


Buddhism vs. Marxism

What is the article about?

In an essay, written in his clear and methodical style, Ambedkar has compared Buddhism with Marxism, listing out their similarities and differences.

What is Ambedkar's stance on religion?

- Ambedkar is often mistaken to be against religion.
- But he was deeply spiritual and conscious of the importance of religion in public life.
- He considers Buddhism to be superior to other religions.
- Ambedkar also believed the Buddha's path to be superior to the major religion-rejecting philosophy, Marxism.



AMBEDKAR

- December 6 is observed as the **Mahaparinirvan Diwas**, or the death anniversary of Dr BR Ambedkar.
- 'Parinirvan' can be translated as 'nirvan' after death, or freedom from the cycles of life and death.
- Dr Ambedkar breathed his last on **December 6, 1956**, less than two months after he had converted to Buddhism.

How has Ambedkar compared Buddhism and Marxism?

Similarity

- **End** - Both strive for the same end of a just and happy society.
- Buddhism's commitment to abolishment of private property is apparent in how its Bhikshus give up all worldly goods.
- The rules for Bhikshus owning property or possessions are far more rigorous than are to be found in communism in Russia.

Differences

- **Means** - The driving force of India's Constitution says that Buddha was a democrat.

- Ambedkar states that the means adopted by Buddha were to convert a man by changing his moral disposition to follow the path voluntarily while the Communists adopted violence and dictatorship.
- The Buddha established Communism so far as the Sangh was concerned without dictatorship.
- It may be that it was a communism on a very small scale but it was communism without dictatorship a miracle which Lenin failed to do.
- **Importance of religion** - Communists claim the State will eventually wither away and they don't answer when that will happen, and what will replace the state.
- Communists themselves admit that their theory of the State as a permanent dictatorship is a weakness in their political philosophy.
- To the Communists, religion is anathema (something that is intensely disliked).
- Their hatred to religion is so deep seated that they will not even discriminate between religions which are helpful to Communism and religions which are not.
- **Moral values** - Ambedkar adds that while Communist dictatorship in Russia has wonderful achievements, equality will be of no value without fraternity or liberty.
- He claims that Communism can give one but not all.
- According to him, the three can coexist only if one follows the way of Buddha.

How did Ambedkar distinguish between Buddhism and Christianity?

- Ambedkar claims that Buddhism does not have the faults of the older religion (Christianity).
- He claims that Christianity glorifies poverty and suffering in this world.
- He says that Buddhism talks of being happy in this world and of earning wealth through lawful means.

Quick facts

- **Socialism** - Socialism is based on the idea of public ownership of the means of production, but individuals may still own property.
- **Communism** - Communism advocates for a classless system in which all property and wealth are communally (rather than privately) owned.
- **Capitalism** - Capitalism is an economic system characterized by private ownership and a system of laws that protect the right to own or transfer private property.

References

1. [The Indian Express | Ambedkar on Buddhism being better than Marxism](#)
2. [Investopedia | Communism, Socialism, and Capitalism](#)



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