

Moksha and nirvana essay sample

[Religion](#), [Buddhism](#)



Moksha and Nirvana Both Hindu and Buddhist beliefs of reincarnation end with the ultimate goal of ending that cycle. Moksha is a final resting place that is attained by living a good life through the five caste levels. Moksha is basically the ending of the cycle of birth and rebirth while the soul lives on. Nirvana is the highest level of enlightenment a Buddhist can receive.

Adhering to the various phases of the Noble eight Fold Path to eliminate suffering, one will reach the final phase, nirvana. Nirvana is also the end of the cycle of birth and rebirth but you become “ extinct.” The idea of nirvana is difficult for any American to fully understand or even try to explain. We are a society that has maybe too much emphasis on the present day and material possessions and this makes it so hard to understand that this goal is compared to a flame flickering out. Nirvana is the ultimate goal of the Buddhist and it is perfect liberation, freedom, peace, and tranquility (Rahula, p. 43). It is also the end of the thoughts of lust, anger, and delusion. In contrast to Hinduism, one does not have to wait until death to reach this goal. Nirvana can be realized in the present life based on ones intuitive knowledge.

It is realized by understanding the teaching of Siddhartha Guatama and practicing it carefully, consistently and completely through the Noble Eight Fold Path. The Noble Eight Fold Path is Right Understanding, Thought, Speech, Action, Livelihood, Effort, Mindfulness, and Concentration (Rahula, p. 45). Nirvana has to be realized by people within themselves. You are not blessed with nirvana but you bless yourself with nirvana. When Buddhists achieve nirvana it does not mean they are entering into a heaven but simply breaking the cycle of incarnation by becoming enlightened on what it really

is. Thinking as an American you could say nirvana is nothing because you cannot see, hear, smell, taste, or touch it with your senses. You have to realize it with your mind.

The Noble Eight Fold Path is essential in understanding nirvana because it is the way of understanding. Right understanding is accepting things the way they are. The way of nature is explained by the Four Noble Truths. They are dukkha (suffering), origin of dukkha (desire), Cessation of dukkha (nirvana), and the Noble Eight Fold Path to nirvana (Rahula, p. 50). Right thought is the thought of selfless detachment (Rahula, p. 49). Right speech is not cursing, gossiping, talking behind one's back, and lying. Right action is simply having morals. Right livelihood means making an honest living working in areas that do no harm to others.

Right effort pertains to maintaining a peaceful state of mind and no having impure thoughts. Right mindfulness is to be aware of your thoughts, changes within the body, and of things and people around you. Finally, right concentration has to do with the four stages of dyhana. The first stage of dyhana is to expel bad thoughts from the mind. In the second stage you become focused on sharpening the mind much like Jnana yoga. The third stage is where the sensation of joy is no longer felt, that is to say that you are not happy. The fourth stage of dyhana is freedom from all sensations and total awareness occurs.

The ultimate goal in life for Hindus is not personal happiness or even getting to heaven, rather it is the attainment of Moksha, the liberation from the cycle of birth and rebirth. It is also a detachment from the senses, like nirvana.

One is neither happy nor sad, and one does not feel earthly connected to anyone or anything. Moksha differs from nirvana in that it is also the union of the Atman with Brahman. Atman is the real and permanent part of us, essentially the mind and soul that is reborn again and again. Brahman is the ultimate being, the cosmic order, and the entire universe. Attaining Moksha involves the loss of the individual identity and is absorbed into the cosmic order. Detachment is a result of this because attachment breeds desire. In performing your duties, do not focus on the results because you will then be attached to the outcome and not the whole process (Easwaran, p. 68). In order to obtain Moksha you must realize there is no I, me, or mine.

There are ways you must follow in order to achieve Moksha and all are forms of yoga. The first is karma yoga. This is the path of action for active people. Karma yoga is doing deeds, duties and helping people according to your caste because you know it is your duty. You do not feel happy that you helped someone because you made him or her feel better but rather because it was your duty to better the world (Class notes). The second way of attaining Moksha is through Jnana yoga, the western world's vision of yoga. Jnana yoga is for the intellectual people in order to sharpen their minds (Class notes). It is executed through meditation, which focuses and sharpens the mind to realize the true Self and detachment. Physical exercises are part of this also. Your body has to be in good physical health in order for the mind to think properly to attain Moksha. The mind and body go hand in hand. One cannot exist at its best without the other at its best. The final form of yoga is Bakti yoga. This yoga is for the emotional person. This type of yoga is based solely on devotion and worship. In Bakti yoga you develop a personal

relationship with a deity that suits your personality. In developing this relationship you detach yourself from others and possessions in order to worship that deity. Detachment is Moksha.

Buddhism believes that nirvana is actually the termination of rebirths, meaning that the identity of an individual is extinguished. One way to distinguish the Hindu teaching from the Buddhist teaching is to present a metaphor a friend of mine told me. In describing the Hindu idea of Moksha, the individual is like a raindrop that falls into the ocean becoming one with and returning to what created it. In describing nirvana in Buddhism, the identity of a person is like a candle flame that is blown out. Nothing is left but what sustained the flame.