

# Buddhism and Hinduism in Sociological Perspectives: A Similar Comparative Study

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## Abstract

Academic title on Buddhism and Hinduism in Sociological Perspectives: A Similar comparative Study is aimed to compare the similarity of concepts, symbols, and practices in Buddhism and Hinduism the methodology is trying to collect the data from textbooks, magazines, newspapers, doctrines, religious scholars, etc. Which are concerned with Buddhism and Hinduism and this is documentary research only. We expected to know the similarity of concepts, symbols, and practices in Buddhism and Hinduism. The results found that 1) Similar Concepts between Buddhism and Hinduism In both religions, there are similar vocabularies such as samsara (the cycle of rebirth), karma (cause and effect), or dharma (moral order), 2) Similar Symbolism between Buddhism and Hinduism Apart from similar concepts, there are similar symbols that occur in both Buddhism and Hinduism, including mudra and dharma chakra, and 3) Similar Practices between Buddhism and Hinduism On the surface, there may be noticed that Hindus and Buddhists share a few common practices such as the use of mantras and meditation.

**Keywords**— Buddhism, Hinduism, Sociological Perspectives, Comparative Study

## I. INTRODUCTION

The theme of our title is the intermingling of two religions namely, Buddhism and Hinduism. 95 percent of the people of Thailand belong to the Buddhist religion. Due to several reasons, Buddhism in Thailand has several Hindu characteristics. Our aim of the present research is to analyze how far and to what extent Hinduism has made its impact on Buddhism in Thailand. As our study is related to religion, we have studied the concept of religion from a sociological perspective and have applied it to our particular research. Our purpose in this research is to compare the similarity of concepts, symbols, and practices in Buddhism and Hinduism involved in the study of religion.

**What is religion?** This is a question hard to answer in a few words, and if a number of people

were asked, each might give a different reply. Religion is hard to define, not because there is so little of it, but because there is so much: it has existed in some form or another since human history began, and geographically it covers the whole world, for there are no peoples entirely without it. It has wielded immense political power and swayed the rise and fall of empires, it has also, and most profoundly, been as a source of inspiration for the highest good of mankind: indeed, it is this very permeation of all history and social living that makes the work so difficult to define. It may be possible to arrive at a clearer picture if we go back to early origins and try to reconstruct the various stages of religious thought as they grew out to one another (Selwyn Gurney; 1963: P-9).

Religion is a multifocal term whose range of meanings varies in different social and cultural contexts. There is no one agreed definition in the social sciences, but the variety of definitions serves to indicate the areas of interest and the breadth of treatment of religion in the social science field.

If we analyze the kind of definitions employed in sociological Literature, two types are prevalent: substantive and functional definitions. Substantive definitions say what religion is; functional definitions of religion-state what religion does.

**Tylor** defines religion substantively as the “Belief in spiritual beings” (Guthrie Steward; 1980 P.182) and **Vinger** defines functionally religion as “... a system of beliefs and practices by means of which a group of people struggles with (the) ultimate problems of human life.” (Hill Micheal; 1985: P.108)

Not all definitions are either substantive or functional; some are a combination of the two. Take, for example, Durkheim’s well-known definition: “A religion is a unified system of beliefs and practices to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart a forbidden – beliefs and practices which united into one single moral community called a church, all those who adhere to them. (Nisbert Robert A. 1974: P.169). In another word, **Durkheim** says the function of religion is integration. (Vide Dobbelaere, Karel and Lauwers; 1973/74: P.537).

**What is Buddhism?** Buddhism is, in its literal meaning Enlightened or Awakened and Refers to the One who has discovered the Dhamma and has established what is called Buddhism. This means that the teachings of the Buddha are nothing but a collection of natural truths discovered, preached, and not created or invented, by the Buddha. They always prevail by themselves, whether the Buddha was born or not and whether he had discovered them or not.

This matter of fact may be seen in the Dhammaniyama Sutta: they are, in the ultimate

sense, neutral, being of itself neither good nor evil; universal, belonging to nobody; always existing by their own nature, not born of the Buddha’s or anybody’s speculation or power. This system of teaching and practice has one distinguished character in that it is not based on, and therefore has transcended, the realm of emotion. The founder of this religion, who was later called the Buddha, has exercised the faculty of wisdom to its almost degree, thereby developing his insight into the highest state of perfection ever known to man.

The Dhamma, as above-mentioned is the result of his discovery, and not of his creation or invention, through his own exertion and was proclaimed out of compassion for all sentient beings. The fact that the Dhamma is the result of his discovery, and not his creation, leads to another fact that it is the Monopoly of none, being open and universal for all who take pains to do what He had done in order to become what He had been.

Long ago in India, a country well provided with thinkers and investigators, intelligent people dispensed with all paying homage to supernatural beings and started seeking instead the means of conquering birth, aging, pain, and death the is, of eliminating greed, hated and delusion, out of this search arose Buddhism, a higher religion based on insight, a means of conquering birth, aging, pain, and death, a method for destroying the mental defilements. Buddhism is a religion based on intelligence, science, knowledge, art, etc.

**What is Hinduism?** “Hinduism is the oldest religion in the world. Over four-fifths of the diverse peoples of the vast sub-continent of India, people of Nepal and Bali (Indonesia), and millions of Indians who have migrated overseas have faith in Hinduism. There are, besides, many ancient cultures, such as South-East Asia, which have been greatly influenced by the Hindu cultural ethos. The history of the Hindu, as we know it today, goes back 5000 years, but Hindus believe that their religion is without beginning as an end is a continuous process even preceding the existence of our earth and the many other worlds beyond. science today accepts that there may be

other worlds in the vast Universe, each with its own laws. Hindus have held this view from time immemorial.

## II. OBJECTIVE

The objective of this study is to compare the similarity of concepts, symbols, and practices in Buddhism and Hinduism.

## III. METHODOLOGY

3.1. To collect the data from textbook, magazine, newspapers, doctrines religious scholars, etc. Which are concerned with Buddhism and Hinduism.

3.2. To do documentary research only.

## IV. EXPECTED OUTCOME OF THE STUDY

Expected to know the similarity of concepts, symbols, and practices in Buddhism and Hinduism.

### **Sociological perspective of religion**

A Philosophy of religion is akin to theology in its normative interest, but it shares its subject matter with the science of religion. Theology is a normative discipline and, is concerned with the analysis, interpretation, and exposition of one particular faith. Theology consists of religious beliefs that provide meaningful explanations of the major questions of human existence such as life and death, human origins and destiny, happiness and suffering, success and failure, and good and evil.

The sociologist, though not called upon to deny or confirm religious claims cannot ignore them. In estimating the effects of the initiative of the founders, their own theological claims must be taken into account, because the sociological effects of their work are dependent on the significance which they attach to themselves and their message. The interaction among the theology which formulates the basic concepts for the interpretation of a religious experience, the history of religion which describes its manifestations and developments; psychology of religion which analyses its subjective aspects; and

sociology of religion which analyses the nature and variety of the grouping which it produces, thus become evident psychology, philosophy, may all be concerned with the same phenomenon, such as a particular belief or a particular ritual, but they ask different questions about the phenomenon. Psychological analysis is concerned with the psychological development and the function of the belief or ritual. Philosophy is concerned with the correspondence between the belief and ritual and some criterion of truth, logic or goodness and theology, with its correspondence with such criteria as the will of God or other given norms of faith.

Sociology of religion and other descriptive social sciences cannot show the validity of any particular faith, nor do they try to. Descriptive disciplines such as Sociology of religion, on the one hand, and philosophy and theology as normative sciences, on the other, have different aims and methods and hence should be treated differently and separately. For instance, theology is an attempt to use the rational philosophical method in explaining what is involved in the religious experiences of various traditions.

Sociology examination of religious groups need not be interpreted as an implicit admission that the theological, philosophical, and metaphysical problems and questions growing out of such a study will have to remain unanswerable. They can and most certainly should be answered, but it is not the task of this inquiry to do so one purpose has been present material that would be of use to readers – who are interested in a study of the interrelation of religion and society. We do not expect anyone to “derive” theological or philosophical principles from a descriptive study. To summarize, the sociology of religion will be a supplement but can never replace phenomenology, psychology, or History of religion, to say nothing of theology.

In the pages that follow the relationship of sociology of religion to some important branches of sociology is brought out.

## V. RESULT OF THE STUDY

### 1) Similar Concepts between Buddhism and Hinduism

In both religions, there are similar vocabularies such as **samsara (the cycle of rebirth), karma (cause and effect), or dharma (moral order)**.

**Samsara** refers to the endless cycle of birth and death. Both Buddhism and Hinduism see life as a cycle, which means that spirits are continually reincarnated into a new life after the end of their previous one. This cycle can only be broken by achieving enlightenment.

**Karma** is the concept that any action or thought will directly result in a fitting consequence in the present or future life state. To put it plainly, if someone does bad things in this life, that person might be reborn in a less desirable state in the next life. Similarly, when good things happen to someone, karma states that it may be due to good deeds in a past life.

However, the idea of karma for Buddhists and Hindus is slightly different. Hindus see karma as fitting behavior according to the role of the person, often this includes religious rituals, while Buddhists see it as correct intent and ethical actions.

**Dharma** is a difficult word to translate and it vaguely means natural law, duty, moral order, right conduct, or role in the universe. This concept is central to both Buddhism and Hinduism, but the interpretations in the two religions are different. In Hinduism, it is tied closely with the duty of a person, or how a person is supposed to conduct oneself according to their caste. In Buddhism, it often refers to the teachings of Buddha.

### 2) Similar Symbolism between Buddhism and Hinduism

Apart from similar concepts, there are similar symbols that occur in both Buddhism and Hinduism, including **mudra and dharma chakra**.

**Mudra** is a system of symbolic hand gestures with meanings, often used during meditation. Buddha is often portrayed using these hand

gestures in statues or paintings. Mudra is commonly practiced in both Hinduism and Buddhism but the positions, meanings, and uses are different.

**Dharmachakra** is a symbol common to Buddhism and Hinduism that looks like a ship's steering wheel. The wheel appears in India's national flag as well as the Thai royal family's flag. It is also called the Wheel of Law. The number of spokes varies, but **eight is most common**, representing the **Eightfold Path** teaching for Buddhists. Dharmachakra commonly appears on Hindu temple walls as well, particularly in temples of the sun god, Surya.

### 3) Similar Practices between Buddhism and Hinduism

On the surface, there may be noticed that Hindus and Buddhists share a few common practices such as **the use of mantras and meditation**

**A mantra** is the utterance of syllables or words in a melodic way, which is believed to have spiritual power and can bring the person to higher spiritual awareness.

Hindus use mantras during rituals while worshiping gods. They also use it while praying. In Buddhism, a mantra is more used as a meditation exercise to help the mind focus on certain things and let go of attachments.

Another shared practice between Buddhism and Hinduism is **meditation**. But again, the two religions have different perspectives on how to go about it and why you should practice it. Buddhists see meditation as a means of self-edification and attaining nirvana, while Hindus have varying purposes for **meditation including physical, mental, and spiritual enhancement**. (Asia highlights.com/India/Hinduism-vs-Buddhism searched on 21/05/2022).

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