

A brief analysis of God, Self, Karma and Rebirth in context of Buddhism and Jainism

Rishika Patgiri

M.A. Gauhati University, E-mail- rishikapatgiri@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Buddhism and Jainism are the Nastika schools of Indian Philosophy. Both these schools do not believe in the authority of the veda. The concept of God, Self, Karma and Rebirth occupy important place in Buddhism and Jainism. But although both these philosophies interpret these concepts but they interpret these in their own different ways. The aim of this paper is to analyze the concepts of God, Self, Karma and Rebirth from the point of view of Buddhism and Jainism.

INTRODUCTION:

God is regarded as the Supreme power in most of the schools of Indian Philosophy. He is regarded as the ultimate power, the creator of every beings and the creator of the universe. Self is regarded as the essence of being. It is also called Atman. Karma means action. The outcomes depend on one's own actions. It is their actions which decides the cycle of Birth and Rebirth of every human being.

OBJECTIVES:

The aim of this paper are-

1. To explore the concept of God, Self, Karma and Rebirth of Buddhism and Jainism.
2. To find out if there are any similarities or differences in the philosophy of Buddhism and Jainism regarding their views of God, Self, Karma and Rebirth.

METHODOLOGY:

For this study analytic method has been used to analyze the concept Buddhism and Jainism regarding God, Self, Karma and Rebirth.

God, Self, Karma and Rebirth:

God is believed to be the ultimate reality in most of the schools of Indian Philosophy. The nine schools of Indian Philosophy are related to the idea of God directly or indirectly by either accepting or rejecting the concept of God.

Self, on the other hand, refers to the inner self or soul in Indian Philosophy. It is also known as Atman. It is regarded as the essence of an individual.

The doctrine of Karma also has an important position in Indian Philosophy. Karma refers to action. According to the doctrine of Karma, good actions lead to good outcomes whereas bad actions lead to bad results.

Rebirth means life after death. It is believed to be the outcome of karma. It is believed that if someone has not bear the fruits of his action in this life then he will bear it in his next life.

This paper aims to discuss the notion of God, Self, Karma and Rebirth theories of Jainism and Buddhism.

CONCEPT OF GOD, SELF, KARMA AND REBIRTH IN BUDDHISM:

Buddhism is one of the Nastika schools of Indian Philosophy which arises out of the teachings of Gautam Buddha. His philosophy arises out of the four noble truth (catvari aryasatyan) which are-suffering (duhkha), cause of suffering (duhkha samudaya), cessation of suffering (duhkhanirodha) and path leads to cessation of suffering (duhkha-nirodha-marga).

Regarding the concept of God, it is clearly stated in Buddhism that Buddha didnot believe in God. According to Buddha, there is no evidence to believe in the existence of God. He calls it as unnecessary to prove the existence of God. He believed that human beings have the capacity to purify their mind, find salvation on their own. According to Buddha, the idea of God developed in human beings out of fear such as fear of wild animals, of natural calamities, and of not being able to find food for themselves. Buddha taught how to deal with such situations and suggested ways to overcome our desires in order to find complete liberation.

Again, one of the most important teachings in Buddhism is the theory of 'Anatmavada' or 'No Soul' theory. It clearly states that Buddhism does not believe in the existence of soul. According to this theory, the believe in the existence of one's own essence or self is the root cause of our bondage that hinders the attainment of liberation. Buddha holds that the idea of self is an imaginary, false belief which has no corresponding reality and belief in the concept of 'self' leads to selfish desire, attachment, egoism and other such like problems.

While analyzing the idea of Rebirth in Buddha's philosophy it can be seen that Buddhism accept the concept of Rebirth. But Buddha's concept of Rebirth slightly differs from the Rebirth in Hinduism. In Hinduism it is the 'soul' that migrates from one body to another body after death. But according to Buddhism Rebirth refers to the continuity of the stream of consciousness. Although Buddha did not believe in the existence of soul, but he believed in the

continuity of the stream of successive states that compose a man's life. The present state of consciousness results from the previous state of consciousness and thus, the past continues in the present through its effect.

Karma, on the other hand, plays an important role in Buddha's philosophy. Buddha believed in the doctrine of Karma. According to this doctrine, our present life is the effect of our past lives and our future would be the effect of our present existence.

JAINA's DOCTRINE OF GOD, SELF, KARMA AND REBIRTH:

Jainism is the philosophy that arises out of the teachings of twenty Tirthankaras, the last of whom was Vardhaman Mahavira who was the contemporary of Gautama Buddha.

Like Buddhism, Jainism also does not believe in the existence of God. According to Jaina, God cannot be perceived and it is baseless to prove the existence of God through inference. Again, 'God' is described to be eternally 'Perfect'. But according to Jaina, perfection is used in order to remove imperfection and there is no point of describing God as perfect who was never 'Imperfect'.

Soul is accepted in Jaina philosophy. Soul is regarded as conscious substance. It is arranged in degrees of consciousness in which the highest degree is given to perfect souls that overcome all karmas. in the middle, lies the souls having two to five senses and the lowest degree is given to the most imperfect souls. Soul, according to Jaina is different from body whose existence can be proved by its consciousness itself. The soul extends in space and it is formless. But it takes the form of the body, which it illuminates. All souls are qualitatively different.

Regarding Karma, Jaina is of the opinion that the highest degree of soul which is liberated soul is free from the karmic bondage, from the cycle of birth and death. The lower and lowest degree of souls which

are worldly souls are trapped in karmic bondage and face the cycle of birth, death and rebirth. Karma is the link between jiva and the body. The nine fundamentals of jiva doctrine are- Jiva, Ajiva, Punya, Papa, Asrava, Samvara, Bandha, Nirjara and Moksa. Jiva refers to extended conscious substance whereas Ajiva refers to extended non-living substance. Punya or virtue is the result of good conduct of mind, body and speech while Papa is the unpleasant sensations that arise out of evil activities of mind, body and speech. The influx of karma particles into the soul is called asrava. The flux of karma can be checked is called samvara. Bandha or bondage is the result of wrong belief, passion, etc. nirjara means removing the soul by tapa(self-motification). Moksa or liberation refers to complete freedom of soul from karmic bondage.

From the above discussions, it is clear that Rebirth is accepted in Jainism. It depends on one's karma. The evil activities of mind, body and speech as well as wrong belief, passion, etc. trap oneself into the cycle of birth, death and rebirth.

SIMILARITIES:

1. Both Buddhism and Jainism do not accept the concept of God. Both these philosophies believe that liberation can be attained by one's own efforts and that there is no God who can help us to attain pleasure or liberation.
2. Both Buddhism and Jainism accept the doctrine of Karma.
3. The concept of Rebirth is also accepted in both Buddhism and Jainism.

DIFFERENCES:

1. Jainism accepts the concept of Soul but Buddhism does not. According to Buddhism, there is no Soul or Atman. Buddhism only accepts consciousness as the essence of being.

2. Karma in Jainism is karma bondage whereas Karma in Buddhism is Karma to the result, Karma of its function, etc.
3. Liberation or moksa in Jainism differs from nirvana of Buddhism. Jainism discusses about liberation of soul. But Buddhism talks about the liberation from suffering.
4. Moksa in Jainism is to be attained after death while nirvana of Buddhism can be attained in this life.

CONCLUSION:

After detailed study, we have come to the conclusion that although Buddhism and Jainism differs in the ways of interpreting the concepts of God, Self, Karma and Rebirth but their interpretations regarding these concepts resembles each other. By rejecting the concept of God, it is clear that both these philosophies are based on evidence. Their believes are based on their pramanas. Although Buddha rejected soul but he accepted the stream of consciousness as the essence of being and according to Jaina, the essence of soul is consciousness. Although karma in Buddhism means karmic bondage and karma in Jainism means karma to the result, karma to its functions, but both these philosophies try to explain that our wrong deeds results to bad results and our good deeds results to good outcomes. Both these philosophies believe that the ultimate good is to escape from the cycle of Rebirth and attain liberation.

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