India today is a land of many religions, including Hinduism, Islam, Jainism, Sikhism, Zoroastrianism, Christianity, and Buddhism. In early India the two great religions were Hinduism and Buddhism. Both of these faiths shared many beliefs in common, including reincarnation. However, they did have many differences.

Hindus did not trace their religion to a historical founder. Instead, Hinduism developed gradually over the centuries from many beliefs and practices. Although some thinkers emphasized the oneness of the universe, Hindus usually worshipped many gods. They taught it was not necessary to go through cycles of rebirth if a person fasted, meditated, and did good deeds. Hindus also practiced grand rituals of worship. According to the social system they believed in, each person was assigned his or her place or rank in life at birth.

Buddhists, on the other hand, avoided devotion to gods. They followed the teachings of their religion’s founder, Siddhartha Gautama. Known as the Buddha, or “Enlightened One,” Gautama taught that suffering was caused by desire. Freedom from desire – and the cycle of rebirth – was attained by fasting, self-denial, and meditation. Buddhists rejected the Hindu system of ranking. Instead, they believed that a person’s place in life depended on the person, not on the person’s birth.

List the characteristics of Hinduism and Buddhism

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Hinduism** | **Buddhism** |
|  |  |

Look at your chart. Now create a list of what these two religions have in common.

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| --- |
| **Both Hinduism and Buddhism:** |
|  |