

# The final destination for buddhist and muslims religion essay



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The followers of Buddhism and Islam believe that each individual controls their fate in the afterlife. A Buddhist believes that life and time are cyclical and that believers may be reborn many times until the laws of Karma allow them to reach Nirvana the highest destiny of the human spirit. The followers of Islam view time as linear and believe that they are allowed just one chance to live a good life that will determine if they are allowed into Paradise. The religions differ significantly in their teachings, view of God, guiding principles, and expectations. This essay will compare and contrast Mahayana Buddhism and Islam and how each religion views the concepts of death and the afterlife.

### The Teacher and The Prophet

Both Buddhist and Muslims can trace the beginnings of their religions to two remarkable men Siddhartha Gautama and Muhammad. It is through the Enlightenment of Prince Siddhartha Gautama later known as the Buddha that Buddhist religion was founded. Likewise Islam was started when the Prophet Muhammad was visited by Gabriel the archangel of God, and received a Revelation. Based on their personal experiences each man declared to the world that they had the answer to the meaning of life and the afterlife. They inspired millions of people to follow their way of thinking and established two of the world's largest religions.

Siddhartha Gautama was the son of a King and heir to the throne. Upon his birth his father sought the services of fortunetellers who declared him a most unusual child. They also proclaimed that he would follow one of two paths. The first path would lead him to unify India and become a great conqueror

and king. The second path would make him a world redeemer (Smith 84). Although his father worked diligently to keep him on the first path by providing him with every earthly pleasure and shielding him from contact with disease, sickness and death he nevertheless became discontent once he perceived the inevitability of bodily pain, decay and death. His Great Going Forth required him to leave the pleasures and distractions of his life behind in search for truth. His search was not easy and he sought first the Hindu masters, then a band of ascetics, and eventually through dedication and meditations he was Enlightened and understood the mysteries of the universe and sought to give his knowledge to others.

Muhammad was born in Mecca, Arabia in 570 AD his father died before his birth and his mother died when he was six. He was raised first by a grandfather who also died and then by Abu Talib, an uncle who adopted him. Muhammad probably worked as a camel driver and traveled the Arabian Peninsula, which gave him access to different cultures and religions. At age 25 he married his employer a wealthy widow named Khadijah and lived in affluence for many years. However, like Buddha he was not satisfied with the life he saw around him. During his late 30's he began regularly visiting a cave in Mount Hira, outside Mecca. During one of these visits Muhammad received a Revelation from the archangel Gabriel who commanded him to become the messenger of God and to proclaim that Allah was the only true God and he was commanded by God to spread this truth.

Buddha and Muhammad both questioned the world around them. Each man sought to understand the true meaning of man's existence and purpose.

Both men sought solitude and used meditation in search of truth. Both men  
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saw suffering and social injustice and both hoped to remedy what they saw. One man looked inward and proclaimed that the goal of life was to end all suffering and that each individual alone, not a god, was responsible for their own deeds and the outcome of those deeds (Karma) determined one's standing in the afterlife. He became the Teacher of Buddhism. The other man received a Revelation from God through the archangel Gabriel that told him to proclaim that there is only one true God, Allah. He became the Prophet of Allah and established Islam. Both men were responsible for the creeds, doctrines, and scriptures related with their religion that are used by believers today.

#### Basic Doctrines of Buddhism and Islam

Both Buddhism and Islam have as creeds or declarations of faith that include an afterlife. Both religions have writings or scriptures that help to guide the believers to live a life that will result in a positive outcome in the afterlife. The Buddhist creed is called the Triratna (Three Jewels). The creed states: " I seek refuge in the Buddha, I seek refuge in the Dharma, I seek refuge in the Sangha". (The Buddha in the creed refers to Siddhartha Gautama, the Dharma is his teachings, and the Sangha is the community or monastery of monks.) In addition Buddhists follow the Four Noble Truths which are fundamental to the understanding of living. These truths basically state that life means suffering and that suffering is the result of attachment or desire but that you can stop suffering by following the Noble Eightfold Path. The Noble Eightfold Path offers believers a path to follow, through self-discipline and meditation, a way to end desire, the cause of suffering. The Eightfold Path states that believers should have a Right View, Right Intention, Right

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Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness and Right Concentration. Essentially the Eightfold Path says that believers should view things as they really are. They should intend to improve, watch their speech, abstain from misconduct, choose a livelihood consistent with the teachings of Buddha, work hard to see that no negatives distractions or unwholesome thoughts enter their mind and to concentrate (meditate) on ending suffering. It is through this process that Nirvana may be obtained. Each individual is responsible for living the Eightfold path and responsible for how they fare in the afterlife. The Tripitaka (Pali Canon) is the holy book of Buddhism but it does not play as significant role as the Qur'an in Islam.

The Islamic creed is the shahadahtain and is a declaration of faith that states, " There is no God but Allah and Muhammad is His Messenger" (Kamaruzaman, 2006 3). The Pillars of Faith are related to the belief in Allah, prophets, angels, scriptures, the hereafter, and fate. The Pillars of Faith conveys the beliefs of Muslims while the Pillars of Islam demonstrate through action the commitment to those beliefs. The Pillars of Islam require that Muslims confess the holy creed at least once in their life, pray five times daily toward Mecca, give money (zarat) to the poor, fast on Ramadan, and go to pilgrimage if possible. In practicing these rituals they affirm their faith to Allah. The Qur'an is the primary source of every Muslim's faith and practice. It deals with all the subjects that concern all human beings: wisdom, beliefs, worship, and law. Muslims believe that The Qur'an is a record of the exact words revealed by God through the Angel Gabriel to the Muhammad and has never been revised or changed. Muslims quote and use the Qu'an in every aspect of life.

## Existence of God

One of the most glaring differences between Buddhism and Islam is how each religion deals with the concept of God and the existence of a soul. Buddhism is a religion where the belief in God as a divine creator is non-existence. In Buddhism there is no God to hand out rewards or punishments and there is no judgement day. Buddhism is not based upon faith in a supreme-being and Buddha is not a savior who can save others. “ The focus of Buddhism is on the person and the nurturing of the person into a spiritual being rather than on theology and worship.” (Kamaruzaman, 2006 3)

Buddhists follow the teachings of the Buddha (Dharma) not because they view Buddha as a god but rather because he is the ultimate teacher and guide, the Enlightened One, who can help them in their personal search to end suffering (dukkah) and reach Nirvana. Buddha preached a religion totally devoid of divine authority as represented by his teaching, “ Be lamps unto yourselves. Those who, either now or after I am dead, shall rely upon themselves only and not look for assistance to anyone besides themselves, it is they who shall reach the topmost height”( Burt, 1955 49-50). Buddhism places emphasis on self-determination, self-discipline, and individual striving. Practicing Buddhist does not strive to please a god or call upon a god for help rather they seek guidance through the teachings of Buddha. By faithfully following the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path individuals can improve their Karma and work to obtain Nirvana, the goal of all Buddhist. Karma is the consequence of every action, whether good or bad, and determines how a Buddhist progresses in the afterlife. The fundamentals of Buddhism places emphasis on individual struggle to do good in order to be

released from the sufferings of life in a corporeal body. Karma alone determines if a person must be reborn to try again or if a person has lived a good life and can reach Nirvana. Buddhism teaches that most people will be re-born many times before their Karma will allow them to reach Nirvana. It is this lack of belief in a divine authority that causes some to suggest that Buddhism is an atheistic philosophy rather than a religion.

In addition Buddhism denies the existence of a permanent soul because in Buddhism nothing is permanent. The Buddha told the monks in one of his last address to them, " Behold, O monks, this is my last advice to you. All component things in the world are changeable. They are not lasting. Work hard to gain your own salvation." Rather than a permanent soul, Buddhist believe that there are five elements which come together at birth and separate at the death and these elements are called skandas. The Buddha taught that our egos, personalities and the sense that the " self" is something distinctive and permanent enclosed within our bodies, are just illusory effects of the skandhas. Skandas are defined as the body, feelings/senses, perceptions, habits and inclinations, and consciousness. Mahayana, Buddhism considers all physical forms to be void of intrinsic self (a teaching called shunyata, which means " emptiness"). The ideal in Mahayana is to enable all beings to be enlightened together, not only out of a sense of compassion, but because we are not really separate, autonomous beings. Therefore rebirth is not like reincarnation where an individual's soul is transferred from one body to another. Rather rebirth is a new beginning.

In contrast Islam is a monotheistic religion and absolutely everything in Islam revolves around God, Allah, the creator of everything, who has authority over <https://assignbuster.com/the-final-destination-for-buddhist-and-muslims-religion-essay/>

everything and everybody. Muslims believe that Muhammad is the last messenger of Allah and there will be no other messengers or prophets to follow. The cornerstone of Islam is, "there is no god but God." The foundation of Islam is faith in Allah and submission to the will of Allah. The Qur'an states about Allah,

"Say, 'He is Allah, the One;

Allah, the Eternal, Absolute;

He begets not, and neither is He begotten;

And there is nothing that can be compared to Him."

Qur'an 112: 1-4

Muslims believe strongly in an afterlife. They believe that you have once chance to do the will of Allah and that when you die Allah will judge your actions. The goal of an individual is to obtain an afterlife in one of the heavens described in the Qur'an and to avoid one of the numerous hells. The Qur'an is considered the literal word of Allah as given to the Prophet Muhammad by the angel Gabriel. Islam does not hold that the actions of God will lead to salvation but rather that submitting to God, following his guidance, and remembering God in every aspect of daily life is important because God will judge every action and that the totality of a persons life both good and evil will determine if they are allowed into Paradise or doomed to Hell. Islam teaches that each individual has complete responsibility over their actions and attitudes and that on judgement day every man will account for what he has done and his eternal existence will

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be determined on that basis: “ Every man’s actions have we hung around his neck, and on the last day shall be laid before him a wide-open book” (17. 13).

Islam preaches a doctrine of predestination in that Allah has knowledge of everything in his creation and that nothing exists outside the will of Allah. The Qur’an says this, ““ Nothing will happen to us except what Allah has decreed for us: He is our protector’: and on Allah let the Believers put their trust” (9: 51). In this respect Muslims believe that Allah will guide who he pleases and send away people as he pleases. This doctrine is controversial because it seems to mean that free will does not really exist in Islam. If God chooses who to guide and who to send away then what of free will? The best explanation is that God created everything and that everything happens with His will and Knowledge. Even though men have free will God knows in advance the choices that men will make and that what will happen has been recorded in a book called Al-Lawl Al Mahfud (the Book of Decree). Islam teaches that each individual has a permanent soul and that this soul survives death and will be allowed into Paradise or doomed to one of the Hells.

### Afterlife

Followers of both Buddhism and Islam believe in the existence of life after death. For Buddhist the goal is to live a right life following the Eightfold Path and obtain Nirvana a state of nothingness. Buddhists hold that the retributive process of Karma will determine the destination of followers after death. They do not live their lives in fear of God’s retribution or in anticipation of his rewards. They seek to simply cease to exist and thereby

end all suffering and enter Nirvana. However, along the way to the afterlife they may have to repeat suffering over and over and in several realms until they get it right.

Muslims have one life and one chance to please Allah. The incentive for living a good life and not doing evil is the rewards or retributions of Allah. Allah alone will determine if the person has lived a good life and please Allah. Allah is merciful and it is His because of his mercy that believers may enter Heaven and it is because of his judgement that souls will be sent to hell. If a soul is sentenced to Hell than it is not because of Allah but because of choices made during a lifetime. Muslims desire to please Allah in all things that they may enter Paradise.

I wonder if Allah was to send a Buddhist to hell for being a non-believer would the Buddhist just shrug and say its bad Karma and wait for the next time?

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