



## BUDDHISM IN INDIAN PHILOSOPHY: AN OVER REVIEW

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**Abstract :** *S. Radhakrishnan tries to absorb Buddhism into Hinduism. He undertook this task in Volume I of his magnum opus, Indian Philosophy. Radhakrishnan expends a great deal of time upon accomplishing this task; he offers a variety of resources, and advances various philosophical arguments. He first special and novel aspects of Buddhism, noting about and acknowledging its contribution. This of Buddhism. He, however, goes on to make the position of Buddhism, which we shall see chain of argumentation. Radhakrishnan then asserts that early Buddhism was not an absolutely original doctrine'. 'original' to mean breaking away completely country. Radhakrishnan thus surprises the reader Buddhism 'is no freak in the evolution of' 'Buddha did not break away completely from of his age and country. For Ambedkar, the Vedas are a collection hymns, or chants, and are 'mere invocations Indra, Varuna, Agni, Soma, Isana, Prajapati, Bramha, and others'. There is not 'much philosophy' 'speculations of a philosophical nature' about world, the creation of 'individual things', The Buddha, according to Ambedkar, the Vedic sages as worthy of reverence', but only He did not see anything 'morally elevating' Ambedkar argues that for the Buddha, the 'Vedas as a desert', and so he 'discarded' them us useless.*

**Key Words:** *Buddhism, Hindu, Radical, India, Philosophy.*

Radical and the ritual are two significant aspects surrounding the phenomenon of religion. The radical consists of elements that differ, disagree, dissent, oppose, or even exclude, the then existing religion, or religions. This could be with respect to either their ideas or practice. The ritual or regulative is concerned with formulating, systematising, building, laying the rules, maintaining, emulating, and eventually consolidating new ideas. Giving importance to the latter and not factoring in the former can seriously compromise one's understanding of the nature of religion. Further, let me reinforce my argument by introducing a distinction between a leader and a follower. A leader is one who knows how to handle not only what is politically correct, but also that which is politically incorrect. The

competence about these two realms significantly distinguishes a leader from the followers. The follower mostly deals with what is politically correct. If we take into consideration the second aspect, we then cover only the confirmative aspect of religion, while leaving out its radical aspect. Very often, a new religion begins with a difference; hence, difference forms the foundation of religion. Even the novelty of a new religion comes later in the chronological order. There is an imperative need to take note of these foundations and their chronological order, not only to arrive at a comprehensive idea of a religion, but also to understand its later functions. The immediate reason for bringing this to the table of discussion is to make a case for the indispensable significance of difference between two, or amongst more than two religions, or even



philosophies. This essay, therefore, attempt—an arduous attempt—to deny important philosophical or religious schools, and Buddhism.

S. Radhakrishnan tries to absorb Buddhism into Hinduism. He undertook this task in Volume I of his magnum opus, Indian Philosophy. Radhakrishnan expends a great deal of time upon accomplishing this task; he offers a variety of resources, and advances various philosophical arguments. To begin with, he does acknowledge the originality and uniqueness of the Buddha and Buddhism. With reference to early Buddhism, he writes:

There is no question that the system of early Buddhism is one of the most original which the history of philosophy presents. In its fundamental ideas and essential spirit, it approximates remarkably to the advanced scientific thought of the nineteenth century. The modern pessimistic philosophy of Germany, that of Schopenhauer and Hartmann, is only a revised version of ancient Buddhism. It is sometimes said to be 'little more than Buddhism vulgarized.' As far as the dynamic conception of reality is concerned, Buddhism is a splendid prophecy of the creative evolution of Bergson. Early Buddhism suggests the outline of a philosophy suited to the practical wants to the present day and helpful in reconciling the conflict between faith and science

Therefore, in Radhakrishnan's assessment, Buddhism is original; it is a precursor, inspiring the pessimistic philosophy of Germany; it is practical and, more importantly, it is up-to-date. Having thus eulogised Buddhism, Radhakrishnan proceeds to identify certain important shifts in philosophy brought about by the Buddha, the most important being that while the Upanisads were 'a work of many

minds', Buddhism, on the other hand, was the 'considered creed of a single individual'. Indicating another difference between the Upanisads and Buddhism, Radhakrishnan states that in the 'Upanisads we have an amazing study of an atmosphere, in Buddhism the concrete embodiment of thought in the life of a man' (ibid.: 291). This shift away from many minds to a single individual and the ensuing unity of thought and life was, according to Radhakrishnan, what 'worked wonderfully on the world of the time' and was in fact responsible early Buddhism.

Radhakrishnan proceeds to acknowledge contribution. Buddha, he avers, 'wished to steer metaphysical discussions'. He first special and novel aspects of Buddhism, noting about and acknowledging its contribution. This of Buddhism. He, however, goes on to make the position of Buddhism, which we shall see chain of argumentation.

Radhakrishnan now reports that the Brahmanism's 'creed' was 'collapsing' and their system The unsaid subtext of this statement is that Buddhism on a strong philosophical system, but one that was In that sense, the statement erodes the importance Radhakrishnan goes on to explain, however, that background of this disintegrated system that 'provide a firm foundation for morality' on the 300). This firm foundation, provided by ancient Radhakrishnan, 'resembled positivism in its attempt from the worship of God to service of the man.

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statement definition of originality that Radhakrishnan at the very least it is an interpolation within external to it. To substantiate his move, Radhakrishnan an argument by introducing a distinction; he against the conventional and legalistic religion thing; to abandon the living spirit lying behind. There is something unconvincing about Radhakrishnan's attitude towards Buddhism; but analyse his next move. Claiming the Buddha as ancient way of being, he declares that 'Buddha the dharma which he has discovered by an effort of self-culture is the ancient way, the Aryan path, the eternal Radhakrishnan writes:

Buddha is not so much creating a new dharma an old norm. It is the venerable tradition that meet the special needs of the age.... Early Buddhism, to hazard a conjecture, is only a restatement Upanishads from a new stand point.

In this view, Buddhism is not a break from hermeneutic version of the same tradition Thus, in his interpretation, Buddhism is in need of reform, and possesses no autonomy this ambit. Radhakrishnan proposes to substantiate the 'spirit of the Upanishads is the life-spring by pointing out the aspects that these in common:

- a. Both the Upanishads and early Buddhism accept the 'doctrine of impermanence'
- b. Buddha, 'following the Brahmanical theory, presents hell for the wicked and rebirth for the imperfect'
- c. Only 'metaphysics that can justify Buddha's ethical discourse is the metaphysics underlying the Upanishads'. And Buddha did not look upon himself as an innovator, but only a restorer of the ancient way, i.e., the way of the Upanishads

- d. Finally, the incomprehensibility of the absolute by the intellect is accepted by both the schools

Thus, for Radhakrishnan, Buddhism '... is a return of Brahmanism to its own fundamental principles'. Having drawn out the commonalities between Buddhism and Brahmanism, Radhakrishnan states, however, that Buddhism brought about the democratic practice of including the masses by breaking open the exclusivism of the Upanishads. Nonetheless, even this concession to Buddhism that Radhakrishnan makes, in acknowledging its contribution towards democratising Hinduism, is immediately weakened when he goes on to say upheavals are common features of Hindu Revealing his desperation and the vulnerability resorting to examples from the post-Buddha period, writes that when 'the treasures of the great property of a few, Ramanuja, the great Vaishnava the mystic texts to even the pariahs.

Having underscored the attributes common systems, Radhakrishnan makes the bold move major differences between Buddhism and the denial of atman, and the rejection of with reference to the first, Radhakrishnan advocated both atma-vada and anatma – vada.

The two doctrines were preached by Buddha for objects. He taught the existence of Âtman when he to his hearers the conventional doctrine; he taught an-Âtman when he wanted to impart to them doctrine. The Buddha's adherence to this dual position, Radhakrishnan, is played down by later interpreters who 'drew the negative inference that there was Nagasena, alleges Radhakrishnan, ignored Hence, according to Radhakrishnan, this difference and an-atman is not a substantial one.



Making a further point, Radhakrishnan claims that the Buddha did not 'oppose the institution [of caste], but adopts the Upanishad standpoint [which is that] The Brahmin or the leader of society is not so much a Brahmin by birth as by character'. In his view, the Buddha undermines that spirit of caste which later gave rise to inhuman practices. Yet, even this reformist move, for him, is not new to Brahmanical theory, as the latter too 'looked upon the highest status of the Sannyâsin as above caste' (ibid.: 370). Summing up his views on this topic he writes:

... in the world of thought both Upanishads and Buddhism protested against the rigours of caste. Both allowed the highest spiritual dignity to the poor and the humble, but neither rooted out the Vedic institutions and practices, though on this little more successful.

Thus, for Radhakrishnan, the Buddha does as have been attributed to him, but only rejects versions. More importantly, the Upanishads, interpretation, do not clearly advocate all these common features between Buddhism Radhakrishnan makes yet another move claims that the Buddha is dependent on Hinduism. rules of Buddhist Sangha were borrowed from though they were adapted to missionary purpose.

At the end of the discussion Radhakrishnan turns the matter on its head when he points out a central defect in Buddhism. He writes that the 'central defect of Buddha's teaching is that in his ethical earnestness he took up and magnified one half of the truth and made it look as if it were the whole' (ibid.: 399). Radhakrishnan attributes this error to the Buddha's 'distaste for metaphysics' that consequently 'prevented him from seeing that the partial truth had a necessary complement and rested on principles

which carried it beyond its self-imposed limits'. Explaining Hinduism's hostility towards Buddhism, Radhakrishnan writes:

The Hindu quarrels not so much with the metaphysical conceptions of Buddha as with his practical programme. Freedom of thought and rigidity in practice have marked the Hindu from the beginning of his history. The Hindu will accept as orthodox the Sâmkhya and the Purva Mimamsa systems of thought, regardless of their indifference to theism, but will reject Buddhism in spite of its strong ethical and spiritual note, for the simple reason that the former do not interfere with the social life and organisation, while the latter insists on bringing its doctrine near to the life of the people.

This is not only important, but also interesting, substantial threat the Buddha poses to Brahmanism. schools of Indian philosophy offered differences ideas; Buddhism threatened to intervene in both organisations. In this context, it sought to diminish between theory and practice. It is this move according to Radhakrishnan, which threatened organisation of social life that incurred the worth of the Hindus.

Thus, Radhakrishnan begins by acknowledging Buddhism is original, modern and scientific, a a practical and updated school of thought. He Buddhism as a system that revolves around a single which sought to remove abstract metaphysics. Subsequently, reversing this view, Radhakrishnan claims that not an original doctrine, but merely presents the new standpoint. In support of his assertion, Radhakrishnan out common themes in Buddhism and Hinduism, differences between the two, such as anatma-vada of caste in Buddhism. While conceding that Buddhism the exclusivist



tendencies in the Upanishads, and participation of the masses, Radhakrishnan nonetheless this ostensibly unique characteristic too by claiming democratic overtures are also found in Hinduism, this difference between Buddhism and Hinduism. Radhakrishnan points out the defects in the Buddha's and states the reasons for Hindus being intolerant As I have already pointed out, there is something about the long and arduous route of philosophical that Radhakrishnan has undertaken. We must, however, points in his discussion: first, the politics of denying between Hinduism and Buddhism underlying his solid and persistent attempt at offering a philosophical in support of his view; and third, his acknowledgment sociological fact that Buddhism posed a real threat to Hindu society.

While disagreeing with Radhakrishnan's attempt the differences between Buddhism and the Upanishads, however, pay close attention to two other aspects. of his argument shows that he is making two important (a) he endorses Buddhism's attempt to reduce the gap between theory and practice present in corrupted and Brahmanism; (b) he admits that this angered the Hindus.

In sharp contrast to Radhakrishnan, Ambedkar radical stand of the Buddha and Buddhism. the Vedas and the Upanisads, and accepts Sankhya Buddhism in Indian philosophy. Interestingly, Sankhya, he rejects the Bhagavad Gita. He the Gita was to 'defend certain dogmas of religion grounds'. This is intriguing based on the metaphysics of Sankhya.

For Ambedkar, the Vedas are a collection hymns, or chants, and are 'mere invocations Indra, Varuna, Agni, Soma, Isana, Prajapati, Bramha, and others'. There is not 'much philosophy

'speculations of a philosophical nature' about world, the creation of 'individual things'. The Buddha, according to Ambedkar, the Vedic sages as worthy of reverence', but only He did not see anything 'morally elevating' Ambedkar argues that for the Buddha, the 'Vedas as a desert', and so he 'discarded' them us useless.

The Brahmanas are a part of the Vedas, Sruti. The Brahminic philosophy, says Ambedkar, as not only 'sacred' but also 'infallible'. Further, philosophy, 'performance of Vedic sacrifices religious rites and ceremonies and the offering can save souls from transmigration and give addition to this, Ambedkar points out, Brahmins ideal society, that is the Chaturvarna, which entailed society into four classes: Brahmins, Kshatriyas, these classes are not equal but are ruled by first one is placed at the top, while the last bottom. There is also a division of occupations, and does not permit trespass. Another rule of society is that education must be denied to of all classes. A further rule is that a man's life stages. This, Ambedkar explains, is the divine pattern of an ideal society called Chaturvarna'. Finally, endorsed the doctrine of karma.

The Buddha, insists Ambedkar, 'strongly thesis that the Vedas are 'infallible' and that never be questioned'. On the contrary, 'nothing was infallible and nothing could Buddha also denies any 'virtue in sacrifice'. in the 'sense of self-denial for the good of the Buddha regards as false sacrifice the offering to God for personal benefit' (ibid.: the theory of Chaturvarna as unnatural, arbitrary, of freedom. While conceding that inequality the Buddha, writes Ambedkar, rejects Brahmanism graded inequality.

The Buddha found this ordering of society also wrong, designed to serve the interests particularly, the Shudras and



women. Being and education, these segments of society responsible for their degraded condition. Their causing them to rebel against Brahmanism, devotees and upholders of Brahmanism' reasons, concludes Ambedkar, 'the Buddha being opposed to the true way of life.

In Ambedkar's critique of the Upanishads, of the Upanishads was that Brahman was the same as Brahman. The Atman did not realize that it was Brahman because of the Upadhis in which it was entangled.' So, the question [as asked by the Upanishads was: 'Is Brahman a reality?' In Ambedkar's reckoning, the 'acceptance of the Upanishadic thesis depended upon the answer to this question'. In contrast, says Ambedkar, the 'Buddha could find no proof in support of the thesis that Brahman was a reality. He, therefore, rejected the thesis of the Upanishads'. The question above was put to no less a person than Yajnavalkya, 'a important a part in the Brihadarnyaka 'What is Brahman? What is Atman? All was: 'Ned! Netil, I know not! I know not!' 'Reality about which no one knows anything',. The Buddha had, therefore, no Upanishad thesis as being based on pure in contrast to Radhakrishnan, Ambedkar between the Upanishads and Buddhism. Rather, the Buddha clearly and wholly rejected not the Vedas but also Upanishads.

Although Ambedkar rejects outright and the Upanishads, he accepts, together importance of one old system of Indian Ambedkar considers Kapila, the founder most pre-eminent 'among the ancient philosophers. An important dimension of Ambedkar's although he endorses the philosophy of Sankhya, the Bhagavat Gita, which is based on the Also, Ambedkar made another interesting revealing the close relationship between the Gita and Buddhism.

According to Ambedkar, the Gita is not it has 'no message'. It only defends 'certain philosophical grounds'. The defends is the justification of war on the human existence (ibid.: 194). Second, it defends Chaturvarna by 'linking it to the theory of men'. The third such defence is, the selfish motive behind performance by 'introducing the principle of Anasakti, without any attachment for the fruits of the Karma.

Ambedkar goes on to claim that there is Jaimini's Purva Mimamsa and the Bhagvad difference, it would lie, according to Ambedkar, 'more formidable supporter of counter-revolution' providing a 'permanent basis which they without which they [that is, the counter-never have survived' (ibid.: 198). In this context, Ambedkar asserts—contrary to those like Telang and Tilak—that the Gita 'has been composed after Jaimini's Purva Mimamsa and after Buddhism' (ibid.: 199). Ambedkar rejects those 'typical' Hindu scholars who are 'reluctant to admit that the Bhagvad Gita is anyway influenced by Buddhism and is ever ready to deny that the Gita has borrowed anything from Buddhism'.

In identifying the source whence, the Gita borrowed theory Ambedkar points out that as 'no Upanishad the word Nirvana' the 'whole idea is peculiarly borrowed from Buddhism' (ibid.: 203). There Gita that are borrowed from Buddhism, Ambedkar are: the definition of a true devotee: '(1) maitri (2) karuna (compassion); (3) mudita (sympathising (4) upeksha (unconcernedness).' These are found and Tevijja Sutta. The other idea that the Gita takes is on the question of what knowledge is, and the explication, in chapter XIII, 'reproduced main doctrines of Buddhism...' from the Gospel. Further, even the 'new metaphorical interpretation



in chapter VIII is a 'verbatim reproduction of from Majjhina Nikaya I, 286 Sutta XVI.

Therefore, we have in Ambedkar an acceptance of Buddhism and those aspects of the Sankhya that were accepted by the Buddha, and a complete rejection of the Vedas, Brahmanas, Upanishads and the Gita. The last, Ambedkar argues, is a response to Buddhism, and is a philosophical defence of Purva Mimamsa. While Radhakrishnan denies any significant difference between Hinduism and Buddhism, Ambedkar in contrast, reinforces the differences. While Ambedkar uses the differences between Hinduism and Buddhism to claim the rejection of the former by the latter, Radhakrishnan, on the other hand, explains the differences away to establish continuity between the former and the latter. Although Radhakrishnan attempts to erase the differences between Hinduism and Buddhism—and this may not be a politically correct thing to do—he seriously engages with the issue and persistently pursues his line of argument. It is one thing to disagree with Radhakrishnan dispense with him. Thus, there is a need to political correctness and theoretical engagement. with theoretical rigour can, at times, cost politics particularly so, not while making political claims, to making sure political claims endure. In the case is politically correct. He clearly, but only briefly, with his contemporaries such as Telang, Tilak However, what Ambedkar has stated has not followed up and explored further by the Philosophical community.

There is a need to extend Ambedkar's different traditions and make these philosophically and to bring in rich resources from Buddhism, relation to Hinduism. In an interesting paper, a claim for Dalits to take to theory (2002). I this to include a philosophical engagement

reopen the critical philosophical engagement Along with the political claims clearly stated philosophical insights and ideas available in extensively elaborated. These can be further the fundamental philosophical themes in Hinduism: this opening between political ideas to philosophical discussions, and insights as philosophical theories, relating Ambedkar and highlighting his critique of Hinduism, critical relation between Buddhism and Hinduism—all these can reinvigorate the discussion on Indian philosophy. This manner of the clearing of a space, or making an opening, has successful precedents, since this is what was undertaken by Buddhist philosophers in relation to the Buddha. They extended and philosophically formulated his ideas in a metaphysical discourse, even though the Buddha rejected metaphysics. The rich and extensive philosophical resources from Buddhism can be used to consolidate the critique of Hinduism initiated by Ambedkar. This, in my reading, would not only consolidate the political views that Ambedkar proposed, but also make the debate between Hinduism and Buddhism more current. Hence, we may say that Ambedkar brings political correctness to the discussion, making it more contemporary. However, one of the limitations in his preoccupation with exposing the injustice society to Dalits, he considers only the impact Gita, without considering the impact of Hinduism in other words, both Radhakrishnan and Ambedkar extreme positions, albeit in opposite directions. that I shall discuss the work of T.R.V. Murthy.

Murti states his philosophical differences with Radhakrishnan's denial of differences between Hinduism and Buddhism. Like Ambedkar and Radhakrishnan, Murti credits Buddhism with offering a modern perspective. In his



estimation, the 'egalitarian stand taken by Buddhism, as contrasted with the hierarchical pattern of Brâhmanism, in regard to the cultivation of spiritual life is in closer conformity with the ideals of today'. Directly taking on Radhakrishnan.

Having identified the genus-like similarities differences, Murti then highlights the relations between the two schools of thought. lies in elucidating this transformative relation and Buddhism, rather than merely stating absence of differences. This is what distinguishes Ambedkar and Radhakrishnan. Ambedkar impact of Buddhism on the Gita and does influence of Hinduism on the shaping Radhakrishnan strategically and infrequently interrelations between the two systems, them by subsuming Buddhism within Brahmanism, the process of transformation restricted Radhakrishnan, it becomes a marginal activity his overall concern, which is to correct Brahmanism critical application of Buddhism. In contrast, Buddhism and Brahmanism have mutually impacted each other.

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