



Jain Philosophy and Education: A Critical Examination of Values, Principles, and Practice

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Abstract

Since time immemorial and through modern times, it has retained its ancient dignity and reverence as applied to the world of study; hence, it differs somewhat in its pedagogical philosophy from other Indian philosophies. It is an ancient Indian spiritual tradition that offers a unique educational philosophy based on Non-Violence (Ahimsa), Pluralism (Anekantavada), and Non-Possessiveness (Aparigraha). Holistic development is emphasized by this philosophy and logically includes the intellectual, ethical, and spiritual aspects. Jain education via experiential learning encourages the development of people who are mindful, inclusive, and sustainable in their actions. Jainism, by emphasizing non-possessiveness and sustainability, also gives the world an important lesson in environmental consciousness and responsible consumption. Thus, it is an enlightened educational system preparing man for a purposeful life, universal harmony, and meaningful engagement in building a more conscious and compassionate world for all.

Keywords: Jain Philosophy, Spiritual Growth, Ahimsa (Non-Violence), Educational Theory, Integrated Learning, Experiential Education.

Introduction

Being an ancient Indian philosophy, the Jain philosophy presents a unique metaphysical and ethical frame work. In which dualism, non-theism, and karma are seen as prerequisites. Through personal effort one gains liberation (moksha). In Jainism, education is a process that transforms an individual and transmutes knowledge to being ready for spiritual and moral growth. All over the world, Jainism is one of the oldest religions¹. Jainism, an ancient and eminent tradition of spirituality emanating from India, proposes a deep and distinctive theory of pedagogy. Having its foundation on the three cardinal principles of Ahimsa (non-violence), Anekantavada (pluralism), and Aparigraha (non-possessiveness), Jainism provides a transformative learning model that intertwines intellectual, ethical, and spiritual aspects. According to Jain literature, Dharma is equivalent to Ahimsa².

Jaina Dharma, therefore, is identical with Ahimsa Dharma. Right in the center of Jain thought is the self-realization and liberation (moksha), which is possible through an ordered and ethical way of life. Thus, this philosophical framework combines to present a unique perspective on education, with a focus on the actualization of the self, moral integrity, and the formation of true knowledge, faith, and action. The state of liberation is, all the hurdles are removed, and the soul reaches its ideal perfection—infinite faith, knowledge, power, and bliss³. Jainism supports a balanced and scholarly approach

to education with the conjoining of material and spiritual learning practically applied to the fulfillment of individual and social well-being. Experiential learning, self-discipline, and mindfulness all share equal importance with respect for divergent perspectives and ethical conduct. Lord Mahavir says, knowledge means one realizes the true nature of substances; faith means one trusts in them, conduct stands for one to stop the progressions of karmas, and austerity means one reaches purity⁴.

The Jain tradition conferred inclusiveness and pluralism by acknowledging the truth to have many aspects, thereby fostering intellectual humility and critical appraisal. In addition, Jainism offers teachings in simplicity and sustainability for environment-conscious living and consumption⁵. Thus, Jainism is a great visionary educational framework teaching a person for a purposeful life in universal harmony and meaningful engagement that actually builds an enlightened and compassionate world. Philosophy involves the fundamental questions about existence, reality, and knowledge. Rooted in ancient Indian thought, Jain Philosophy imparts its singular view on these questions. Jain philosophy tries to resolve the essence of existence between objective reality and subjective perceptions. Jain philosophy claims that the universe is made up of two entities: those that are conscious and sentient beings (jīva) and those that are unconscious and material entities. Or, in other words, this is the dualistic metaphysics that Jain thought is founded upon.

According to the Jain theory of knowledge, it has consciousness (cetana) and the power of understanding as its most prominent inherent qualities. Jain philosophy covers many theme areas: cosmology, ethics, metaphysics, ontology, and soteriology.

Literature Review: With the analysis, Pal posits the idea that Jainism offers a singular and refreshing viewpoint on morality and ethics drawn from its ancient heritage as one of the oldest spiritual traditions⁶. Ahimsa, or nonviolence, is the core of Jain ethics and means to lead life with love and non-harm—an attitude of honesty and self-discipline—that appreciates the intricate connections and relationships of all existent beings. This research will explore the basic structure that shapes the application of Jain ethics, including its origin and its defining principles, along with its ethical practices and influence on an individual's and perhaps even a community's well-being. It thereby hopes to show through ethical dilemmas and case studies interpreted by the Jain viewpoint that Jain ethics remain relevant and practical in today's world.

Flugel states that Jain devotees spare no expense and put up temples and shrines but care little about fostering religious teachings or engaging in academic research on Jainism. In the main, their activities lean toward ensuring correct performance of rituals and seem to give hardly any attention to the study of the history, teachings, and symbolism of the tradition. But a drastic change has happened in the Jain attitude toward education in the last century. As information-based economies gained prominence and access to formal education broadened, Jains have achieved commendable improvements in literacy rates. According to The Census of India 1891, the literacy rate of Jain women was only 1.4% and of Jain men 53.4%⁷.

These figures, however, jumped to 94.1% for females and 90.6% for males by 2001, thus bestowing the title of the most educated religious group upon the Jains, who overtook the Parsis. The younger generation of Jains in the diaspora around the globe considers getting at least a bachelor's degree a prerequisite for success, thereby feeding further into the culture that values education; hence some cultural changes are underway, and traditional Jain culture is finding it difficult to keep pace. Jain mendicants and pandits, who were once the main protagonists in Jain religious education, today find it difficult to keep with the expectations of their evolving followers. Some mendicants and pandits are, therefore, attempting to marry monastic and academic training as a way to stay relevant.

The Jain philosophy stands for moral principles that Rani says reflect the ideal life⁸. Through the discipline of moral laws described in Jain philosophy, an individual can uplift themselves to obtain the practice and knowledge of truth. The three supports of Jainism, i.e., right belief, right knowledge, and right conduct (Ratnatraye), are set for reaching this ideal. The ancient Jain tradition of nonviolence always holds a contemporary significance toward the welfare of humanity and

social improvement. The present research tries to study the moral principles laid down by Jain philosophy and their relevance in ensuring an atmosphere conducive to peace and harmony. India is an abode of spiritual heritage with ancient philosophical texts like the Upanishads, the Gita, the Buddhist Tripitakas, and the Jain Agams underlining spiritual enlightenment. These scriptures are full of spiritual and ethical inculcations emphasizing the crucial position that ethical knowledge has for building human worth. In present-day times full of immorality, injustice, and hatred, discussions on ethical knowledge are perhaps the greatest needs of the hour.

Research Gap- Despite extensive work on Jain ethical values and philosophy, there is a lack of focused research on how these principles shape modern educational practices, especially gender equality, leadership, and environmental sustainability in the context of Jain values.

Problem Statement: How can the values and principles of Jain philosophy be practically integrated into contemporary educational systems to promote ethical, intellectual, and emotional growth?

Objective of Research Paper: i. To explore the educational philosophy of Jainism. ii. To analyze how its six principles foster holistic development. iii. To examine Jainism's role in promoting women education and empowerment. iv. To evaluate its relevance to modern global educational needs.

Methodology

The study applies qualitative content analysis to Jain Scriptures, philosophical texts, and recent learned works. Insight into Jain educational practices is obtained by synthesizing the secondary data obtained from journals and historical sources.

Results and Discussion

We have identified six fundamental principles in Jain education: Ahimsā, Anekāntavāda, Syādvāda, Tapa, Svādhya, and holistic education, thus fostering critical thinking, empathy, discipline, and individual development. Jainism holds that education should prepare students to emerge as ethical global citizens. Of course, the promotion of women's empowerment is of considerable historical and sociological interest. Non-violence or ahimsā is the synthesis and focal point of the entire Jain philosophy. In the opinion of the Jains, the liberation of the soul from the cycle of rebirths is attained through non-violent means⁹. Unlike other religions, Jainism in its essence is a non-theistic religion and does not accept the existence of a creator. On the contrary, it suggests a universe with no beginning, based on the Law of Karma. The most important principle governing Jain philosophy is this strict dualism between matter (body) and spirit (soul). Hence this distinction in itself becomes very important to comprehend Jainism fully, especially the concept of liberation.

Jain philosophy is characterized by: i. Dualism: The separation of matter and soul. ii. Non-theism: Rejection of a creator deity. iii. Karma: The power of actions to shape destiny. iv. Relativity: The recognition of multiple perspectives. v. Ethics: Morality based on the liberation of the soul.

Jainism emphasizes individualism and personal responsibility. According to Jain philosophy, liberation is achieved through individual effort and independence. Freedom is created as a consequence of the soul's own activity and choices. Jainism is an ancient Indian tradition with roots in the sixth century BCE. Though there are many commonalities with Buddhism, Jainism, in its uniqueness, rejects Vedic and Upanishadic authority. The Jain philosophy offers its own account of reality, liberation, and the predicament of man. In Jainism, education does take a paramount place and functions as the pillar of one's realization and enlightenment. In other words, it is not merely about knowledge acquisition but about fostering wisdom with ethics that leads to liberation from birth and death cycles (Moksha). Thus, relatively speaking, in Jainism, education is a process of transformation in accordance with its gamut philosophy, imparting ethics, spirituality, intellectual evolution towards shaping future citizens capable of raising society on their way toward Moksha. In the end, it aims at guiding inward self-discovery of the learner toward liberation through behaviors of loving-kindness, simplicity, and wisdom.

Six Jain educational principles furnish a comprehensive and holistic process of human-armament, in which ethos has to be considered on intellectual, emotional, and spiritual grounds. This process aims at developing responsible, enlightened, active global citizens who can thrive and work in an ever complex and inter-related environment.

Ahimsa: Non-Violence and Compassion: The concept of Ahimsa, that is, non-violence and compassion, is fundamental to a Jain education. Students are taught to resolve conflicts peacefully, respect the dignity of others, and nurture feelings of compassion within themselves. This assures an atmosphere of kindness, tolerance, and consideration.

Anekantavada: Acceptance of Multiple Viewpoints: This is the recognition of pluralism of truth and the necessity to include all possible angles. Students develop a sense of critical thinking, creativity, and intellectual humility, assisting them through intricate interrelations of the world.

Syadvada: Critical Thinking and Reflection: It fosters in the learner the capacity for reflection and critical thinking; hence, for assuming different viewpoints, for supporting or questioning a position, for questioning unconscious assumptions, for gathering and analyzing evidence, and for consciously adopting a position.

Tapas: Self-Discipline and Self-Awareness: Of the four tenets of Jainism, Tapas holds that self-discipline and self-awareness

are necessary for growth and healing; hence, the students acquire the skill of self-control and set worthy goals for themselves while also judging their capacity for working or not working toward those goals to develop a growth mindset and life skills.

Swadhyaya: Self-Study and Autonomy: Swadhyaya endorses self-study and autonomy in learning: a student owns the learning process, pursues his or her own interests, and develops independence, self-motivation, and an enjoyment of learning.

Jain Education: Holistic approach: The holistic approach produces active learners, critical thinkers, and compassionate beings who can flourish in a fast-changing environment.

Jain education pointed up the development of both intuition and reason. Reason is the whole mind in action, where other faculties come from Radhakrishnan Sarvepalli¹⁰. Intuition is beyond it, but not against it¹¹.

The six ideals of Jain education offer a strong foundation to undertake intellectual, emotional, and spiritual development. If these principles are implemented in schools, they can nurture the whole child and contribute to developing responsible, enlightened, and engaged world citizens.

Among all religions, Jain women are the most educated¹². Jain education states women's education and the like being looked into. The establishment of Jain education has empowered women and promoted gender equality, the very basis of Jainism. There can be no question about it in such an ancient Indian way of life; women are seen as equal to men and encouraged, therefore, to seek opinions on their own spiritual and intellectual development. Since the beginning of history, Jainish women have been active in education, contributing, among other things, to Jain literature and philosophy. According to Jain tradition, education is important for women, and many Jain women have become great scholars, teachers, and leaders. A system of education founded on Jain teachings therefore aims at enabling women to think critically, improve creativity, and develop problem-solving skills. The system, therefore, nurtures spiritual growth and self-awareness. Women are encouraged to obtain higher education and hence participate in leadership roles within communities for social change and development. Accordingly, Jain education still undergoes evolution towards empowering women, gender equality, and social justice.

Jain bodies and institutions have endeavored to facilitate the education of women, especially of rural and underprivileged backgrounds. These initiatives seek to close that gap in education and provide women with a better social standing. By having access to good education and training, a woman can stand for change to resolve social, economic, and environmental problems in their community. Another dimension of Jain education and perhaps the corner comprises Jain ethics-an individual mindset that leads to the development of self-

awareness, self-reflection, and self-discipline. These are the very attributes women need to develop in order to be leaders and role models within their communities.

In conclusion, the Jain education had a positive role in the empowerment of women and gender equality. By providing education and resources, Jain institutions are working together to establish a just and equitable society where women have all the opportunities to grow and thrive.

Conclusion

Jain education provides a very special mode blending intellectual, ethical, and spiritual learning. Also, it holds a strong relevance to education in modern times in promoting non-violence, inclusivity, and sustainability. These six principles prepare the learner to face the challenges of the modern world while building a just and compassionate society. Hence, Jain education is a unique and holistic approach to learning, for it emphasizes intellectual development along with emotional and spiritual growth. It is with six basic Jain principles that inculcate in a student human values embedded in critical thought, creativity, and compassion: Ahimsa, Anekantavada, Syadvada, Tapas, Swadhyaya, and Jain Education. Nurturing in this way allows the student to argue, make choices, and function as an active learner in the adult world- the object of learning being that of undergoing more interconnected increasingly complex scenarios. Combining morals and spiritual values with the process of learning makes it the goal of Jain education to nurture responsible, enlightened, and active world citizens. The importance of Jain education rests in creating an environment for non-violence, tolerance, and understanding. "The basic spirit of Jainism is 'to live and let live', to live a life of understanding, tolerance, systematic cooperation and peaceful coexistence, nay, the still fuller and nobler correlation"¹³.

In a world still plagued with conflict, inequality, and social injustice, the principles of Jainism do stand stocks of hope. Employing these principles, the educators can create environments that nurture the entire child and prepare him to thrive in a fast-paced world. According to Jain education, solutions should follow a complex multidimensional way of thinking for problem-solving and, hence, take into consideration the multidimensional nature of issues that real life brings forth. Teaching students to cherish empathy, self-awareness, and critical thinking development means cultivating those skills that will eventually impart to them all the tools they need to confront the challenges of the 21st century. In this way, in Jainism, education could be seen as one of the two sacred things bearing the capacity to bring transformation to human beings in whole, that is, intellectually, emotionally, aspirationally, and spiritually. Reflecting on the significance of Jain education brings to our minds how individual opportunities, the community at large, and the whole society may all be significantly influenced through this means. By following Jain principles, we can pave

the way for a more loving, equal, and just world. In a world still plagued with conflict, inequality, and social injustice, the principles of Jainism do stand stocks of hope. Employing these principles, the educators can create environments that nurture the entire child and prepare him to thrive in a fast-paced world. According to Jain education, solutions should acquire and apply a complex, multifaceted way of consideration with respect to problem-solving, and hence consider the multifaceted nature of issues confronting the real world. By fostering empathy, self-awareness, and critical thinking, students nurture those skills that will ultimately provide them with tools necessary to deal with challenges of the 21st century. Thus, in Jainism, one could hold that education is one of the two sacred things that bear the capacity to transform human beings holistically on an intellectual, emotional, aspirational, and spiritual plane. Reflecting on the significance of Jain education brings to our minds how individual opportunities, the community at large, and the whole society may all be significantly influenced through this means. By following Jain principles, we can pave the way for a more loving, equal, and just world.

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