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Hinayana and Mahayana Buddhism

Initially there were no branches of Buddhism when Lord Buddha started this religion. But after the death of Gautam Buddha, the division of Buddhism came into existence. There were four Buddhist Councils held in different periods.

1st Buddhist Council. King Ajatshatru, by Mahskasyspa, in Suttapani caves, Rajgrih

2nd Buddhist Council. King kalashoka, by Sabakarni, in Vaisali(Bihar)

3rd Buddhist Council. King Ashok, by Mogliputta Tissa, in Pataliputra.

4th Buddhist Council King Kanishka, by Vaccinia, in Kundalvana, Kashmir, Hinayana and Mahayana formed.

Rallison wrote, " with three passage of Kanishka rule fourth Buddhist council was held and it gave birth to Mahayana which was different from Hinayana, such as simple Christian religion to medical Catholic religion"

Causes for the rise of Mahayana:

There are differences of opinions among scholars and historians regarding the rise of Mahayana. According to R.S. Tripathi, Mahayana stream had evolved much before the time of Kanishka, while Prof Ghosh claimed that the seeds of Mahayana existed in the ancient Hinayana.

Several factors responsible for the growth of of Mahayana are as follows:

1. **Impact of foreign religion:** According to Dr Smith, when Buddhism crossed the Indian border and reached to other nations, it got influenced by the religions of those nations. This resulted in the birth of new sect of Buddhism, came to be known as Mahayana.

2. **Impact of idol worship:** Other religion prevalent in India, have emphasis to idol worship. But Buddhism opposed this practise of idol worship. But bhakti cult of Bhagwat Gita influenced and gave birth to Mahayana. Buddhist monks also started worshipping the idol of Lord Buddha, like that's of Lord Rama or Lord Krishna.
3. **Faith in Lord Buddha:** Buddhist monks paid more credits to Lord Buddha. After this death this faith converted into dedication and they started worshipping Lord Buddha as an incarnation, superior to human being.
4. **Idol worship by Jain:** Jain followers had already started worshipping their teachers by idol worship, this helped Buddhist monks anas Mahayana cashmere into existence.
5. **Influence of foreign invasions:** Since several communities attached over India from time to time and they stayed in India. They adopted Buddhism and amalgamated several practices of their religion into Buddhism. This transformed the ancient Buddhism and gave birth to new Mahayana sect.
Since this was a simplified version of Buddhism, so it developed speedily. The followers of Hinayana, criticised Mahayana and regarded it as the corrupt or distorted version of Buddhism. But it can not be the logical interpretation of Mahayana principles

Differences between Hinayana and Mahayana: Original form of Buddhism as it was started by Lord Buddha, was known as Hinayana, while there changed concept, during the time period of Kushans, came to be known as Mahayana. There were several differences visible between the two:

1. Hinayana was original religion as it was started by Lord Buddha, but Mahayana was an amended version of Buddhism.
2. Hinayana believed in the pabina of Lord Buddha only, but Mahayana also believe in the teachings of Bodhisatva,.
3. Hinayana focused on individual salvation, Mahayana on the other hand, promoted for the salvation of the whole world.

4. Hinayana was philosophical, Mahayana was purely a religion, Hinayana was unchangeable and monotonous, while Mahayana developed down of Hinayana.
5. Hinayana regarded Lord Buddha as a great human being, but in Mahayana, Lord Buddha was regarded as a developed version of Hinayana.
6. Hinayana didn't believe in idol worship, Mahayana believed in idol worship.
7. Mahayana was also regarded as "the religion of Bodhisatva" but Hinayana did not believe in Bodhisatvas.
8. Hinayana used Pali language, while Mahayana used Sanskrit.
9. Hinayana principles were severe, Mahayana was simple and according to the need of the people.
10. Hinayana believed in the salvation of individuals, but Mahayana believed in the ideal of Bodhisatva.
11. Hinayana promulgated similar preachings for all. But in Mahayana, the principles for general disciples were different than those of more capable disciples.
12. Hinayana monks were recluse, while Mahayana monks were housekeepers.
13. Mahayana was emotion-centred and Hinayana was based on knowledge.
14. Mahayana was more optimistic than Hinayana.

The difference between the two Buddhist sect was well marked and visible that the differences came among its followers too. Both the forms of Buddhism still exist in all over the world in one or the other form. Their followers believed Lord Buddha and his principles as well as Bodhisatvas and their principles. So to conclude it can be said that it was the convenience and acceptance of the followers what type of Buddhism they want to follow, accordingly they accept Mahayana or Hinayana, as a medium of worship of Lord Buddha. So no single religion can boast of its superiority over other. India still adheres to both the forms of Buddhism in different regions.