

Jain Philosophy

Epistemology

Jainism made its own unique contribution to this mainstream development of philosophy by occupying itself with the basic epistemological issues, namely, with those concerning the nature of knowledge, how knowledge is derived, and in what way knowledge can be said to be reliable. Knowledge for the Jains takes place in the soul, which, without the limiting factor of karma, is omniscient. Humans have partial knowledge – the object of knowledge is known partially and the means of knowledge do not operate to their full capacity. According to Tattvārthasūtra, the knowledge of the basic Jaina truths can be obtained through:

- Pramāṇa – means or instruments of knowledge which can yield a comprehensive knowledge of an object, and
- Naya – particular standpoints, yielding partial knowledge.

Pramāṇa are of five kinds:

- mati or "sensory knowledge",
- Sruta or "scriptural knowledge",
- avadhi or "clairvoyance",
- manahpariyaya or "telepathy", and
- kevala or "omniscience"

The first two are described as being indirect means of knowledge (parokṣa), with the others furnishing direct knowledge (pratyakṣa), by which it is meant that the object is known directly by the soul. Jains came out with their doctrines of relativity used for logic and reasoning:

- Anekāntavāda – the theory of relative pluralism or manifoldness;
- Syādvāda – the theory of conditioned predication and;
- Nayavāda – The theory of partial standpoints.

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These philosophical concepts have made most important contributions to the ancient Indian philosophy, especially in the areas of scepticism and relativity.

Anekāntavāda

Aspects of Violence (Himsa)

One of the most important and fundamental doctrines of Jainism is Anēkāntavāda. It refers to the principles of pluralism and multiplicity of viewpoints, the notion that truth and reality are perceived differently from diverse points of view, and that no single point of view is the complete truth.

Jains contrast all attempts to proclaim absolute truth with adhgajanyāyah, which can be illustrated through the parable of the "blind men and an elephant". In this story, each blind man felt a different part of an elephant (trunk, leg, ear, etc.). All the men claimed to understand and explain the true appearance of the elephant, but could only partly succeed, due to their limited perspectives. This principle is more formally stated by observing that objects are infinite in their qualities and modes of existence, so they cannot be completely grasped in all aspects and manifestations by finite human perception. According to the Jains, only the Kevalis—omniscient beings—can comprehend objects in all aspects and manifestations; others are only capable of partial knowledge. According to the doctrine, no single, specific, human view can claim to represent absolute truth.

Anekāntavāda encourages its adherents to consider the views and beliefs of their rivals and opposing parties. Proponents of anekāntavāda apply this principle to religion and philosophy, reminding themselves that any religion or philosophy—even Jainism—which clings too dogmatically to its own tenets, is committing an error based on its limited point of view. The principle of anekāntavāda also influenced Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi to adopt principles of religious tolerance, ahimsā and satyagraha.

Syādvāda

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Syādvāda is the theory of conditioned predication, which provides an expression to anekānta by recommending that the epithet Syād be prefixed to every phrase or expression. Syādvāda is not only an extension of anekānta ontology, but a separate system of logic capable of standing on its own. The Sanskrit etymological root of the term syād is "perhaps" or "maybe", but in the context of syādvāda, it means "in some ways" or "from a perspective". As reality is complex, no single proposition can express the nature of reality fully. Thus the term "syāt" should be prefixed before each proposition giving it a conditional point of view and thus removing any dogmatism in the statement. Since it ensures that each statement is expressed from seven different conditional and relative viewpoints or propositions, syādvāda is known as saptibhaṅgīnāya or the theory of seven conditioned predications. These seven propositions, also known as saptibhaṅgī, are:

1. syād-asti—in some ways, it is,
2. syād-nāsti—in some ways, it is not,
3. syād-asti-nāsti—in some ways, it is, and it is not,
4. syād-asti-avaktavyaḥ—in some ways, it is, and it is indescribable,
5. syād-nāsti-avaktavyaḥ—in some ways, it is not, and it is indescribable,
6. syād-asti-nāsti-avaktavyaḥ—in some ways, it is, it is not, and it is indescribable,
7. syād-avaktavyaḥ—in some ways, it is indescribable.

Each of these seven propositions examines the complex and multifaceted nature of reality from a relative point of view of time, space, substance and mode. To ignore the complexity of reality is to commit the fallacy of dogmatism.

Nayavāda

Nayavāda is the theory of partial standpoints or viewpoints. Nayavāda is a compound of two Sanskrit words—naya ("partial viewpoint") and vāda ("school of thought or debate"). It is used to arrive at a certain inference from a point of view. An object has infinite aspects to it, but when we describe an object in practice, we speak of only relevant aspects and ignore irrelevant ones.

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This does not deny the other attributes, qualities, modes and other aspects; they are just irrelevant from a particular perspective. Authors like Natubhai Shah explain nayavāda with the example of a car; for instance, when we talk of a "blue BMW" we are simply considering the color and make of the car. However, our statement does not imply that the car is devoid of other attributes like engine type, cylinders, speed, price and the like. This particular viewpoint is called a naya or a partial viewpoint. As a type of critical philosophy, nayavāda holds that all philosophical disputes arise out of confusion of standpoints, and the standpoints we adopt are, although we may not realise it, "the outcome of purposes that we may pursue". While operating within the limits of language and seeing the complex nature of reality, Māhavīra used the language of nayas. Naya, being a partial expression of truth, enables us to comprehend reality part by part.

Ethics

The Jain morality and ethics are rooted in its metaphysics and its utility towards the soteriological objective of liberation. Jaina ethics evolved out of the rules for the ascetics which are encapsulated in the mahavratas or the five great vows

- Ahimsa, non-violence
- Satya, truth
- Asteya, non-stealing
- Brahmacharya, celibacy
- Aparigraha, non-possession

These ethics are governed not only through the instrumentality of physical actions, but also through verbal action and thoughts. Thus, ahimsa has to be observed through mind, speech, and body. The other rules of the ascetics and laity are derived from these five major vows.

Jainism does not invoke fear of or reverence for God or conformity to the divine character as a reason for moral behaviour, and observance of the moral code is not necessary simply because it is God's will. Neither is its observance necessary simply because it is altruistic or humanistic,

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conducive to general welfare of the state or the community. Rather it is an egoistic imperative aimed at self-liberation. While it is true that in Jainism, the moral and religious injunctions were laid down as law by Arihants who have achieved perfection through their supreme moral efforts, their adherence is just not to please a God, but because the life of the Arihants has demonstrated that such commandments were conducive to the Arihant's own welfare, helping him to reach spiritual victory. Just as the Arihants achieved moksha or liberation by observing the moral code, so can anyone, who follows this path.

Atomism

The most elaborate and well-preserved Indian theory of atomism comes from the philosophy of the Jaina school, dating back to at least the 6th century BC. Some of the Jain texts that refer to matter and atoms are Pancastikayasara, Kalpasutra, Tattvarthasutra and Pannavana Suttam. The Jains envisioned the world as consisting wholly of atoms, except for souls. Paramāṇus or atoms were the basic building blocks of matter. Their concept of atoms was very similar to classical atomism, differing primarily in the specific properties of atoms. Each atom, according to Jain philosophy, has one kind of taste, one smell, one color, and two kinds of touch, though it is unclear what was meant by "kind of touch". Atoms can exist in one of two states: subtle, in which case they can fit in infinitesimally small spaces, and gross, in which case they have extension and occupy a finite space. Certain characteristics of Paramāṇu correspond with that sub-atomic particles. For example Paramāṇu is characterized by continuous motion either in a straight line or in case of attractions from other Paramāṇus, it follows a curved path. This corresponds with the description of orbit of electrons across the Nucleus. Ultimate particles are also described as particles with positive (Snigdha i.e. smooth charge) and negative (Rūksa – rough) charges that provide them the binding force. Although atoms are made of the same basic substance, they can combine based on their eternal properties to produce any of six "aggregates", which seem to correspond with the Greek concept of "elements": earth, water, shadow, sense

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objects, karmic matter, and unfit matter. To the Jains, karma was real, but was a naturalistic, mechanistic phenomenon caused by buildups of subtle karmic matter within the soul. They also had detailed theories of how atoms could combine, react, vibrate, move, and perform other actions, which were thoroughly deterministic.

Infinity

The Jain mathematical text *Surya Prajnapti* (c. 400 BC) classifies numbers into three sets: enumerable, innumerable, and infinite. Each of these was further subdivided into three orders:

- Enumerable: lowest, intermediate and highest
- Innumerable: nearly innumerable, truly innumerable and innumerably innumerable
- Infinite: nearly infinite, truly infinite, infinitely infinite

The Jains were the first to discard the idea that all infinities were the same or equal. They recognized different types of infinities: infinite in length (one dimension), infinite in area (two dimensions), infinite in volume (three dimensions), and infinite perpetually (infinite number of dimensions).

According to Singh (1987), Joseph (2000) and Agrawal (2000), the highest enumerable number N of the Jains corresponds to the modern concept of aleph-null (the cardinal number of the infinite set of integers 1, 2, ...), the smallest cardinal transfinite number. The Jains also defined a whole system of infinite cardinal numbers, of which the highest enumerable number N is the smallest. In the Jaina work on the theory of sets, two basic types of infinite numbers are distinguished. On both physical and ontological grounds, a distinction was made between *asaṃkhyāta* ("countless, innumerable") and *ananta* ("endless, unlimited"), between rigidly bounded and loosely bounded infinities.

Contributions to Indian philosophy

Jainism had a major influence in developing a system of philosophy and ethics that had a major impact on Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi. The scholarly research and evidences have shown

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that philosophical concepts that are typically Indian – Karma, Ahimsa, Moksa, reincarnation and like – either have their origins in the shramana traditions or were propagated and developed by Jain teachers. The sramanic ideal of mendicancy and renunciation, that the worldly life was full of suffering and that emancipation required giving up of desires and withdrawal into a lonely and contemplative life, was in stark contrast with the brahmanical ideal of an active and ritually punctuated life based on sacrifices, household duties and chants to deities. Sramanas developed and laid emphasis on Ahimsa, Karma, moksa and renunciation.

Schools and traditions

Jain philosophy arose from the shramana traditions. In its 2500 years post-Mahavira history, it remained fundamentally the same as preached by Mahavira, who preached essentially the same religion as the previous Tirthankara. However, he modified the four vows of Parshva by adding a fifth vow, celibacy. Jain texts like the Uttaradhyana Sutra speak of parallel existence the order of Parsva which was ultimately merged into Mahaviras order. Harry Oldmeadow notes that the Jain philosophy remained fairly standard throughout history and the later elaborations only sought to further elucidate preexisting doctrine and avoided changing the ontological status of the components. The schisms into Śvetāmbara and Digambara traditions arose mainly on account of differences in question of practice of nudity amongst monks and liberation of women. Apart from these minor differences in practices, there are no major philosophical differences between the different sects of Jainism. The Tattvārthasūtra, which encapsulates major philosophical doctrines, is accepted by all traditions of Jainism. This coherence in philosophical doctrine and consistency across different schools has led scholars like Jaini to remark that in the course of history of Jainism no heretical movements like Mahayana, tantric or bhakti movement developed outside mainstream Jainism. Thus, there are traditions within Jainism, but basically the same philosophy that is at the core of Jainism.

Earlier traditions

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As per the tradition, Jain Sangh was divided into two major sects:

- Śvetāmbaras believe that women can attain liberation and that nudity is optional.

Śvetāmbara scriptures support both *acelakatva*, nudity in monks and *sacelakatva*, the wearing of white clothes by ascetics. They also hold that the Jain canon was not lost.

- Digambaras hold that nudity is necessary for liberation and only men can attain the final stage of non-attachment to the body by remaining nude. They also hold that the canonical literature was eventually lost.

The now defunct Yapaniya sect followed the Digambara practice of nudity and eating from the hands while standing up along with Śvetāmbara beliefs and texts. They notably also permitted their ascetics to be "half-clothed" (*ardhambara*) in public areas only. The Yapaniya sect was absorbed into the Digambara community during the medieval period.

Medieval traditions

The period of 16th to 18th century was a period of reforms in Jainism. The later schools arose against certain practices and belief that were perceived as corrupting and not sanctioned by scriptures. The following schools arose during this period :

- Sthanakvasi – The Sthanakvasis, arising from the Śvetāmbara tradition, rejected idol worship as unsanctioned by scriptures.
- Terapanthi (Digambara) – The Digambara Terapantha movement arose in protest against the institution of Bhattarakas (Jain priestly class), usage of flowers and offerings in Jain temples, and worship of minor gods.
- Terapanthi (Śvetāmbara) – The Terapanthi, also a non-iconic sect, arose from Sthanakvasis on account of differences in religious practices and beliefs.

Recent developments

Recent events lead to dissatisfaction with the monastic tradition and its related emphasis on austerities saw the arising of two new sects within Jainism in the 20th century. These were

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essentially led by the laity rather than ascetics and soon became a major force to be reckoned with. The non-sectarian cult of Shrimad Rajchandra, who was one of the major influences on Mahatma Gandhi, is now one of the most popular movements. Another cult founded by Kanjisvami, laying stress on determinism and "knowledge of self", has gained a large following as well.

Jain philosophers

Jains hold the Jain doctrine to be eternal and based on universal principles. In the current time cycle, they trace the origins of its philosophy to Rsabha, the first Tīrthankara. However, the tradition holds that the ancient Jain texts and Purvas which documented the Jain doctrine were lost and hence, historically, the Jain philosophy can be traced from Mahāvīras teachings. Post Mahāvīra many intellectual giants amongst the Jain ascetics contributed and gave a concrete form to the Jain philosophy within the parameters set by Mahavira. Following is the partial list of Jain philosophers and their contributions:

- Kundakunda (1st—2nd century CE) – exponent of Jain mysticism and Jain nayas dealing with the nature of the soul and its contamination by matter, author of Pañcāstikāyasāra "Essence of the Five Existents", the Pravacanasāra "Essence of the Scripture", the Samayasāra "Essence of the Doctrine", Niyamasāra "Essence of Discipline", Atthapāhuda "Eight Gifts", Dasabhatti "Ten Worships" and Bārasa Anuvekkhā "Twelve Contemplations".
- Samantabhadra (2nd century CE) – first Jain writer to write on nyāya, (Apta-Mimāṃsā), which has had the largest number of commentaries written on it by later Jain logicians. He also composed the Ratnakaranda Srāvākācāra and the Svayambhu Stotra.
- Umāsvāti or Umasvami (2nd century CE) – author of first Jain work in Sanskrit, Tattvārthasūtra, expounding philosophy in a most systematised form acceptable to all sects of Jainism. __