asceticism that we find in Hinduism. The Buddhists believe in the teachings of the Lord Buddha and the Buddhist scriptures. Hindus believe in the supremacy of four Vedas - *Rigveda*, *Samveda*, *Yajurveda* and *Atharvaveda*. The Buddhists do not believe in the stages of life. People can join any of the stages any time depending upon their spiritual preparedness. The Hindus believe in the four stages of life, also known as the 'ashramas' - *Brahamacharya Ashram* or Student life, *Grihastha Ashram* or family life, *Vanprastha Ashram* or the age at which a person leaves all the worldly desire and home, and *Sanyasa Ashram*- when a person meditates and awaits for the ultimate truth, death.

The Buddhists and the Hindus, both sects, cross each other in religious and social philosophies and practices, with no strife, but in perfect accord. They have a sense of reverence for the deities of each other. They often worship deities in temples and monasteries alike, without any ill-feelings. They have the spirit of oneness and unity prevalent among them is always strengthened by the common participation in the various

rituals and festivals. Generally the Buddhists and the Hindus are not distinguishable from each other.³ They have strong attachment with each other. Hindus and Buddhists live together in different parts of the world.

The study of religion in the present of the world which is undergoing through the time of war and violence makes it more relevant than ever. As Dr. Radhakrishnan speaks on the value of religion.

Religion far from being the source of any struggle and strife is a real bond of union among human beings. As a matter of fact, religions are a thing which is of immense value. Any unprejudiced thinker will easily be convinced of the importance of religion.¹

Most of the Buddhist feel themselves as political outcasts. There are antagonistic feelings among Buddhist versus Hindus, oppressed Dalits versus privileged classes, male versus female, rich versus poor etc.

The present political scenario threatens the very sovereignty Nepal, in lack of mutual brotherhood feeling. Here Dr. Parameshwar Yadav speaks more clearly in this aspect:

... that the present world is afflicted by the malady of crisis of values. There are corruption, selfusion, terrorism and many such vices. Besides, there are also chaos and confusion, tension and insecurity in the world. In this background, the cardinal principles of Hinduism and Buddhism can be of great help. Both Hinduism and Buddhism stress the ideals of ahimsa, love, compassion, renunciation, service etc. So, modern man can make life batter and happier if he tries follow ideals which preached by these two great religions of the world.²

Talking about Hinduism and Buddhism in context of Nepal, we find religion acts both as a creative force as well as destroying force in the society. When religion was not properly explained to the mass and practiced with a level of clarity, it brought conflict and classes among various castes and communities in Nepal, causing Maoist movement and violence in various forms of life. Again people did realize that religion particularly; Hinduism and Buddhism are based on compassion and coordination. Society now again makes its march forward on the road of peace and tranquility. It proves the point that Buddhism which has been born in Nepalese soil does have capacity to create order, peace, mutual love and affection. So, if Nepalese understand religions values and tolerance, the

present state of anarchy and uncertainty will be wiped out. It would not be wrong to say that, tolerance, compassion and natural co-existence are the glue that attach and bind the society together which comes from religions like Hinduism and Buddhism.

Religions in Nepal have always been a guiding force in injecting moral and spiritual values. Religions in Nepal have been conceptual and ideological foundation of Nepalese culture. It is due to these reasons that religions like Hinduism and Buddhism have always had influence in Nepalese political life. This nation was unified on the basis of religious values by the King Prithvi Narayan Shah and his successor never interfered into the religious life of people, rather they protected religious institutions. When religious values in Nepal became weaker, at the time anti-social activities like violence and communal misunderstanding has spread. Therefore, in the context of Nepal we need try to create public awareness and opinion within Hinduism and Buddhism.

In this post-modern world, significance of Hinduism is increasing basically more in western world. Hinduism is appreciated for its flexibility and dynamism. In the den of Hinduism, many other religions like Buddhism, Sikhism, Jainism and others have flourished and prospered. It has maintained a great deal of distance from other state management. Comparing it to other religions, we find that there has been tussle between church and government over a long period of time. Similarly, Islamic countries are still being dictated by 'Sariyat' doctrine of Islam. Christianity and Islam still practice conversions. Quite contrast to it, Hinduism never encourages nor does it practice conversion. In this context, Swami Vivekananda, in his historical speech in Chicago has outlined that the concept of conversion itself stands against spirits of Hinduism. He has made his point abundantly clear that he did have capacity to convert others but his 'Guru' Swami Ramkrishna Paramhansa is dead against the practice of conversion. Adaptability is a part of Hinduism. Horizon of Hinduism is very wide. In his famous novel "A passage of India" E.M. Forster has said that Islam is way of life, whereas Christianity pleads for universal brotherhood. But Hinduism encompasses both material and spiritual world. It is focused more on spirituality.

Hinduism says that means and ends both have to be pious. As we notice many religions under the cover of certain philanthropic institutions like NGO and INGO's are launching towards its programmes in converting the people of other religions. It means that means is good but end is not good. In this context, we can quote the view of Nobel

Laureate T.S. Eliot, in his famous drama “Murder in the cathedral” in which here is a line saying, ‘The greatest temptation is the last treason, to do the right deed for the wrong reason. This applies to the point that Hinduism doesn’t do things for wrong reason.

The concept of *Sarva Dharma Sabbhava* and *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* is the basic foundation of Hinduism. On the edifice of it, Hinduism has stood for. It further tries to seek perfection in Human being. On the other hand, Christianity and Islam find human being as full of flaws and weakness. Human beings are destined to suffer in this world. But Hinduism adheres the view that people in this world, through the appropriate system can turn themselves from *Nar* to *Narayan*. In other word, human beings have divinity in their natures and features. In this regard, it is worthy to quote the view of a great Socialist leader Dr. Rammanohar Lohia who says that “We can develop the character of Ram, dynamism of Krinsha and keep mind of Shankar.” Through the appropriate systems and chains of life, Human being can be similar to God. This very divinity character can be only traced in Hinduism.

Comparing it with Buddhism, we find both similarities and differences. In context of Nepal, we can find that bond between Hinduism and Buddhism is very strong. Hindus and Buddhist have regard and respect to each others and both religious groups celebrate their spiritual activities in sprit of togetherness. Buddhists attack on Brahmanism is based on caste system. The purpose of Buddhism is to filter the dirt of Hinduism. This is one of the reasons that Hinduism welcomes Buddhism in their way of life and activities. In “Monastery”, we find Hindu God and Goddesses are prayed whereas in the temples “the idol of Buddha” is prayed to. The very significant difference between two religions is that Hinduism encompasses both attachment and detachment in life whereas Buddhism lays stress on detachment towards life.

Many philosophers comment that Buddhism leads the life towards rustic life far away from pleasures of life. Furthermore, they also say if all the people choose the life of Monk, how can the cycle of civilization run?

In spite of these differences, we notice that both these religions lay emphasis on credibility of character in Human beings.

The present world faces a great deal of crisis because values and norms of human beings are very quickly vanishing in this world. If we understand both these religions properly, we can instill norms and values in valueless society.

Notes and References:

1. Radhakrishnan, Dr. S., (1947), *'Religions and Society'* (George Allen and Unwin Ltd., London, P-12.
2. Yadav, Dr. Parameshwar, (2002), *'Perspectives on Hinduism and Buddhism'* Yashodha Prakashan, Rajbiraj, P.194.