

The Sage Residing within the Heart of a Prince

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ABSTRACT

Prince Goutama Siddhartha is well known as the founder of Buddhism or the way of Buddha. There are also tales about an ancient prince Kaushik, who later became the great sage Maharshi Viswamitra. Both of them were born in kshatriya families but later they became great sages. They not only enlightened themselves but they grace the world with their teachings. The life of Goutama Siddhartha and Kaushik was very different; Goutama Siddhartha was always against violence from beginning but on the other hand, Kaushik ruled his kingdom for a long time and also fought with his guru Maharshi Vashistha.

Keyword: - Shiva, Adi-yogi, Kaushik, Goutama Siddhartha, Hinduism, Buddhism

Introduction

Hinduism and Buddhism are two sides of the same coin. Both religions try to show the path to overcome the materialistic world by Karma, Meditation or Yoga. Hinduism and Buddhism preach that karma leads to the enlightenment. There are two kinds of karma- good and bad. Good karma gives back good and bad karma return adverse effects. We can find lots of such examples through stories in literary pieces like the Puranas and Jatakas. These texts give a picture of how the simple way of happy life leads towards the pure enlightenment.

In both Hinduism and Buddhism, we can see the importance of meditation. The portrayal of the Hindu deity Shiva is commonly seen in either *Dhyana* or meditation form or in a form of dancing. It is believed that, Shiva was there before the universe existed and also after the universe ends. The tradition of *Sadhus* in India has continued since ancient times till the present day. Most of them worship Shiva the Adi-Yogi. Shiva gave his knowledge of the Yogic Science to his seven *Shishyas*, the Sapta rishis¹ (Sapta means *Seven* and Rishi means *Sage*). It is considered that Shiva gave his knowledge to this Sapta Rishis near Kedarnath. The temple of Shiva here is known as one of the twelve Jyotirlingas², it is believed that it was built by the Pandavas³.

The forms of Shiva can be categorized into three categories, Bhoga, Yoga and Vira. In the Bhoga form, Shiva and Shakti or Parvati are together (*Rishabarudar Murti*), in Yoga form Shiva is without Shakti or Parvati (*Dakshina Murti*), the Vira form of Shiva is the Destroyer form like Virabhadra (*Gajasamhara Murti*).

Maharshi Patanjali is also known as the father of modern yoga. He recorded his knowledge of yogic science in his book *Patanjali Yoga Sutra* which consists of 196 verses. Presently people practice yoga all over the globe for good health and United Nation also proclaimed June 21 as the International Yoga Day in order to spread the awareness of Yoga and its benefits. Yoga is not only for adults but also for the kids.

“Yoga is an invaluable gift from our ancient tradition. Yoga embodies unity of mind and body, thought and action ... a holistic approach [that] is valuable to our health and our well-being. Yoga is not just about exercise; it is a way to discover the sense of oneness with yourself, the world and the nature.”⁴

Prime Minister Narendra Modi

¹ Agastya, Atri, Bhardwaja, Gautam, Jamadagni, Vashistha and Vishwamitra are the Sapta Rishi or the seven sages.

² Somnath-Gujarat, Mallikarjun-Andhra Pradesh, Mahakaleshwar-Madhya Pradesh, Omkareshwar-Madhya Pradesh, Kedarnath-Uttarakhand, Bhimashankar-Maharashtra, Kashi Vishwanath-Uttar Pradesh, Trayambakeshwar-Maharashtra, Nageshwara-Gujarat, Vaidyanath-Jharkhand, Rameshwaram-Tamil Nadu, Ghrishneshwara-Maharashtra.

³ The five brothers Yudhishtira, Bhima, Arjuna, Nakula and Sahadeva are known as Pandavas in the epic Mahabharata.

⁴ <https://www.un.org/en/observances/yoga-day>

Siddhartha Gautama teaches us the simple way of life and how to reach Enlightenment. He always imparted the basic knowledge of life through simple stories of his previous births in the form of Jataka stories. The eight-folded path is the way to achieve Nirvana. The four noble truths are also the centre of his teachings. The four noble truth is the explanation of why human beings suffer and the eight-folded path details the obstacles, so if one follows the path then one can overcome the suffering intrinsic to human life.

His teachings spread rapidly and became the fourth largest religion in the world. Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressed the people of India in the auspicious occasion of Buddha Purnima,

“Today the world fights extraordinary challenges. To these challenges, lasting solutions can come from the ideals of Lord Buddha. They were relevant in the past. They are relevant in the present. And, they will remain relevant in the future.”

Prime Minister Narendra Modi

Siddhartha Gautama

Siddhartha Gautama was born in the year 623 BC⁵, he was son of king Suddhodana and queen Mahamaya. He belongs to kshatriya cast and his family was the ruler of Kapilavastu, the land of Sakyas. Queen Maya saw a dream of a white elephant with six tusks which entered her womb from her right side. Queen Maya was returning to her father's house Devadaha and she gave birth to her child at Lumbini garden which is presently located at Nepal. On the 5th day after the birth, king Suddhodana called eight wise Brahmins for the selection of the prince's name and to talk about his future. The Brahmins named the baby Siddhartha. Seven of them predicted his future and said,

“O King, this prince will become a cakravarti, a universal monarch, should he deign to rule, but should he renounce the world, he will become a sammà-sambuddha, a Supremely Enlightened One, and deliver humanity from ignorance.”⁶

The last wise man predicted his future differently and said,

“O King, this prince will one day go in search of truth and become a Supremely Enlightened Buddha.”⁷

Mahapajapati Gautami⁸ brought up Siddhartha after the death of Queen Maya seven days after giving birth. Mahapajapati Gautami took care of him and later she became the first Buddhist bhikkhuni⁹. The prince was accustomed to a luxurious life and was kept away from the sufferings of his surroundings. At the very young age of sixteen he married his cousin princess Yasodhara.

One day he went out with his charioteer Channa, and encountered four kind of people for the first time which turned the direction of his life completely. The first one was a decrepit old man, the second one a sick man, the third one a dead person and finally the fourth one was a monk. He realised that every single person has to face these extreme stages of life, except the monk. He is also a human being but in spite of that he had detached himself from the materialistic world. This made him sad as well as lit the fire in his mind to search for the life's truth.

When the prince was 29 years old, Yasodhara gave birth to a baby and named him Rahula. On the full moon day, prince Siddhartha left his family and royal life to seek the truth of life or Nirvana. He tried to reach his goal for six years but he did not reach success. Seeing the error in his method of seeking, he gave up fasting and accepted payasa or sweet rice from Sujata. At the age of thirty-five, on the full moon day, he became the awakened one or the Buddha and reached his goal. The tree under which he received Enlightenment known as Bodhi tree or the tree of Enlightenment.

He shared his knowledge and views on life with the common people. The four noble truth are- suffering exists, it has a cause, it has an end, the Path leads to the end of suffering. The eight-folded path is the way to lead to

⁵ <https://en.unesco.org/silkroad/silk-road-themes/world-heritage-sites/lumbini-birthplace-lord-buddha>

⁶ Thera, Piyadassi., The Buddha His Life and Teaching, p8

⁷ Thera, Piyadassi., The Buddha His Life and Teaching, pp8-9

⁸ Sister of Queen Maya

⁹ Buddhist nun

the supreme Enlightenment. They are, Right View, Right Intention, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness and Right Concentration.

He travelled and preached to the masses. His teachings were in simple vernacular language therefore, people could easily connect with him, and everyone from ordinary people to kings started following his teachings. At the age of eighty, he died at Kushinagar, presently in Uttar Pradesh. Buddhism quickly spread in India, and gradually spread worldwide. A major role was played by Emperor Ashoka in the spreading of Buddhism. After his victory in Kalanga war, he changed his mindset towards peace and non-violence and aided in spreading Buddhism from Sri Lanka to central Asia. The meaning of his name Ashoka is 'without sorrow', and later he became known as Priyadarshi, which means He who regards everyone with affection. Buddhism spread in Japan rapidly during the time of prince Shotoku Taishi. Prince Shotoku Taishi and Samrat Ashoka played very similar roles in believing and the spreading of Buddhism.

In Japan one can see many sects like the Nara sect, Tendai sect, Shingon sect, Zen sect etc. which accepted Buddhism with open hearts and that is the main reason why Buddhism mixed up with their native religion Shinto and emerged as a new hybrid religion called Shinbutsu-shugo. Buddha's teachings changed world views on religion. It is believed that the first Indian who travelled to Japan was Bodhisena, who travelled to Japan with a group of monks in the year 736. He was in the eye-opening ceremony of the great Buddha of statue of Todai-ji temple at Nara in 752. In 760 A.D. he died in Japan.

Brahmaharshi Viswamitra

The meaning of Viswamitra is the 'friend of the universe'. He is a very famous and well-known sage in Indian mythology. The story of Viswamitra can be found in the *Bala Kanda* or the book of youth of Valmiki Ramayana¹⁰, on the other hand, we can learn about his relationship with Menaka¹¹ and his daughter Shakuntala in Adi parva of Mahabharata¹². He also contributed in the Rig-Veda¹³. His most valuable contribution is the 'Gayatri Mantra'. It is considered to liberate the person who chants it regularly. One of the interesting facts of this mantra is that it has 24 letters and Valmiki Ramayana has 24,000 shlokas. Conjoining the first letter of every 1000th shloka makes up this mantra.

By birth Kaushika belonged to a Kshatriya family (warrior family), he ruled his kingdom. He was a good king and the people of his kingdom liked him. One day during his travels, he reached Rishi Vasishtha's ashrama with a large army and bowed in front of the sage. Kaushika felt inner happiness because of the calm and peaceful surroundings of the ashrama where animals were living peacefully. When Rishi Vasishtha offered them food the king was surprised because he came with a large number of armies. Rishi Vasishtha says,

'O King, this feast that you have partaken with your kinsmen, has been provided by my calf Nandini, who was gifted to me by Indra. You must know that she is the daughter of Indra's cow Kamadhenu. She provides me with everything that I need.'¹⁴

After hearing this king's mind changed and he wanted to possess that cow. Rishi Vasishtha replied him politely that he cannot give the cow to him, but as he was a king, he felt that the refusal by the sage was unjust. Then he tried to give him cows, elephants, horses, golds and other things but Rishi Vasishtha still refused. The king got angry and tried to capture the cow with his power but Rishi Vasishtha requested the cow and she produced fierce warriors who easily defeated Kaushika's army.

Then Kaushika went back and started to meditate to please Shiva and when Shiva came, he asked for the knowledge of weapons. Shiva granted his wish and after that he went to Vasishtha's ashrama and with his destructive power he destroyed the place and killed all the sons of Vasishtha. Then he tried to kill Rishi Vasishtha with all his weapons but failed to confront the Brahmada or the wooden stick.

¹⁰ Valmiki Ramayana written in Sanskrit language, divided in six khandas. Valmiki narrates the life of Rama in 24,000 shlokas.

¹¹ Menaka is the beautiful apsara of Swarga.

¹² Mahabharata is another great epic of Hindus, written in Sanskrit by Vyasa Deva. It is the story of Kauravas and the Pandavas. It has 100,000 shlokas.

¹³ Veda is the Hindu religious text, there are four Vedas, the Rigveda, the Yajurveda, the Samaveda and the Atharvaveda. The Rig Veda considered as the oldest Hindu text. It is in Vedic Sanskrit language.

¹⁴ <http://www.apamnapat.com/entities/Vishwamitra.html>

Again, he started worshipping Brahma through meditation. Brahma appeared and granted him the rank of Rajarshi, but he wanted to be the Brahmarishi so he continued his worship. Devraj Indra sent Menaka to distract Vishwamitra and she succeeded in her work and consequently they had a baby girl called Shakuntala. When he realised that it was a plan to distract him, he cursed Menaka, '...she won't possess her beauty, of which she was proud, in next birth.'¹⁵ In her next life Menaka became Queen Anjani the mother of Hanuman. After that, he again started worshipping and when Brahma came, he granted him the rank of Maharshi and told him that he had still not gained control over his passions. So, he again started worshipping but this time Devraj Indra sent Rambha¹⁶ to tempt him. Vishwamitra cursed her and she became a rock for thousands of years. Vishwamitra continued his worshipping. This time Devraj Indra came himself. When Kaushika prepared a meal for himself to break his long fasting, Indra came as a poor Brahmin and he asked for food. Kaushika gave his food to the Brahmin without any second thought and again started meditation. Devraj Indra realised that he would not be able to tempt him anymore, he had reached his peak and have become the master of his passion.

Finally, Brahma came and granted him the rank of Brahmarishi and named him Vishwamitra. He became very happy and went to Maharshi Vasishtha. He told with pride that he became the new Brahmarishi, Maharshi Vasishtha happily blessed him, in a moment the pride of Vishwamitra dissipated and he became a new and changed soul.

He was known as one of the great devotees of the tri-deva. In present day, those who belong to Vishwamitra gotra are known as the descendants of Vishwamitra within the system of gotras¹⁷ in India. He is also well-known for creating a new swarga or heaven. He created another universe or another Brahma with his power for the king Trisanku. It is named as Trisanku Swarga. Vishwamitra was the guru or teacher of Rama, the seventh incarnation of lord Vishnu. In *Balakanda* of *Ramayana*, Vishwamitra requested King Dasharatha to send his sons with him to fight against the demons. He was also there when Rama and Sita's swayambar¹⁸ took place. His contributed his knowledge in Vedas and Puranas.

Conclusion

Kaushika and Siddhartha Gautama both belonged to Kshatriya or warrior families. Both of them became great sages but their ways were different. Siddhartha Gautama became the great Buddha because he wanted to overcome suffering, on the other hand, Kaushika became a great sage because he wanted to defeat Maharshi Vashistha because of his ego. Both of them got Enlightenment only after they defeated their sense of emotions like Kama, Krodha, Lobha and Maya. Siddhartha was tempted by Mara and his daughters and Kaushika was tempted by Devraj Indra who sent Menaka and Rambha to distract him with worldly pleasures. teaches The most important teaching of Kaushika and Siddhartha Gautama is to focus on the thing which one wants to achieve. On the way many distractions may try to disrupt one from the path but one has to focus, only this way we can achieve what we want.

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¹⁵ <https://familypedia.wikia.org/wiki/Vishwamitra>

¹⁶ Rambha is the beautiful apsara of Swarga.

¹⁷ Gotra is paternal lineage from a common ancestor, Atri, Bharadvaja, Bhrigu, Gotama, Kashyapa, Vasishtha, and Vishwamitra are the seven Brahmins gotras.

¹⁸ Swayambar was an ancient custom for marriageable princesses, who chose husband from a number of eligible princes.

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