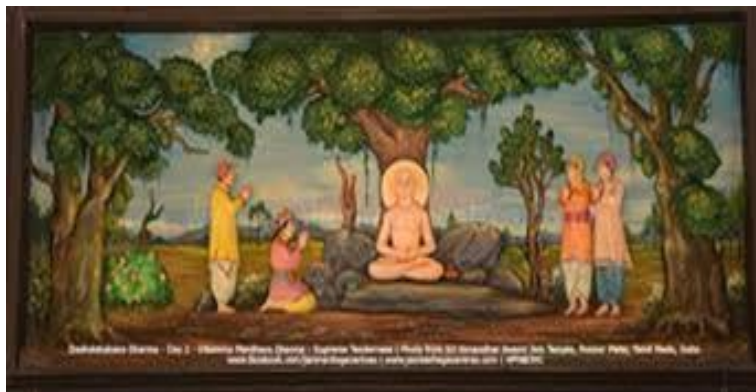


# JAIN DHARM: DARSHAN AND PRACTICE

December, 2022 by [Dr. Narendra Bhandari](#)



If we ask this question to a layman or Acharyas, many of them will say “Ahimsa parmo dharm”, that is the crux or the essence of Jain religion. How can it be? I wonder. Ahimsa can only be a practice, and a minor one; How it can encompass the whole philosophy of Jain Dharma. It has been limited to avoiding killing of small (sukshma) and helpless jivas in daily routine. Further it has been trivialised to mean that one should be careful about the food one takes and avoid meat and potatoes and onions which are multi-souled vegetables. On the other hand, if we ask more learned scholars or some scholarly Acharyas, they will dwell into karma theory and explain the 148 types of karmas and their consequences. This knowledge is useful if one wants to become a Pandit and carry out research on Jain philosophy. But what is Jain Darshan, as such, was not clear. Then, over the years, I understood that Dharma is the nature, and Jain Dharma is the nature of Nature. It is very simple, scientific, logical, and natural and I will attempt to describe my views here.

Before we proceed further, three approaches to understand Nature must be discussed:

- Scientific approach, based on observations, theorising, falsification and correction, till one arrives at the correct, acceptable theory.
- Philosophising, an approach, again based on observation of Nature, integration of all the information by applying mind, extrapolating, and arriving at a world view. Since mind is imperfect, always learning, and observing through sensory organs, which themselves are imperfect, and unable to observe a large number of natural phenomena, which are invisible, all such philosophies, developed in the East (Shatdarshan, like Samkhya, Vedanta, Vaisheshika, Mimamsa, Nyaya and Yoga etc.) or West (Christianity, Islam and Judaism etc.) disagree with each other.
- The third approach is Darshan or seeing, which Omniscient seers saw through meditation, after purifying their body, mind, and soul. This is what the Jain dharma is based on.

Thus, Jain philosophy or Jainism is not a philosophy or an ism, but it is really a darshan, which the enlightened Tirthankaras saw in their meditation and preached. Scientific approach is based on logic and to this extent it is the search for truth, the same as Darshan is, but it does not take one far, to the ultimate, because it is based on logic and much, e.g., experience, lies beyond logic. Scientific theories are just about ready to get into this area of experience, with its study of brain, mind and consciousness through psychology and neurology. We may, therefore, say that whatever science has found out till now has some limitations, but this is not a permanent drawback of science. When scientists take up

study of experience, I am sure they will excel in this field too, as they have done in physical sciences. Darshan, on the other hand, is nearest to the truth; in fact, that is the Truth, the Dharma, the Nature, and that is what the Jain Darshan is based on.



What Tirthankaras saw by looking inside at their purified soul, is the same as what exist outside in the universe and that is why the laws which operate the universe and which operate our body, mind, and soul, are the same. Since Nature works on the principle of simplicity, these laws which govern Nature are few and simple and are the same as those propounded by Tirthankaras, and are scientific, eternal, and universal.

Thus, the first thing to note, then, is that Jain Darshan and Nature are based on the same laws and principles. I will discuss here what these laws are and that will give the correct picture of Jain Darshan, and hopefully a correct world view (samyak darshan).

The fundamental and foremost concept, propagated by both, science, and Jain Dharma, is that the universe and all the processes therein operate on the basis of certain laws. There is no escape from the laws and no scope for an Almighty, Omnipotent God who is postulated to have created the universe and maintains it. We don't have to live in fear of such a God, and ask for favours because he, in effect, cannot do anything, except let the laws apply. The universe exists because of those laws, was formed according to those laws, and will dissolve according to those laws. These are the same laws that science is discovering, and, to that extent, science is something like Shrut Gyan and can lead us on the road to Keval Gyan (Omniscience).

The main features of Jain philosophy can simply be summed up in 5 sutras, 4 pillars on which the whole edifice of Jain Darshan has been built, 5 laws which govern all the processes of the universe, and these are same as those in science, 4 doctrines, 7 practices and 3 concepts. These 28 points sum up the basics of Jain darshan and we will discuss these in some detail below.

#### **Five sutras:**

The 5 sutras of Jain darshan are as follows:

1. **Samsar sutra:** There is only sorrow in the world; every source of happiness ultimately turns into sorrow. When one is born, that is a source of happiness, but ultimately, he dies, and that is the cause of sorrow, etc. This is true of everything in the world.
2. **Karma sutra:** The cause of this sorrow (Dukha) is karma, your own doing.
3. **Jnana sutra:** The karmas can be eradicated by Jnana (knowledge).

4. **Jnana** can be obtained by dhyān (meditation).

We will come to the 5th sutra towards the end of this article.

### Four Pillars:

The 4 pillars, on which the huge edifice of Jain Darshan has been built are as follows:

1. **Atmavada:** Existence of souls: That soul exists in pure form which has infinite jnana as also in impure form, when bound by Karma.
2. **Karmavada:** Every Karma (thought and action) has consequences, and the Soul gets defiled by Karma.
3. **Kriyavada:** That there are methods of purifying the soul, based on Ahimsa (non interference), self discipline (samyam, for purifying the mind) and penances (tapa, for purifying the body).
4. **Lokavad:** The universe is real, consists of six dravyas (Reals) and the Truth is interwoven within the Loka (universe).

### Five Laws:

There are 5 laws which govern all the processes in the universe (both jiva and ajiva).

1. **Law of Causality:** Every cause (action) has an effect and there is no effect without a cause.
2. **Law of Conservation:** Everything in the universe has an essence, is conserved and is permanent, everlasting, without a beginning. One cannot create something out of nothing, nor can one destroy anything. Thus, everything is  $Y = E + M(t)$ , where E is essence and M is mode which changes with time. Thus, change is a law of nature, but the essence is eternal. Jain Darshan therefore propounds that the universe and all the six dravyas (including soul, matter, space, time, motion, and rest) are eternal, though their form may be changing all the time.
3. **Law of coexistence:** Everything in the universe depends on everything else. This is called entanglement in physics, i.e., we are all entangled with each other. Nothing (any jiva and ajiva), cannot exist independently, in isolation, by Itself. This is implied by the shloka: *parasparopagraho jivanam*. But, after a deep study, I have extended it to include ajiva, by modifying it to: *parasparopagraho jivanam-ajivanam*.
4. **Determinism:** It is called niyativad, or, in Jainism, it has been termed as kramabaddhapyaya, or 'Predetermined sequential change of modes. Whatever is going to happen, will happen, no matter what. Kramabaddha paryaya is more profound than determinism, but that is a matter of depth.
5. **Law of Free will:** it is called self effort or Purushartha, that every soul has some scope of making efforts to chart its course of action. Determinism and Free- will look apparently contradictory but in fact, they are applicable in different domains and are complementary. Determinism is applicable in gross domain, as in classical dynamics and Free will in microdomain, as in quantum mechanics, like soul.

In addition to these laws, there are certain doctrines which are unique to Jain Darshan but still consistent with modern physics.

### Four Doctrines:

1. **Anekantvad: Multiplicity of modes:** Every object is changing its mode every moment. It is mentioned above as a part of the law of conservation that although the essence of everything is conserved, the mode is transient and changes with time.
2. **Syadvad or Non-Absolutism:** There is no law which is applicable everywhere all the time. Acharya Amritchandra describes it very succinctly in the following manner: that the only law which cannot be falsified is that there is no such law which is applicable everywhere all the time. It is also defined as 'There is No One Absolute Truth'.

3. **Nayavad or Perspectivism:** Every understanding depends on the mental frame of reference or the viewpoint of the viewer, and all views are partly correct, but not the whole truth. The famous tale of six blind men and an elephant is quoted to illustrate it. In physics, it is known as law of complementarity.
4. **Sapatabhangi:** Every situation has seven valued solution or outcome. Based on the three doctrines mentioned above, seven solutions, including Yes, no, Indescribable and their combinations, leading to 7 possibilities.

The above laws and doctrines describe the fundamentals of Jainism and now we come to the practical aspects. Seven practices consistent with the above theories have been proposed.

#### 1. **Satya or Truth:**

Search of the Truth is the prime requirement for following Jain Dharma. Two conditions have been prescribed (i) that one should be convinced, by his own conviction and experience and not because of blind faith, that it is the truth and (ii) it should be beneficial for one's physical, mental or spiritual betterment. Unfortunately, this practice has been simplified and trivialised to imply speaking the truth, but it actually means search for truth underlying all natural phenomena.

#### 2. **Ahimsa: Non-violence:**

Ahimsa has been glorified and limited to not hurting any jiva, by thought, deed or speech. But Ahimsa is much more than just that. Ahimsa is a sum of many virtues. One must be fearless, courageous, truthful, prepared to fight for his right, ready to sacrifice much comfort and even life for a just cause, etc. A coward can never practise Ahimsa in a real sense. Sometimes, even Himsa can be considered as a form of Ahimsa if we don't confine ourselves to the literal meaning. The full shloka from (non-Jain source) is reproduced as:

*Ahimsa paramodharma*

*Dharma himsa tatheiva che:*

Ahimsa is the supreme Dharma, but Himsa carried out to protect the Dharma, is a Dharma(duty), higher than Ahimsa.

In a wider sense Ahimsa applies to jiva as well as ajiva.

Mahavir swami has said that '*sarvabhuteshu samyam ahimsa*'. Disciplined (minimising) use of all material things, be it energy, resources etc. is true Ahimsa.

#### 3. **Aparigrah:**

Jain darshan gives importance to non-attachment, or absence of possessiveness and minimising possessions. It is not against earning but advocates that one must not have attachment and redistribute one's wealth.

#### 4. **Achaurya:**

Non stealing is another aspect of nonviolence and aparigrah. It includes exploitation of natural resources, and others natural share of wealth.

#### 5. **Self discipline:**

Much emphasis is laid on a lifestyle of self-restraint. Surprisingly, in practice, it has been confined to Brahmacharya, which is usually translated as celibacy. In true sense it is not celibacy but a divine lifestyle with self discipline and includes experiencing the Self.

#### 6. **Compassion:**

Compassion for all living beings is the root of correct world view.

#### 7. **Forgiveness:**

Jain darshan lays much emphasis on Forgiveness and insists that it should be unconditional. In fact, it is considered as the most important practice and Paryushan and Das Lakshan parva, which culminates in global forgiveness, is observed as the most important annual or daily event.

### **Four Scientific Treasures:**

Jain darshan has given three great theories, i.e., theory of matter, theory of knowledge and theory of living beings, which are unique.

1. **Theory of Knowledge:** Jnana is of 5 types of Mati (perceptual)/Shrut (articulate or learned through books and discussions)/Avadhi (clairvoyance)/Manahparyay (mind reading) and Keval (omniscience). Jain Darshan does not consider all knowledge on equal footing but divides it into agyan (ignorance)\_Kugyan (harmful knowledge, which I call igknowledge), and gyan(knowledge), which helps in one's all-round development.
2. **Theory of Matter:** Scientific approach performs experiments to determine the ultimate constituent of matter by breaking matter in smaller and smaller parts. The Standard Model of Particle Physics (SMPP) has come down to 62 particles (like quarks, leptons, and force carriers) which it needs to construct the whole physical Universe. It talks of atomic theory of matter but has not yet found that ultimate atom out of which everything is made of. Jain Darshan, on the other hand, starts with the ultimate atom, the dimensionless paramanu and constructs the whole universe, and explains not only physical processes, but also psychological (psyche) and spiritual (karma) processes in the universe, by 23 types of varagnas or aggregates of paramanus.
3. **Theory of living beings:** The eternal existence of species is the backbone of Jain view of diversity of life on earth. It is called shristivada and is different from Biblical or Vedantic creationism or scientific Darwinian evolution. We may call it Speciation which includes invisible, non interacting Nigodh jiva to well-developed Humans with 1 to 5 senses and mind, and operates both ways: devolution and evolution, depending on the individual's karmas.
4. **Bhed vigyan:** The theory of distinction, i.e., what is useful to one's soul and what is not, and how to determine it is another unique and fundamental feature of Jain Darshan.
- 5.

Lastly, I come to the 5<sup>th</sup> sutra which was mentioned in the beginning.

### **And this refers to *Who am I?***

*I am ONLY an Observer or Knower. This is the crux of Jain Darshan. I am not a doer, and my function is only to observe and to know. In fact, I cannot do anything. This brings us back to determinism and krambaddha paryaya.*

### **What Jain Darshan is NOT:**

A word about what Jainism is NOT will be worth mentioning here and these points are listed below:

- There are No Miracles possible. No God the creator.
- There are No coincidences. Everything or event is because of one's own Karma.
- It is not limited to food or Kitchen/Ahimsa- but much wider in scope.
- Tirthankaras are Not Omnipotent/Omnipresent but only Omniscient and therefore there should be No place for Fear or Favour of God.
- Enlightened persons can only show the path- and we must tread the path ourselves, by our own efforts, i.e., purushartha, and every one can become Omniscient, an Arihant and omniscient, by his own efforts.

If we consider all the above features of Jain Darshan, we come to the conclusion that it is quite unique in the sense that it incorporates all the essentials of a civic society. These features are listed below:

- **Laws:** Everything runs according to laws. There is No Law-less-ness and one can live without fear of God or others, i.e., in absolute Fearlessness.

- **Equality:** All lives are equal and sacred, weakest jiva to even Tirthankars. While the world is still struggling for gender equality, Jain darshan talks of equality of all, small as well as powerful jivas.
  - **Responsibility:** Jain Darshan talks of Purushartha, self effort, positing all the powers in the self. This emphasis on karma and on SELF effort makes one himself, and no one else responsible for himself, for good or bad, that happens to him/her.
  - **Coexistence:** The principle of coexistence, embedded in *Parasparopagraho Jivanam Ajivanam* makes the world harmonious and conflict-free.
  - **All inclusive:** The theory of Anekantavad includes even those who oppose you and puts all views and people on a respectable pedestal.
  - **Social virtues:** The emphasis on Truth/ Non stealing/ Non-interference (Ahimsa): Aparigraha: is the highest form of communism, or equal distribution of all resources and gives everyone equal rights to material wealth.
  - **Equal opportunity:** Jain Darshan gives equal opportunity and a level playing field to everyone, because everyone is governed by the same laws and have the same potential.
  - **Emphasis on Knowledge:** Jain Darshan talks of Ananta Gyan, infinite knowledge and emphasises acquiring Gyan as the highest goal.
  - **Purpose of life:** **The Jain philosophy also defines a purpose of life, i.e., Moksha. In view of the above features, Jain Darshan is worthy of becoming a globally acceptable philosophy.**
- (Based on a lecture given at Jain Centre of North America, Milpitas, on 12 November 2022.)

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