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LAS 341

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January 29, 2015

# Shiva v.s The Wheel of Existence

At first glance, one may see no similarities between the Hindi Naragia, Shiva as Lord of Dance, and the Buddhist Bhavachakra, or the Wheel of Existence. However, after looking at the two, one will find that there are a few ways in which the two objects are similar. These similarities include parts of the religions behind the pieces, the shape of the image portrayed, and also their purpose. Conversely, they have many differences. This includes the overall religion of the two, materials used to create each object, their locations, and also the imagery that is used to portray the meanings behind each symbol.

One similarity between the Hindu sculpture of Shiva, Lord of the Dance and the Buddhist Wheel of Existence is their circular shape. In the Hindi sculpture, Shiva is surrounded by a flaming body halo, or Prabhamandala. This symbolizes the boundaries and limits of the Cosmos, or realms of the Hindu universe. The Bhavachakra is a silk applique, which also in the shape of a circle, more specifically a wheel. Both are in a circular shape to represent eternal life, as well as reincarnation. Another similarity between the two is the use or purpose, on a very shallow level. Both are used as instructional pieces within their religion. Although Shiva is just one part of the Hindu religion, it has very deep meaning behind it, and the Wheel of Life is used to teach about Buddhism, each picture within having a different meaning.

Hinduism is one of the world’s oldest religions, and is the third most practiced with over one billion followers (Das, 1). This religion has four main scriptures, I found their calibers are similar to the Christian Bible, which compile the Vedic collection. These include the Rig Veda, Sama Veda, Yajur Veda, and Atharva Veda. The Rig Veda, otherwise known as The Book of Mantra, is the oldest of the four, and is the closest comparison to the Bible. The Sama Veda, or The Book of Song, is purely made up of religious hymns that are manifested in the Rig Veda. “As Vedic Scholar David Frawley puts it, if the Rig Veda is the word, Sama Veda is the song or the meaning, if Rig Veda is the knowledge, Sama Veda is its realization, if Rig Veda is the wife, the Sama Veda is her husband” (Das, 1). The Yajur Veda, or the Book of Ritual, which served as priests’ guide book. And lastly, the Atharva Veda, or The Book of Spell, which is the second in line of importance next to the Rig Veda. With that being said, the Hindu religion is not like many other religion in the sense of religious worship, it is rather a lifestyle in which people live their lives. Each Hindi has their own Dharma, which is a personal rule of life, or natural power, that varies between ages, gender, and social position. They also believe in reincarnation, or Samsara, which states that every soul continuously lives on and is reborn according to its karma. The only exit from Samsara is to reach Moksha, however there are three paths, or Margas, that can be traveled to reach it. First there is the Jnana Marga

Buddhism is also a very old religion, however it has only about half of the number of followers than Hinduism. Unlike Hinduism, there aren’t many sacred narratives in Buddhism. There is the Tripitaka and the Mahayana Sutras. Those who practice Buddhism believe in Buddha’s Four Noble Truths: Dukkha, Samudaya, Nirodha, and Magga. The first noble truth, Dukkha, refers to suffering. The second is Samudaya, which means the origin of suffering. This contains the Roots of Evil which are greed and desire, represented by a rooster, ignorance, signified by the pig, and hatred, embodied by the snake. The third noble truth, Nirodha, is the way to liberate oneself from these roots of evil. This escape is achieved by reaching enlightenment, also known as Nirvana, which compares to the Hindi Moksha. The fourth noble truth, Magga, is the path to the cessation of suffering, or the guidelines in which one can achieve Nirvana. This consists of three parts: Wisdom, Ethical Conduct, and Meditation. The Magga relates to the Hindi Margas.

One important difference between the two religions is illustrated in the comparison between Shiva and The Wheel of Life. We have made the realization that both pieces incorporate a circular shape to signify continuous life. However, Shiva is just one God in the Hindu religion, the God of Destruction. This single figure is making specific gestures, each with its own meaning. The drum held in the right hand (Damaru) is the source of the vibrating sound of creation. The Abjaya gesture made by the lower right hand represents the removal of fear, or showing protection. In the upper left hand, Shiva is holding the ultimate fire that causes destruction in the universe (Agni). The gesture made by the left leg is meant to provide relief for those who are troubled.

On the other hand, there is The Wheel of Life. This image is also in a circular shape representing continuous life. However, it is divided into six different realms: Deva, Asura, Manussa, Tiryagyoni, Preta, and Naraka. Located at the top of the wheel is Deva, the realm of the Gods, which is known to