

Buddhism, confucianism, and shintoism

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The three of the most common religions in Asia are Buddhism, Shintoism, and Confucianism. In many ways, these religions share a number of common traits although they do possess a certain number of distinct differences as well. As such, a clear examination of the similarities and differences will be provided herein. Buddhism originated in India where it later traveled to China and to Japan. The Chinese version of Zen Buddhism is probably the most prevalently practiced form of the religion in the world.

Mainly, this is because this form of Buddhism is mostly concerned with philosophical and practical approaches to Buddhist theory and study, Mainly, Buddhism is concerned no with an afterlife or a heaven as much as it is concerned with achieving enlightenment on earth. A simple definition of enlightenment would be a free and clear mind that does not prescribe to any attachments or suffering. This is clearly not an easy state of mind to attain. However, by following Buddhism's 8 Fold Path and 4 Noble Truths throughout one's life, it may be possible to attain enlightenment.

Both the 8 Fold Path and the 4 Noble Truths are designed as a means of approaching life in a safe and sane manner that leads to eventual enlightenment. As the name would imply, Confucianism derives from the life, philosophy, and teaching of Confucius. Although Confucius and Confucianism originated in China, the religion has universal appeal. That is why it spread throughout East Asia and, to a certain, degree, into the western world. The basic premise of Confucianism seems more akin to traditional logic than any type of spiritual religion.

(This is where it possesses many Page - 2 similarities to Buddhism) The central tenants of Confucianism stress the importance of educating the

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populace in order to create a moral order. From this moral order, a government will emerge that prescribes to logical, moral tenants. As a result, the government will seek to serve its people as opposed to ruling over them with an iron fist. This connects to the notion that a moral order breeds compassion. This ties into Confucius' belief that relationships and ritual behavior were critical to maintaining societal order.

Shintoism is quite removed from Confucianism and Buddhism in a number of ways. Shintoism is far more localized to Japan than the other two religions. Additionally, it is a religion that places great emphasis on the worship of spirits. This is far removed from the more secular approach of the other two religions. Shintoism seeks to create a harmony between humans and the natural world. So, in a way, it combines secular logic with the natural world and the corporal world of the spirits.

Ultimately, the goal of Shinto is to follow the path of the Four Affirmations. These Four Affirmations involve combining adherence to tradition and family; the natural world; physical cleanliness; and the spirit. Through this, an attainment similar to Buddhist enlightenment might be acquired. Again, there are similarities and differences between all three religions. The main similarity would be the desire to attain a more perfect and moral life. That is a common thread that is quite valuable.