

Free essay about hinduism versus buddhism

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Hinduism and Buddhism are two of the world's well known polytheistic religions. They are similar in some ways, yet different in others. Both Hinduism and Buddhism are originally from the Indian subcontinent. They share a long but uncomfortable relationship with each other. Hinduism is a process of understanding the soul of a human being. It is all about understanding the inner soul or being, hence you are able to understand existence of a being from within. In order to attain the highest life process, you need to remove all manner of distractions from your life so as to achieve understanding of the nature within. Thus, you are able to understand Brahma or rather, existence from within your own Atman. Buddhism on the other hand is not about the soul. It excludes all concepts connected with the soul of a being and is about finding the Anatman (Coomaraswamy, 6). Buddhism is all about living a disciplined life and dispelling all forms of your existence through understanding that nothing is about you. Therefore, you achieve Nirvana by doing this. Gautama the founder of Buddhism was born a Hindu in a Hindu family. Before his enlightenment and becoming the Buddha, he went to Hindu gurus to find answers to his sufferings. He followed the meditation techniques and practices as prescribed by the Vedas. From his background, the differences and similarities arise.

The differences and similarities between Hinduism and Buddhism are manifest in their practices and origins. Hinduism has no particular known founder since they have lost any information about them over the centuries whereas Buddhism was founded by Gautama Buddha. Hinduism is much older than Buddhism. In Hinduism, There's no official clergy in Hinduism, however there are various practitioners and holy men such as Gurus, Yogis,

Rishis and Brahmins. In Buddhism, there are Monks and Nuns, who follow the teachings of Buddha. In Hinduism, the followers believe in the Vedas (Gwynne, 33). The Vedas are the sacred scriptures of Hinduism, from which their traditions and beliefs spring. Buddhist do not believe in the Vedas or any Hindu scripture. Hindus believe in Atman, roughly the individual soul, and Brahman, who is the creator of all, while Buddhists believe in finding the "Anatman", the not soul thus they do not believe in the existence of souls. Whereas Hindus believe the Buddha to be reincarnated from Mahavishnu, one of the gods of Hindu trinity, the Buddhists do not believe in any Hindu god. Hindus believe in the four stages of life (Brahmacharya, Garhasthya, Vanaprastha, and Sanyasa), a belief that Buddhists do not share. Hinduism has many paths of self-realization whereas Buddhists believe that the Buddha, Sangha, and Dhamma are the three most important requirements on the eightfold path, or the principal teachings of the Buddha. , whereas the Hindus do not believe in the enlightened existence, but Buddhists do. Both religions believe in karma and reincarnation (Eliot, 46). In Hinduism, however, only Brahmins (priests), can achieve moksha, the Hindu equivalent of Nirvana whereas in Buddhism any follower can achieve Nirvana through the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path, realizations of the essence of suffering and the methods to remove all suffering. Buddhists do not believe in the Caste System, which distinguishes them from Hindus who are avid believers in societal classes.

Buddhism released the poor and low castes from under the yoke of oppressive traditions. The teachings of Buddha gave them hope in a society dominated by belief in the caste system and the exclusive status of the

privileged classes which the Vedic religion upheld as inviolate and indisputable.

Hinduism is more conducive to political and social stability because it is woven into the very fabric of society, due to the caste system. The caste system is rigid, with upper ranking members as well as lower ranking members. Caste is determined by birth and allows no social advancement. It defines one's profession as well as potential educational. The concept that one's caste is determined by sins or virtues in another life reinforce social limitations. This creates a culture of fatalism and acceptance. Hinduism thus becomes an asset to the political and social status quo. It stabilizes the social structure at the expense of individuals. Buddhism on the other hand focusses more on the individual, thus distancing one from the interests of the ruling class.

Works Cited

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