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Zhuangzi's Way in the Past and Today

Introduction

Zhuangzi, also known as Master Zhuang, is one of the famous and earliest thinkers, who have made significant contributions to a philosophy, which has been named as Daojia. Zhauangzi is considered as contemporary of Mencius, who is a Confucian thinker, but there was a lack of communication between them. He is considered as great literary philosopher, and his name is included among the best philosophers China has produced so far. The style of Zhuangzi is poetic, humorous, mythical, indirect, and narrative. He has critically analyzed the usual evaluations and the generalization, considered different forms of understanding in different cultures, individuals, and philosophical schools and compared them for the purpose of evaluation.

Historical Background of Zhuangzi

Sima Qian, an historian of the Han Dyanasty has indicated that Zhuangzi was born in 403-221 BCE (Rainy). During this era, the apparently ruling authority Zhou has lost its power, and violence increased between the states because they competed for the imperial powers, which paved the way to Baija. Baija is a phenomenon that helped in thriving of several schools of thought, every school has, however, expressed its thought regarding ensuring harmony in the states. the currently known Zhuangzi's text is the result of the arrangement and editing of Guo Xian, who s a commentator and thinker of the Jin dyanasty. Guo Xiang has divided 33 chapters into 3 collections, which are

- The Inner Chapters or Neipian,

- The Outer Chapters or Waipian
- The Miscellaneous Chapters or Zapian

The Inner Chapters comprise of first 7 chapters and they are considered as the work that is done by Zhuangzi himself. Additionally, the Outer Chapters comprise of chapters from 8-12, and the Miscellaneous Chapters consist of chapters from 23-33.

The inner chapters of Zhuangzi have many noteworthy ideas. The inner chapters are as follows:

- Chapter 1: Xiao Yao You (Wandering Beyond)
- Chapter 2: Qi Wu Lun (Discussion on Smoothing Things Out)
- Chapter 3: Yang Sheng Zhu (The Principle of Nurturing Life)
- Chapter 4: Ren Jian Shi (The Realm of Human Interactions)
- Chapter 5: De Chong Fu (Signs of the Flourishing of Potency)
- Chapter 6: Da Zong Shi (The Vast Ancestral Teacher)
- Chapter 7: Ying Di Wang (Responding to Emperors and Kings)

Chapter 1 delivers the idea of those individuals that have left the hustle and bustle of the worldly life and preferred to spend life with the nature away from the city life. In Chapter 2 abstract and the deepest understanding of individuals about the world, lives, language, and perception about other individuals and things is described in detail. Zhuangzi has described about contradiction of the judgment and language as they exist inconsistently between them. But, it is difficult to reject these contradictions because they exert great influence. They provide an idea about the limits and restrictions of understanding, thought, and language.

Chapter 3, however, deals with the methods of nurturing and cultivating life

of an individual so that an individual become capable of preserving natural years of his/her life. In all the individuals there is a life, which is a source of permanence and longevity, and this is the ancestral place from which the process of life starts. However, this ancestral place is protected and safeguarded i. e., bao, completed kept i. e., quan, and nurtured i. e., yang, which paves the way to the sagacious, skilled, and efficient life. Further, Zhuangzi considered that the word skill should be understood in a right manner, technique is a process that can be mastered but the sagacity skill is beyond this.

In Chapter 4, Zhuangzi has described about the protection of one's life, and preservation of the years of one's life, when he/she is living in the society particularly a life of the civil involvement during social corruption, and during the dangerous situations. Zhuangzi in this chapter wants to convey that individuals should remain attentive towards dangers, natural things, and their impact on the development and transformation. In Chapter 5, Zhuangzi has presented some characters such as people having serious bodily deformities since birth, and criminals having amputated feet etc. Zhuangzi wants to teach a lesson in about humanity in Chapter 5. He explains that becoming inhuman is of no use and one should consider the roots of humanity, because humanity indicates a deeper nature.

Chapter 6 describe about the Genuine Individual/Genuine Humanity, and True Man. In this chapter the question regarding natural and human, ot tian and ren is asked, and suggestions are given to understand both of them. This is because wisdom lies in the capability of understanding nature as well as human. However, to be compelled to select between being a human being or

being natural is not correct, it is a mistake. This is it is impossible to separate genuine thriving human life from the nature. Further, the important aspect of humanity cannot be denied, because genuine humanity is regarded as the natural humanity.

Chapter 7 deals with the protecting an individual's life and allowing the society to work in a natural way, so that harmonious and agreeable completion can take place. There should be no interference in the social interactions; they should be allowed to undergo modifications in a natural way, which is harmonious as well as imaginative (Cai).

Comparison between the Dao of Zhuangzi in ancient time and today

The people of Zhuangzi's period value fame, wealth, and comfort. However, during Zhuangzi's era Ethical egoism, political and social opposition can found. People of that era try to obtain more and more comfort and joys and they become perturbed if they fail to find such them. Zhuangzi describes that there are two types of happiness. One type is that in which satisfaction is achieved from the wealth, fame, and luxurious life, and other is a mysterious or strange power i. e., Dao, which is manifested in the workings of the nature, and provide immense pleasure and happiness. The individuals, who consider nature and Dao, just require harnessing of this authority, which can be achieved by going along with the things (Ivanhoe).

The Dao of Zhuangzi in ancient time and today are almost similar, and this can be analyzed from the fact that the ancient concept of Dao as well as the modern Dao has emphasized on the freedom from the worldly matters in order to get true happiness. It has focused on wu-wei, i. e., inaction, which

indicates an action that is not performed for the purpose of gaining any worldly thing. The ancient and present concept of Dao is similar to Confucianism. But, they also differ in many ways, for example, Confucianism considers political, social, and the ethical reforms for reforming people as well as society in order to eliminate the sufferings and the problems of the entire world. But, Dao of Zhuangzi considers that true happiness can only be achieved if worldly desires are set aside (Crane).

Further, Dao considers three manifestations which are, The way of heaven, the way of nature, and the way of human. The way of heaven reflects the ultimate truth and reality, the way of nature is indicative of the fact that the nature is the major force behind all the processes of life, it describes that nature is responsible for establishing the cycle of life. Additionally, the way of human describe about the capabilities of man to face the life and go beyond through the life. Dao of Zhuangzi has stressed on the conventional concepts that describe about the good and bad, right and wrong, life and death, and help in understanding the critical processes in all the areas of life.

Moreover, Dao of Zhuangzi in ancient time and today are similar because they characterize the action of humans. Dao of Zhuhungzi has used the term wandering in order to describe wandering of an enlightened individual who enjoys the creations, but do not become attach to any aspect of these creations in order to attain true happiness. Moreover, Zhuangzi has criticized formal government because government interferes in the natural affairs and this interference destroys the probable genuine or true happiness. according to Zhuangzi there are some issues in the foundation of the government and these issues arise because of the contrast between the nature and man. Dao

of Zhuangzi does not support violence, and politically it is concerned with the working of the government in a positive manner and with the type of the government that should exist.

The difference between ancient Dao of Zhuangzi and today's Dao is that previously it was considered that Dao has played an important role for promoting rationalism in tradition Chinese disbelief because it used to discredit the logical claim by satirizing it. But, today most of the western scholars are of the view that Zhuangzi is anti-rationalist, because the philosophers of China rely more on the intuitions, moral affiliation and persuasion. Further, Zhuangzi has not abandoned the reason and language, but just focused on limiting the flexibility associated with the thoughts by encouraging overdependence. Further, Dao has focused on the addressing the major causes in order to remove chaos from the society.

The ancient as well as present Dao of Zhuangzi, however comprise of the practice and thought that can be considered religious and philosophical, and even the combination of both. However, the modern scholars have classified the Daoist text and material as religious and philosophical. Previously, Daoists showed no interests in the categorization, but now they are preferring dichotomies as well as characterization. In ancient times, they just considered nature and focused on understanding all the aspects and reality associated with nature, increased their longevity, and organized their life in a moral way. Further, they practiced ruler ship, and effectively redgulated their diet and conscience.

Major ideas and the concerns of Daoist include wu-wei i. e., action without effort, ziran, i. e., naturalness, sage, zhenren, i. e., appreciated individual,

and mysterious Dao. Additionally, Ancient and present Dao of Zhuangzi has reduced the focus on the mysterious Dao, and stressed on the workings of Dao. Zhuangzi has emphasized that an individual should conquer his fear about the death and spend life in an effectual manner by living in the present moment. Zhuangzi has considered architecture, art, and music as creation of individuals and expression of Dao, and supported the existence of such creative work.

People should take Zhuangzi's Daoism as the model of today's life

Zhuangzi's Daoism exerts great impact on our lives, and people should take it as the model of today's life via different perspective and according to the age groups. Zhuangzi's Daoism is influential for our life because it enables us to consider ourselves and age more evidently and improves our sense of the personal identity. Dao is without any desires, so it teaches that the humans should model themselves in a way that the order prevails in a natural way, and the implications of the strict rules become unessential. Daoism help us to consider the fact that there is a deep reality in the world, such as it is impersonal and does not love its creatures, it comprise of no authority for imposing anything on any creature, it does not have any consideration, regrets, and memory. There is no split of the mind and body in Daoism and the philosophy of Daoism is not supernatural.

Daoism displays caring attitude such as the care provided by the soil to plant. Such displays have deep meanings, and from these we can consider that adoption of the caring attitude can help in the protection of life and also help to get happiness. However, Dao has infinite power, but it does not

believe of becoming powerful in a way that it does not pressurize and compel anything toward the path, rather it considers that everything follow the path on its own without involvement of anyone, such as the water flows downwards. Though water is adjustable, soft, and flexible, yet it has the tendency of exerting great force and wearing away hardest and strongest rocks. The capacity of Dao is, however, never ending and it is not exhausted because it is based on the universal facts and principles that support and assist us in our lives.

Further, Dao helps us in understanding the nature. Daoism help us to consider the facts of life and real happiness by returning to the infancy state, by actions that do not involve any effort, and by controlling the thoughts and breath. It means that the Daoism helps individual of different age groups and help them to adopt the perspective according to their age and understanding without any compulsion and interference. Further, Daoism help us in adopting the process of change, it makes us aware about the process of transformation. It indicates that the human beings as well as nature are constantly undergoing change and transformations. The natural processes move between the polarities, and the processes of human beings move towards the new perspectives. So, it is worthless to look for the accurate definition and consistency of structures. It tells us that an individual having good understanding of the nature, and follow natural course remain protected from the sorrows.

Moreover, Daoism helps us to understand the Nature is unavoidable and regular, and the efforts done for changing the Nature are useless. It has taught us that we can prevent ourselves from being hurt by working with the

Nature. We can work with the Nature by accepting and considering the existence of nature, and nature of the universal law. Dao has emphasized on getting the things done, no use of the force for ruling, and provision of proper guidance. The emotions can be offset with understanding and reason. For example, if rain prevents a man from going out, he would not be affected due to understanding of the fact, but a child would be affected because of the poor understanding. When mind starts understanding the things, it protects us from being affected by the things. Daoism has provided a new way of understanding the things, and provided a sense of relativism. It has helped us in understanding that it our views that describe our perception. Furthermore, Daoism has shown indifferent attitude towards the death and also criticized the general practice of mourning for the deceased. It has taught us that we should not fear from the death if we want real happiness and the mourning over the dead body indicates the lack of knowledge. By understanding the natural things and nature an individual and sage is not affected by the external factors and the transformations of the world. The influence that the things exert on an individual reduces with understanding the things. It helps us in dissolving the emotions with appropriate reasons. Daoism has taught us that there exist an interdependence as well as continuity between the life and death, and we should adopt and appreciate death in the same way as we adopt the life and become attach to it (Chan, and Chaw).

Moreover, Zhuangzi's Daoism also provide mystical description of immortality. It explains that an individual who succeeded in understanding the fasting of his mind and protecting his thoughts from the worldly desires

will come close to nature and Dao, and he will become able to achieve the enigmatic power in the Nature. Further, he will become capable of preserving himself by adopting the natural facts and considering the natural objects. An individual should live as a part of the Nature and with all the objects of Nature, he should discontinue from the useless pursuit of considering, and analyzing the world. Furthermore, Zhuangzi's Daoism is useful for us in our lives because it points out towards a fact that the when an individual stops getting confuse about the puzzles that are created by other individuals, his mind will become free and he will become ready to adopt and realize the facts that can give him true happiness.

Additionally, when a man vacant his mind form the intellectual biases, he will become capable of considering the similarities of all the things, and he will realize that the the world is within him. An individual can get intellectual liberation from the prejudices and biases, and limitation that are imposed by other individuals by understanding all the ways and aspects of life. when an individual consider natural course of action and events he become free from the prejudices and restrictions. Further, he will also feel that whatever he performs and the surrounding things will not cause any depression and anxiety, and he will feel complete freedom for moving in this universe. This is, however, the stage of true as well as supreme happiness, because a person in this happiness has all the wishes and things that are in harmony with Nature.

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