

# Buddhism

In Buddhism there is no concept of a creator God. and so it is regarded as a part of atheist or philosophical tradition of the subcontinent and like Jainism can be called a Godless religion.

It also does not accept the existence of the soul (Anatm) and so Buddhism is also called a soulless religion whereas Jainism is only Godless.

Buddhism accepts the consciousness (Chetna) and also highlights its component but it accepts that the consciousness is <sup>due to</sup> ever changing ~~due to~~ combination of the different component of the consciousness. In Buddhism the world or the universe or the

creation is accepted as a real entity and also an eternal entity. but according to Buddhism the world or the Universe is in flux.

That is to say everything is transitory and nothing has acquired a consolidated and stable opposition. Events are constantly happening without reaching any final form thus in Buddhism there is no concept of being and it only accepts the

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## Concept of becoming.

The only stable state accepted in Buddhism is the state of Nirvana which is also presented as the objective of the life. Nirvana is explained as a ~~psychological~~ state which can be reached even during the life time, i.e; even in flesh.

At this stage one is neither dead nor alive. At this stage one is neither happy nor sad and is also free from worldly sorrows and sufferings. The state of Nirvana is attained by destroying Trishna which is translated as desires or "Craving of all sorts". This is also called extinction of the flame of desires.

This state of Nirvana leads to Parinirvana after death when the flame of life itself is extinguished and one is free from the cycle of birth and death.

Nirvana — extinction of the flame of desires  
(Lifetime)

↓  
Parinirvana — extinction of the flame of life.  
(Afterdeath)

Even in the absence of belief in the existence of the God and in the existence of the soul Buddhism accepts the theory of Sansara and tries explained it on the basis of <sup>e</sup>existence of causal relation between two lives. According to Buddhism the Karma -phalas acquired in one life give birth to another life but in the process nothing is transmigrated (not even the Karmaphalas from one life to another) thus Buddhism even accepts the theory of karma as a part of its explanation for the cycle of birth and death.

For the attainment of Nirvana, Buddhism prescribes acknowledgement of the four noble truths. (Arya-Satya), which are mentioned below:-

- 1) Life is sorrowful.
- 2) Sorrow is caused by Trishna.
- 3) Sorrow can be ended by eliminating Trishna.
- 4) Trishna can be eliminated by following the eight-fold path.

That Buddhism also prescribes a disciplined life based on 10 rules (Das Shikshas).

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Buddhism also prescribed the middle path for religious observances and the elements of Tapas are generally not ~~rigorous~~ and emphasis placed upon meditation and contemplation.

## # Mahayana Buddhism

Mahayana Buddhism emerged as a sect of Buddhism. Initially in the north and north-western part of the Indian subcontinent during the early Christian century. Its doctrine were given final shape in the 4th Buddhist council which took place in Kashmir under the patronage of famous Kushan ruler Kanishka. It was also patronized by the last great ruler of the ancient regime Harshavardhan.

Some of the important thinker or philosopher associated with Mahayana Buddhism are Ashvaghosa, Vasumitra, Parshvanatha, Nagarjun, Asang, Dignaga etc.

The rise of Mahayana Buddhism is mainly explained on the basis of the material and ideological changes associated with the climax of second urbanization during the early Christian century.

We find emergence of rich and prosperous traders and merchants who were willing to make donations ~~imitating~~<sup>imitate</sup> the contemporary ruling classes to the Buddhist monks and the monastic establishment. The new prosperity started transforming the life style not only the lay followers of Buddhism but also of the Buddhist monk. Now preferring a more luxurious life style.

The new life style was not in harmony with the old preachings of Buddha related to a simple and austere life. At this conflict noticed in the material imperatives and ideological position necessitated some sort of ideological adjustment and the rise of Mahayana Buddhism and the ideological transformation associated with the ideological transformation are supposed to be product of the efforts made in the same direction.

The rise of Mahayana Buddhism is also explained on the basis of the arrival of foreign ruling groups in the post ~~Mauryan~~<sup>Mauryan</sup> age and the influx of new ideas due to establishment of closer trading and commercial contact with new regions like the central Asia and the West Asia.

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It can also be explained on the basis of general Syncretic tendencies of the subcontinent.

Mahayana Buddhism came to be characterised by the following features—

1. Exaltation of Buddha to the position of the God.
2. Emergence of the concept of Bodhisattvas largely based on the theme of (Jataka stories) which were stories related to the previous births of Buddha.

{ Bodhisattvas were also perceived as entities in }  
{ the process of becoming Buddha. }

3. Worship of Buddha and Bodhisattvas, initially in form of symbol but in due course of time also in form of ideals marking the beginning of the iconic tendencies in the historical age.

<u>Symbols</u>	- Elephant - birth
Horse	- Mahabhrishkarm
Bodhi Tree	- Enlightenment of Buddha
Wheel	- first Sermon of Buddha Mahadharma Chakra Parivartan (Paravatian)
Stupa	- Death of Buddha

4. Emphasis on the grace of Buddha for the attainment of Nirvana. Thus we find some short of dilution of the role of individual efforts for the attainment of Nirvana.

5. for the attainment of the grace of Buddha emphasis placed upon a sense of love, surrender and devotion towards Buddha. This is seen as the beginning of devotional cults as a part of the main stream religious life of the subcontinent.

6. As a part of the worship of Buddha emergence of new rituals mainly associated with the idol worship like making offerings to the Idols. and Pradakshina (circumambulation). With time these rituals became integral parts of even the temple rituals.

7. With time this ritual became integral parts of even the temple rituals. Emergence of the idea of the transfer of religious merit from one person to another and even from one life to another.

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Use of Sanskrit as a medium of literary and philosophical expressions.

behind the rise of Mahayana

Q. Explain the circumstances behind the rise of Mahayana Buddhism.

Q. Highlight the contribution made by Mahayana Buddhism in shaping the socio-cultural consciousness of the Indian Subcontinent.

Q. Highlight the differences between the Hinayana and Mahayana Buddhist sects of Buddhism.

## Bhagratism / Vaishanavism

Bhagratism or Vaishanavism represents the most popular aspect of the Puranic traditions. Its origin can be traced back to the early Christian centuries but its principles or tenets acquired their mature forms mainly in the Gupta and the post-Gupta ages of Indian History. Its doctrines can be seen in the texts like Vishnu Puran, Shiva Puran, Bhagvata Puran, and Bhagvat Gita. The rise of Bhagratism is seen as a survival of Brahminism, mainly as a result of counter-reformist tendency undertaken by it in the overall context of the challenges posed by the heterodox sects and their variants. In this process we notice large scale appropriation of popular cults and practices and also the appropriation of some popular aspects of the heterodox sects. Seen from this perspective the rise of Bhagratism is an important example of syncretic tendencies and the composite culture of the subcontinent.

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The rise of Bhagvatism can also be seen as a result of the material and ideological changes associated with the progress of Urbanisation influx of new ideas and the patronage extended by the newly arrived foreign ruling groups.

Some important features or characteristics associated with Bhagvatism or Vaishnavism are mentioned below.

1. The cult of Bhagvat a popular cult figure who in due course of time came to be identified with Narayan.
2. In due course of time both came to be identified with a minor deity of the vedic tradition - Vishnu.
3. Emergence of the concept of Divine trinity with Brahma as the creator Vishnu as a protector and Mahesh or lord shiva as the destroyer of the universe.
4. The concept of divine consorts or companions who came to be associated with major deities of the divine pantheon like Brahma- Saraswati, Vishnu - Laxmi, and Shiv - Parvati.

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5. Composite deities

6. Divine Hierarchy

7. The concept of Avataranada (Theory of Incarnation)

Initially the most famous Avatar of Vishnu was Krishna Vasudeva who was a hero of the famous Krishna Tribe living in and around Mathura.

In due course of the time we find acknowledgement of 10 incarnations of Vishnu including Buddha.

8. The Concept of Vyuhvada (Emanation).

9. Bhakti (devotional cult)

10. Idol Worship

11. New Rituals - Temple rituals.

12. Ahimsa (Non-violence)

# Tamil Bhakti

The notion of / the idea of love, surrender, and the devotion forming the basis of so called devotional cults which are initially noticed in the north as a part of the sects like Mahayana Buddhism and Bhagvatism reached the south in due course of time.

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There it developed as a movement mainly in the Tamil speaking areas with its spiritual and social over tones and became famous as the Tamil Bhakti. Seen from this ~~perspective~~ the Tamil Bhakti is an important chapter in the process of cultural exchange between the north India and the south India which has played an important role in ensuring all India cultural uniformity.

Tamil Bhakti witnessed emergence of two major streams based on the two major deities of the puranic traditions Vishnu and Shiva forming bases for the Vaishnavite and Shaivite schools of the Tamil Bhakti. We find a series of saints belonging to both the traditions beginning with the 6th century BC. and lasting till the tenth century AD. The saints associated with the Vaishnavite school came to be known as the Alvars, 12 in number and the most famous of them was Namalvar.

Among them we also find the women saint namely Andal. The saints belonging to the Shaivite school came to be known as Nayanaars and the most famous among them was Sundararumi. They were 63 in number. These saints composed devotional songs in the Tamil language and sang them publicly moving from one place to another.

→ Composition - of songs and poetry singing and dancing.

→ Wandering life  
In due course of time the songs of Alvars came to be compiled and the compilation is known as Prabandham. Even the songs of Nayanaars came to be compiled and the compilation is known as Tevaram.

Like any other Bhakti school of the subcontinent in Tamil Bhakti too we noticed some reformist tendencies associated with some sort of liberal and ~~associated~~ democratic approaches in the religious life. We don't find distinction based on the caste or varnas and among the saints of Tamil Bhakti.

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We not only find representation of women but also the representation of the so called lower stratas of the Society.

Tamil Bhakti also developed some distinct features like it remained confined mainly to the Shaguna tradition, and mainly developed around cult of temples.

It also displayed intense devotionalism.

In the Tamil Bhakti we also notice some sectarian approaches as the Saints of the Tamil Bhakti displayed some degree of hostility towards some other heterodox sects.