

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE PHILOSOPHICAL AND EDUCATIONAL THOUGHT OF JAIN AND CHARVAKA PHILOSOPHY

Mamta Kandpal

Research Scholar, Mewar University, Chittorgarh, Rajasthan

Abstract

The philosophies have always guided the human race to live a happy and content life. Be it the attainment of salvation or leading the present life happily, all the philosophies help the individual to lead the life wisely and become a content individual in all respects. Amid all the existing philosophies, the paper aims to compare the educational thought of the two philosophies viz. the Charvaka and the Jainism. The paper focuses on their philosophical principles and their educational thought and prescribed actions and tries to highlight the conflicting views.

Key-words: Jain Philosophy, Charvaka Philosophy, Educational Thoughts



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1. Introduction

Philosophy is the word that etymologically means “love for wisdom”. Since ages, man has been struggling to get answers to several questions regarding the cycle of birth and death, the process of reincarnation etc. his quest for knowledge has made him a wanderer in the search of truth. Different experiences gave birth to different theories that ultimately took a specific dimension and came to be known as a philosophy. Each philosophy then went on to elaborate its own line of thought and action and thereby prescribe a path that education should follow in order to instill in the pupils the principles/thought that the philosophy suggested. Thereby originated the specific schools, propagating the educational thought process, suggested by different philosophies.

2. Philosophical and Educational Thought of the Jainism

Jainism was founded in India in 6th century BC as a revolt against Brahmanism. The “Jain” are the followers of the Jinas. “Jina” literally means “conqueror” that is the one who has conquered love and hate, pleasure and pain etc and has thereby freed his soul from the karmas obscuring knowledge, perception, truth etc. The jains refer to jina as their god¹. When

¹ Lord *Rishabha* is regarded as the first Jina, followed by lord Parshava and lord *Mahavira* with 21 others in between. Jainism till now has had 24 tirthankars the first one being lord Rishbha and the last one as Lord Mahavira.

a living being destroys all his karmas he becomes the god for jains. Thereby, every living being has the potential to become god.

According to Jainism, the reality consists of two eternal principles Jiva and Ajiva. Jiva or the soul consists of infinite identical spiritual units of life. The lifeless element which always remains constant is termed as ajiva. Much of the world is jiva trapped in ajiva and that causes the jiva to suffer. Universe and all its entities are eternal. It has always existed and will always continue to exist. It has no beginning and no end. Further, Jainism believes in the theory of Karma and firmly states that the good and the bad that a person is acing is the result of his own past actions.

Knowledge for the jains takes place in the souls. This knowledge manifests when disturbing media like pride, anger, greed etc are removed. The knowledge as per Jainism is to be obtained through 5 instruments viz. Sensory knowledge (by the means of senses or mind); Scriptural (knowledge revealed through signs and symbols, words and scriptures); Clairvoyance (knowledge of the things at a distance of time or space); Telepathic knowledge (knowledge of the thoughts of others); Omniscience (can only be felt and not described). Jainism believes in the principle of / non one sidedness and states that reality is multi faceted. It stresses on looking at the things from the others point of view also.

Thus, Jainism asserted that modern education must aim at moral and spiritual development of the child as the ultimate purpose of education is the attainment of salvation. Knowledge which is imparted should result in wisdom and enlightenment and should be based on Non violence (Ahimsa); Truth (Satya); Non stealing (Asteya); Chastity (Brahmacharya) and Non possession (Aparigraha).

3. Philosophical and Educational thought of the Charvaka

Charvaka philosophy was propounded by a sage named çharvaka' and focused mainly on the materialism². This philosophy propagated "perception" as the only source of valid knowledge. Inference as a source of knowledge was rejected due to its uncertainty. The philosophy argued that what all is perceived by the senses can be only be treated as truth. To support the argument, the example of fire and smoke is often quoted. When the smoke, it is

² A materialist is accordingly called also lokayatika

usually ascertained that it is due to the presence of the fire. Though, it is mostly true, it is not the case universally as smoke can have other causes as well.

Further, Charvaka denied the metaphysical concepts of “reincarnation” and the presence of supernatural powers as the causes of happiness and sorrow in one’s life. This philosophy believed in the existence of the world as it is now. It denied the presence of the world/life beyond the present one due to its non perception.

The Charvaka philosophy rejected the notion of denying the pleasures of this world in anticipation of the pleasure in life after death. Though while describing pleasure, the philosophy propagated that the pleasure is always accompanied by the pain and both must be cherished in order to live life happily.

As suggested by the philosophical ideas of the Charvaka, the education needs to prepare the individual for the happiness and peace in the present life. The present life and its betterment in all possible forms were ascribed as the aim of the education system. The Charvaka rejected the notion of the existence of the other worlds, thus did not give any sort of importance to doing penance for the attainment of *Moksha*.

The focus was to make the children learn on the basis of evidence only and hence science and allied subjects were given importance in comparison to philosophies. Charvaka guided the education system to develop the child’s personality from all the dimensions and turn him into a social being for him to lead a happy and content life. Vocational subjects were given more importance to enable the individuals earn a sound living and lead a good life in all forms.

4. Comparative Analysis of Charvaka and Jainism

The comparison between the Jainism and the Charvaka philosophy can clearly be made in terms of all the dimensions. In terms of epistemology, where the Charvaka philosophy believed in perception, as one and the only source of knowledge, the Jainism discussed five different sources of knowledge. Jainism discussed the 6 entities (*jiva* and 5 *ajiva* as eternal and universal), on the other hand, the Charvaka denied the validation of both inference and causation as being unreliable and invalid.

Jainism preached self control to attain omniscience and eventually liberation whereas the Charvaka raised serious concerns over the validity of the claims the presence of life after death and attainment of *Moksha*. The Charvaka philosophy insisted of living a happy life and bearing pain if it leads to pleasure and satisfaction. They rejected the notion of suffering in present life in search of happiness after death and claimed such activities as rather foolish.

The Jainism on the other hand, encouraged aiming at the freedom from the worldly bonds by practicing self control and discussed practices such as *Santhara*- sitting motionless and starving to death. The Charvaka believed in living life to the full and not wasting. The educational thought of both the philosophies were in contrast to one another. Where on one hand, the Charvaka guided to prepare an individual capable enough to live this life in a contented manner, the Jain philosophy prepared the child for the attainment of salvation³ which was denied by the former

5. Conclusion

The purpose of the philosophy is to guide the individual by directing his thoughts and actions towards his intended goals. All the philosophies, be it the Charvaka or the Jainism, help the individual to become a contented individual either to live this life fully or in expectation of salvation whichever seems to be more important to him. All the philosophies guide the people to become a wiser person and lead a good and a happy life that is the goal of humanity.

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³ "deliverance" or "redemption" from sin and its effects.