**Hinduism versus Buddhism**

Everyone struggles to find perfect happiness; however, most differ in the path that they choose. Hinduism and [Buddhism](http://www.associatedcontent.com/topic/609/buddhism.html) have many of the same elements, stemming from similar cultural beliefs, yet they also have some important differences. In both religions, essentially the goal is the same - to reach bliss.

In life, everyone has the aspiration to find perfect happiness. Hindus and Buddhists all over the world set forth everyday to achieve this. Both Buddhists and Hindus strive to have positive karma. In Hinduism, a man can only hope to achieve moksha ("salvation"). Moksha allows this man to break the cycle of Samsara. (In Buddhism, as in Hinduism, Samsara is the constant cycle of rebirth and the everyday world of change.) He achieves a higher place out of the caste system. Buddhists struggle through life to be rewarded with nirvana. Nirvana releases you from all suffering, allowing your exemption from rebirth. This is obviously consistent with moksha. Although these two achievements are similar in that aspect, they differ as well.

The caste system plays an important role in Hinduism. In order to pursue moksha, one must be a man of the Brahmin caste. If not, he/she needs to work for the opportunity. They can only hope to become something of a higher caste in their next life, for there is no chance in their present life. Within Buddhism, however, it is thought that any enlightened person can hope to reach nirvana, although it is not easily attained.

There was one person who began the religion of Buddhism - Siddartha Gutama. Through 49 days of extreme meditation, he reached enlightenment. Although Siddartha, from that point on, was known as "The Great Buddha," he is not considered a god. This is a great difference from Hinduism, which has no founder. Most Hindus worship one being of ultimate oneness (Brahman) through infinite depictions of gods and goddesses - over 300,000 of them. These various demonstrations of gods and goddesses come to life within idols, temples, gurus, rivers, animals, etc. Buddhism remains more modest in representations.

A physical way to move toward moksha is to practice the yogas. The word means "union." Meditation in Buddhism is as important as yoga is to the Hindus. Since this was what the Buddha was practicing at the time of his enlightenment, people are now encouraged to do the same. Strong meditation will help to answer the main questions that Buddhists seek.

Buddhism was derived from Hinduism yet was also a reaction to Hinduism. Therefore, the two religions share many concepts, yet certain things differ completely.

*Adapted from Neusner, Jacob. Comparing Religious Traditions: The Life of Virtue, Vol. 3*