# Key differences between Hinduism & Buddhism

While Hinduism and Buddhism have various similarities and shared origin, given that Buddhism was an offshoot of Hinduism, there are several fundamental differences between these two religions. Similarly, while Buddhism is divided into two main religious groups Mahayana Buddhism and Hinayana Buddhism, with various fundamental similarities, they also have some differences between them. There are various forms Mahayana Buddhism including Tibetan Buddhism, and Zen Buddhism among others that are unique in various ways and have the specific origin. This research seeks to evaluate and explain the key differences between Buddhism and Hinduism as well as the differences between Mahayana and Hinayana Buddhism. Moreover, the research will also involve identification of two forms of Mahayana Buddhism examining their origins, unique features and recognizing the most appealing form with reasons.

In Hinduism, there are different ways of seeking God including meditation or Raja Yoga, Karma Yoga, where the righteous conduct all the duties in accordance with human demand as long as they are in the world. Moreover, Hindus perform Bhakti, devotions, prayers as well as Jnana Yoga, which is believed to be the path of knowledge (Cawley, 2015). Alternatively, Buddhism emphases on the eight fold path and four cardinal truths as ways to achieve Nirvana. The four cardinal truths entail acknowledging the existence of sufferings in the universe and that the sufferings are caused by the deceptive desires of the world, which is ever changing. Moreover, Buddhism subscribes to the conviction that the search for eternity aggravates human suffering and that for one to overcome the sorrows and attain Nirvana, they ought to adhere to the eight-fold path and suppress false desires (Ross, 2013). Buddhist emphasis on the fundamental philosophy of suffering and that the individuals need to practice meditation so that they can escape from the sorrow of the world. Consequently, dedicated mediation breaks the cycle of suffering and enable the individual to attain the level of nothingness, the Nirvana. Buddhism holds that suffering increases when individuals’ attachment to people and things increases and that suffering is an integral part of the body as well as the physical plane (Warner, 2017). In nothingness, there is true reality. On the other hand, Hindus subscribe to the belief that life is full of joy.

Dharma, a concept referring to the way of life, is common to Hindus and Buddhist. Buddhists mostly use the concept of Dharma to mean the collective Buddha’s teachings. Buddha continuously used the concept to refer to the way in which the universe works or the cosmic law as well as the order. Likewise, Dharma refers to the ultimate reality of truth. Conversely, Hindu still use the concept of Dharma in their worship but with a different meaning. The concept of Dharma, according to Hindu, refers to refer to the duties bestowed upon the individual in the universe (Ross, 2013). According to Hinduism, the concept of Dharma entails not only the routine performance of one’s religious acts but their family responsibilities and the way in which they carry out their duties in the community. However, according to Hindu religion, the individual’s dharma may change depending on the caste as well as the stage of life. For instance, a young man, who comes from the lower caste, might have different Dharma from the older man, who comes from a specific higher caste (Warner, 2017). Consequently, the concept of Dharma may be applicable in the two religions it finds intensive application in Hinduism compared to Buddhism.

Hindus worship numerous goddesses and gods. While Hinduism advocate for worshiping many goddesses and gods, the religion is largely monotheistic because each god is perceived as a manifestation of a particular Supreme God. For instance, in a particular Hindu family, a particular deity is worshiped. Most of the Hindus exercise devotion or bhakti to Lord Shiva or Lord Vishnu (Cawley, 2015). Although Buddhism does not repudiate the existence of such Supreme god, they subscribe to the belief that the followers should not bother themselves with devoting or worshiping one particular God. They argue that human beings are responsible for their enlightenment and that believe in a specific supreme being may not help them to address various issues that they have or which they may encounter (Ross, 2013). However, they preach and advocate the fact that it is in vain seek or worship an entity in which the individual may not be aware of its existence. The idea behind the belief was derived from Buddha, who after experiencing the world challenges, became disappointed and started preaching that life has sorrows and that the solution to reduce suffering is for individuals to seek nirvana. While Hinduism admits that there are sorrows and suffering that human may encounter, they attribute these sorrows and sufferings to previous human actions or karma (Cawley, 2015). Hindus also argue that individuals may attain divine happiness and ecstasy by discovering the Brahman and Atman.

Another difference arises for the entity in which the religious group pays tribute. The followers of Hinduism pay tribute to natural resources including stones, water and other things in the universe including the sun while Buddhist pay tribute to Buddha. Hinduism tribute is attributed to the belief that the ultimate reality is derived from all things, which are united as one magnificent divinity. Buddhism subscribe to the belief that the ultimate reality is derived from nothingness (Warner, 2017). Accordingly, although Hindus gain Moksha become united all things in the universe, the Buddhists achieve Nirvana, where they are detached from all things until they attain nothingness.

Buddhism has two major religious groups namely Hinayana Buddhism (Theravada) and Mahayana Buddhism. Although the groups share many similarities, they have various differences. Among them include the fact that the Mahayana Buddhists subscribe to the belief that Buddha, also referred to as the Siddhartha Gautama was indeed a God (Batchelor, 2015). However, the Hinayana Buddhists hold to the belief that Buddha was an ordinary human being. According to followers of Mahayana Buddhism, Buddha is regarded as a God because he descended to earth so that he can assist the believers to cross the sea of life (Lama & Chodron (2017). Alternatively, Hinayana Buddhists believe that Buddha was a human being and not a God because he only conceived the idea of the Nirvana. According to Hinayana Buddhists, Siddhartha Gautama was an ordinary individual since his characteristics marched that one of a human being including birth, living, and how he thought and operated. Besides, the Hinayana Buddhists argue that if he was a God, he would have been born as mediation master and discovered many human secrets such as the death, diseases and the fate of the people after they depart from the earthly life (Walpola, 2014). To Hinayana Buddhists, Siddhartha Gautama devoted his time to finding the truth and reaching enlightenment but he was ordinary human beings, who ought to be treated as such.

Followers of Mahayana Buddhism believe that it is recommendable to assist others individuals to reach Nirvana before one who is assisting could reach such a state. On the other hand, followers of Hinayana Buddhism belief that each individual should struggle to attain Nirvana on their own. Fundamentally, Mahayana Buddhists do all their best to assist other individuals to attain Nirvana before one could attain such state because it is interpreted as a noble mission (Batchelor, 2015). According to Hinayana Buddhists the act of reaching Nirvana ought to be the ultimate objective or every Buddhists and thus it should be an individual effort.

Followers of Mahayana Buddhism believe that the individuals, who trust in Buddha, have the opportunity to reach Nirvana. Essentially, all individuals, who have faith in Buddha, irrespective of the fact that they may pass through different paths, will eventually reach Nirvana (Sørensen, 2017). Nevertheless, they hold to the belief that it is much easier to reach Nirvana through Mahayana Buddhists’ way or through the big vehicle than through all the other ways. The followers argue that instead of focusing on self-actualization only, individuals should be inspiring and compassionate to others because it is only through such interventions that one can comprehensively change humanity. Simultaneously, the progress achieved through self-realization may be achieved faster because collective effort and compassion lead to more achievements.

According to Batchelor (2015), the subscribers of Mahayana Buddhist believe that collective effort leads to a better liberation because the individual is liberated not only from their personal predispositions but from the other individual’s predispositions. The bigger vehicle is not only progressive but inclusive and thus followers see themselves as more open-minded and liberal in approach compared to the Hinayana Buddhists. In contrast, followers of Hinayana Buddhist hold to the conviction that the only followers of Hinayana Buddhists will attain Nirvana (Lama & Chodron (2017). Consequently, the followers of Hinayana Buddhist are fully convinced that the only assured way that one can use to reach Nirvana is through the Hinayana way or the way of the small vehicle. This view is highly debatable because the Hinayana Buddhist disregards any other ways that one can use to reach Nirvana, arguing that they are not only wrong but are pointless and ineffective. While all versions of Buddhism started with Siddhartha Gautama they have different beliefs (Batchelor, 2015). Hinayana Buddhist are narrow in focus and are less impactful to the life of the other independent individuals or fellow followers because the vehicle is small to an extent that it cannot accommodate other individuals or have considerable impact to their lives.

Mahayana Buddhism and Hinayana Buddhism differ in the way they treat the characteristic four immeasurable attitudes. The four immeasurable attitudes include love, joy, compassion as well as the equanimity. According to Walpola (2014), Hinayana Buddhism and Mahayana Buddhism agree on definitions of compassion and love. Nevertheless, they differ in how they should treat or define the immeasurable attitudes of equanimity and joy. Mahayana Buddhism delineates the immeasurable attitude of joy as the aspiration that others individuals experience happiness or joy that leads to continuous enlightenment. Moreover, Mahayana Buddhism defines equanimity as the particular state of mind that is deprived of the attachment, repulsion, and indifference (Batchelor, 2015). Although Hinayana Buddhism also teaches the four immeasurable attitudes, they differ from the Mahayana Buddhism regarding how the immeasurable attitudes joy and equanimity should be defined. Hinayana Buddhism defines the immeasurable attitude joy as the practice of rejoicing in the delight of other individuals without jealousy (Sørensen, 2017). Hinayana Buddhism delineates equanimity as the consequence of rejoicing, love as well as the compassion.

According to Mahayana Buddhism, Bodhisattvas alone accomplished the ten comprehensive attitudes. The ten comprehensive attitudes include generosity, mental stability, patience, skill in means, ethical self-discipline, joyful perseverance, deep awareness, strengthening, aspiration-filled prayer as well as the discriminating awareness (Batchelor, 2015). Contrariwise, Hinayana Buddhism does not subscribe to the belief that only Bodhisattvas practiced the ten comprehensive attitudes. Correspondingly, Hinayana Buddhism has slightly different constructs of the far-reaching attitudes. These attitudes include mental stability, aspiration-filled prayer, and skill in means, renunciation, and remaining faithful to one’s word, resolution, equanimity, and love (Lama & Chodron, 2017). Additionally, Mahayana Buddhism goes into details regarding the nature of factors as held by Buddha by subscribing to the belief that everybody can indeed become a Buddha. Alternatively, Hinayana Buddhism does not adhere to the miniature details into the nature of factors as held by Buddha.

There are different forms of Mahayana Buddhism including Zen Buddhism and the Tibetan Buddhism. Zen Buddhism first originated in China in 6th century CE before spreading to other parts of the world including Japan, Korea as well as other Western parts of the globe during the Tang dynasty (Sørensen, 2017). It was originally referred to as the Chan Buddhism. Zen Buddhism is unique in various ways. For instance, the Zen Buddhism is driven by the attempt to comprehend and appreciate the real meaning of life without undertaking misleading rational language or thought. The tenets of Zen Buddhism are consistent with other faiths including Christianity and thus the tenets of their beliefs are quoted as an example of the approaches of pursuing the mystical understanding of faith. This form of Buddhism requires a passionate discipline such that when consistently practiced it leads to ultimate freedom and total genuineness (Walpola, 2014). This form of Buddhism subscribes to various fundamental tenets. For instance, according to Zen Buddhism, all humans are Buddha and thus they should seek to discover the truth on their own. Zen Buddhism holds to the belief that individuals should not seek truths that are outside their own understanding. The reason is that they are able to understand the truth by ardently adhering to the tenets of Zen Buddhism.

Tibetan Buddhism became a major religion in Tibet close to the end of the eighth century CE. It was later introduced to India when one of the Tibetan kings named Trisong Detsen was invited to India. The King came with two Buddhist masters from Tibet with significant and extensive Buddhist texts that contained specific practices of the Tibetan Buddhist (Sørensen, 2017). Tibet Buddhism combines various essential traditions of Mahayana Buddhism with those of Shamanic and Tantric that contains materials from antique Tibetan religious tenets referred to as Bon. According to Tibetan Buddhist, when one ought to struggle to reach the state of Buddhahood, where they are freed from entire mental obscurations. At this state, individuals are said to have achieved the state of uninterrupted happiness, which is mixed with an instantaneous cognition of emptiness. After attaining this state, an individual is said to have reached the correct nature of reality. Individuals who have reached this level should help others as well (Sørensen, 2017). Nevertheless, there are certain influences or actions that could limit individual’s ability to reach the state of happiness including individuals limitations derived from individuals’ former actions and karma’s limit each time Buddha are willing to help.

Zen Buddhism is the most appealing form of Buddhism. The reason is that it continuously seeks to comprehend and appreciate the real meaning of life without undertaking misleading rational language or thought. Moreover, the values held by Zen Buddhism are consistent with other faiths including Christianity or other major religions and thus it can enhance unity and bridge of boundaries between major religious groups. The fact that it requires a passionate discipline and always seeks to discover the truth, it can serve as a valuable construct of enhancing values and responsibility among the followers and other interested members of the community. Besides, it advocates purity and truth and thus enables the followers to preserve their values at all times.

Conclusively, there are various key differences between Hinduism & Buddhism. Among them include Hindus worship numerous goddesses and gods. Alternatively, although Buddhist do not repudiate the existence of such Supreme god, they subscribe to the believe followers should not bother themselves with devoting or worshiping one particular God. The followers of Hinduism pay tribute to natural resources including stones, water and other things in the universe including the sun while Buddhist pay tribute to Buddha. Hinduism tribute is attributed to the belief that the ultimate reality is derived from all things, which are united as one magnificent divinity. Buddhism subscribe to the belief that the ultimate reality is derived from nothingness. Accordingly, although Hindus gain Moksha become united all things in the universe, the Buddhists achieve Nirvana, where they are detached from all things until they attain nothingness.

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