

SPECIFIC AND SIMILAR CHARACTERISTICS OF JAINISM AND BUDDHISM - A SURVEY

Dr. Ashwani Kumar

Assistant Professor, Department of Buddhist Studies, University of Jammu

Abstract

Human being is considered by all religions as the greatest creature of the world and has potential to attain Moksha, Nirvana or Kaivalya that is the ultimate aim of human being and purpose to taking birth on this surface of the earth. In the present world different religious teacher of different religion interpreting the meaning of religion with complex way and forgetting the true meaning of dharma/religion. In true sense religion teach how to live in a same roof with peaceful way irrespective of diverse principle of different faiths, caste, colour, race, location etc. Religion teaches us how to respect the religion of other and toward spiritual enlightenment.

Origin of Jainism as Religion

Jainism may be regarded as offshoot of Hinduism. Both Jainism and Buddhism arose on the Indian soil as reaction against excessive Vedic ritualism, but none of them could free itself from the essential of Hinduism. Lord Mahavira, known as Vardhmana in childhood, is generally regarded as the founder of Jain religion. The word jaina came from the root word *jina* which etymologically means a conqueror. It is common name given to all the 24 Tirathankaras since they all had conquered passion and there by attained liberation. Although the jainas believe that there have been twenty three religious teachers prior to mahavira who have contributed to the foundation and development of Jain religion. These religious teachers are known in Jainism as Tirathankaras (perfect soul) Jin (conqueror or victor of passions). Risabhadeva is regarded to be the first Jainas Tirathankara and Parsvadeva is to be the twenty third one.

Mahavira is the 24th and the last in the chain. However Jainism is most prominently associated with the name of Mahavira and it is he who is regarded as the profounder of the essential Jainas principles. Mahavira, like Buddha was a Khatriyas by birth and was elder contemporary of the later. He lived for some time for the life of a household, but later on renounces everything and became a wandering ascetic in search of the light of real knowledge. After fourteen year of ascetic life he felt that he had gained enlightenment and henceforth he devoted his life in preaching his message of human enlightenment and liberation.

Mahavira preached a non- theistic religion of moral purity and excellence in which man was at the centre and the main aim was to liberate man out of the chain of karma and rebirth in which he was fallen. Of the three major religion of Indian origin, i.e. of Hinduism, Jainism Buddhism, alike the main objective has been to liberate man out of the pool of continued suffering in which he is fallen. But in the eyes of the latter two this objective can be fulfilled not by worshipping the Gods and Goddess nor by performing various rituals, but simply by following the path of pure ethical conduct. Jainism find the world eternally existing which does not need any creator God to creat and sustain it.

Moreover it is believed that man is the highest being with a most developed soul within him and he is capable of attaining godhood by himself. Jainism lays utmost

emphasis on the moral virtue of the Ahimsa as much upholds the life of monks or celibate who has renounced the world completely and is engaged in spiritual elevation.

In course of time, Jainism was divided into two sects-Digambaras and Svetambaras. There is hardly anything essentially different between the two in practice, except that, the former believe in non- possession to such an extent that they do not think it desirable to possess even rag of wearing clothes. While the later are not so rigid in their approach. Consequently the Digambaras Monk lives and moves in nudity without any cloth n their body, but the Svetambaras do not believe in complete nudity and wear the white clothes. There is third sect also known as Sthankavasis, limited to a very small area in Maharashtra. This sect shot out of the Svetambaras in protest against the latter's worship of images of the Tirthankaras, they maintain a non –idolatrour worship.

Notion of Soul in Jainism

Jainism believes that every substance has soul and it is regarded as one of the six fundamental and eternal substances (dravyas) which form the universe. 'The two states of the soul substances re mentioned in the jai texts. These are Svābhva (pure or natural) and Vibhāva (impure or unnatural state) soul in transmigration is in impure state and liberated ones are said to be in natural or pure state. Jain philosophy is the oldest Indian philosophy that completely separates matter from soul. According to the theosophist,; some religions told that Atma (spirit) and Parmatman (God) are identical, while others asserts that they are distinct; but jain say that Atman and Paramatman are identical as well as distinct'.

Specific Characterstics of Jainism as Religion

1. 'It is an atheistic religion believing in no creator God behind the World. The World according to it eternally existing the works by its own inherent laws.
2. It is a religion of moral and spiritual purity aiming at the elevation of man to the state of perfection and Godhood. Thus although Jainism does not believe in God, it believes in Godhood, which a man can attain by following the path of moral and spiritual discipline.
3. Jainism takes the world as perfectly real, with all its plural beings. The world according to it is a function of six externally substances, five material and one spiritual.
4. Jainism believes in a life after death which is either in the form of rebirth, the transmigration of the soul from the old body to a new one, or Moksha. Moksha is the final liberation of the soul from the chain of birth and rebirth.
5. Liberation can be attained not by offering rituals to Gods and Goddess, but by following the rituals to gods and goddesses, but by following the path of three Jewels-right faith, Right Knowledge and Right Conduct.
6. Jainism lay utmost emphasis on the value of moral conduct under which Ahimsa is the most emphasized virtue. Of others, purity, chastity, non- attachment, compassion, love, fellow- felling etc. are much emphasized'.

Origin of Buddhism as Religion

The Buddha's way of life left a deep impact on the mind of spiritual unrests and intellectual confusion. Siddhartha Gautama was born in about 563 BCE. Siddhartha

Gautama was born in ancient India near Lumbini which is situated in Nepal. Siddhartha meticulously belongs to Sakya-Kshatriya having family lineage 'Gautama'.

In the 6th century Bc, various Rishis and Munins were practicing the wrong interpretation of the Dharma. During this period of time, Buddha came in the form of a savior of Humanity when the cruelty, degeneration and unrighteousness spreading everywhere like a fire. He became a great social reformer by renouncing his household life and has gone to search for Truth (Truth of Suffering and its Remedy). He came to be called "*the Buddha*," which means "*Awakened One*". In the remaining years of his life, the Buddha travelled and delivers different discourses to diverse people of the entire world.

Notion of Soul in Buddhism

Venerable K. Sri. Dharmanada Maha Thera described in Buddhism there is no reason to believe that there is an eternal soul that comes from heaven or that is created by itself and that will transmigrate or proceed straight away either to heaven or hell after death.

Buddhist believes that anything either in this world or any other world that is eternal or unchangeable. We only cling to ourselves and hope to find something immortal. We are like children who wish to clasp a rainbow. To children, a rainbow is something vivid and real; but the grown-ups know that it is merely an illusion caused by certain rays of light and drops of water. The light is only a series of waves or undulation that have no more reality than the rainbow itself.

Those who believe in the existence of a soul are not in a position to explain what and where it is. That Buddha's advice is not to waste our time over this unnecessary speculation and devote our time to strive for our salvation. When we have attained perfection then we will be able to realize whether there is soul or not. A wandering ascetic named Vacchagotta asked the Buddha whether there was Atman (self) or not. The story is as follows:

Vacchagotta comes to Buddha and asks:

'Venerable Goutam, is there an Atman?'

The Buddha is silent.

Venerable Goutam is there no Atman.

Again the Buddha is silent.

Vacchagotta gets up and goes away after the ascetic left, Ananda asks the Buddha why he did not answer the Vacchagotta's question. The Buddha explains his position: 'Ananda when asked by the Vacchagotta, the wanderer: 'Is there a self? If I had answered: There is self'. Then, Ananda that would be siding with those recluses and brahmanas who hold the eternalist theory (sassata-vada).

'And Ananda, when asked by the wanderer: 'Is there no self? If I had answered: There is no self', then that would be siding with those recluses and brahmanas who hold the annihilationist theory (uccedavada).

'Again, Ananda, when asked by Vacchagotta: 'Is there a Self? If I had answered: There is a Self', would that be in accordance with my knowledge that all dhammas are without Self?'

‘Surely not, sir.’

‘And Again, Ananda, when asked by the Wanderer: ‘Is there no soul? If I had answered: There is no Self’, then that would have created a greater confusion I the already confused Vacchagotta. For he would have thought: Indeed I had Atman (Self), but Now I haven’t got one. (Samyutta Nikaya).

Concept of Karma in Buddhism

“A volitional action which is either wholesome or unwholesome, and in consequences either rewarded or punished”.

“Buddhist believes that we are tied to the cycle of death and birth through desire and can be born again in many different forms. But they believe they can find a way to escape this cycle, to be finally released from reincarnation to reach Nirvana’.

“Karma was a pivotal concept in Indian thinking, around which turned the whole question of why life is as it is? It can act as an explanation of why misfortune happens when it is not recognisably the result of particular actions. The importance of karma is that it demonstrates the practicality of Buddhist teachings. Ethical considerations become paramount, because liberating oneself from the diseases of Samsaric existence is a karmic matter’.

Bad karma resulting from previous bad decisions, in this life or in former lives, can cause suffering in the current incarnation. The Buddha said:

“Evil in the future is the fruit of bodily offence. Evil is the fruit of offence by word, by thought, in the future life. If I do something wrong through mind, body and speech then after death we will be reborn in the waste. The way of Woe, the downfall, the Purgatory (a place or state of suffering inhabited by the souls of sinners who are expiating their sins before going to heaven”.

Specific Characteristics of Buddhism as Religion

Buddha dhamma is a dhamma totally based on Truth and Righteousness. His teaching helps us to live a happy life and guide time to time all the generation of the world since 2500 years ago. His teaching basically teaches us not to commit any evil and to do well, teaches us not to tell a lie but cling to the truth is regarded as a highly valuable virtue from the Buddhist point of view. The specific characteristics of Buddhism are as under:

1. Buddhism is a scientific way of life; It is based on logic and reason for example as the medical science do not state without any strong practical evidence similarly Buddhism too, do not believe in any belief.
2. The only purpose of the Buddha’s dhamma is to distribute the fruit of pleasure and happiness to the whole world and make peaceful environment.
3. It talks about equality and justice.
4. The Buddha rejected the caste system which was traditionally based on birth and gave importance to the good character of man and said he /she can become a Brahmin or noble person through their good deeds.
5. The Buddha gave equal status to women as the men have.

6. The Buddha stopped animal sacrifices on the name of Deity.

Conclusion

In the essence it is analysed in the said topic i.e. comparative religion that both Jainism and Buddhism and of course Offshoot of Sanātan Dharma. All these religion or Dharma talks about the welfare of human being irrespective of caste colour and sex etc. So for as man is concerned in Jainism here the man has the highest status in the world but reject the existence of God. But if the God has any meaning, it is applicable to man himself. Potentially man is perfect; he is capable of attaining absolute perfection.

So for Buddhism is concerned, it is investigated that Buddha did not preach anything absolutely new. He was revolted against the orthodox Vedic ritual, with the sacrifices in which animals were butchered, with the rigidity of caste system. He also gave highest status to man and strong belief that everybody can become Buddha by following the eight fold path shown by the Buddha to the entire world. Both the philosophy assures that a human being can get emancipation and attain Nirvana or Kaivalya.

References

1. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J%C4%ABva_\(Jainism\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J%C4%ABva_(Jainism)), dated-18.09.2022
2. Ibid, page 72
3. Shastri Manmatha Nath, the *history of Buddhism*, (Together with the life and teaching of the Buddha)Aryan book International: New Delhi, 1996, page 1.
4. Edward Conze, *Buddhist Scripture*, 1995.
5. Breuilly, O'Brien & Palmer, *Religion of the World*, 1997.
6. Clive Erricker, *Buddhism*, 1995.
7. Anguttara Nikaya Part 2 Chapter 1:1