

Relevance of Jain Darshan in the modern context
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We show in this article that Jain darshan, as also all other religions, have two main objectives: (i) Understanding and explaining the various natural phenomena and (ii) betterment of their followers in physical, psychological and spiritual domains. In this sense, they have much in common with science, because science too has the same objectives. In spite of this immense similarity between various religions and science, the methodology of science, philosophy and Jain darshan is quite different. The apparent and, many a times significant, differences arise because of three factors, (i) Many other aspects have been added to the basic concepts of various religions such as political objectives, social objectives, efforts to dominate over other religions, increasing their followers, competition between various religions and a kind of superiority complex, (ii) each religion has elements based on local contemporary problems, environment, place and of their origin and (iii) Each religion lays stress on different practical facets as needed by their followers, their mind set and contemporary issues.

Here we will mainly concentrate on Jain darshan and show that it is scientific, logical and simple but it is facing enormous number of challenges in modern times due to several misconceptions. In spite of a glorious past and, whereas Jain darshan contains all the elements of a modern civil society and has deep rooted scientific foundation, Jain followers are shrinking rapidly. Since Jain darshan and ethics have the potential of resolving most of the problems the world is facing today, serious efforts must be made to project its merits on the global platform. Some solutions to various issues are suggested, the most important being understanding the correct foundation of Jain darshan.

key words: Jain darshan, religion, scientific foundation,

Introduction

Most religions were founded at different times and places around the globe by their originators during the long history of human civilisation. At Science and Spirituality Institute we have studied basic concepts of some religions as well as their current narratives. We see that, all of them have severe and growing differences in their outlook and practices, so much so that it is generally believed that religions divide humanity into fragments and followers. On the other hand, Science, which is believed to have formally taken roots only with Galileo (~16th century), in spite of being a recent phenomenon, has won everyone's confidence, has overpowered everyone's life style and has resulted in unifying humanity. Thus, it can be rightly concluded that religion divides and science unites. We summarise below the common concepts between a few prominent religions as well as common concepts between Jainism and Science. The scientific foundation of Jain darshan has been discussed in detail elsewhere (Bhandari, 2015; Bhandari, 2025).

Every religion has been founded for the purpose of making its followers happy, because the life is replete with many unforeseen, unpleasant events. The real happiness comes only if we understand the way nature works, and realise that some events may not be under our control, because they are influenced by unknown factors. Thus understanding the way nature works, or essentially the laws that govern the universe and their acceptance is what can give lasting happiness. Thus knowledge is the key to happiness.

The main point to note is that the only thing which is eternal is nature as a whole and everything in the universe is driven by nature's grand design. Eternal though it may be, the problem is that nature itself is ever changing. This is very aptly defined in Jain philosophy as '*anantadharmitā*', and its main consequence is the enormous diversity in the universe, be it material objects or living beings (Bhandari, 2025). Even while continuously changing with time, we can call change of modes (*pariyāy*), the essence of basic entities (*dravya*), hard to define what it is, remains eternal, and indestructible.

Religions are created by men, and it follows from the above that, they can be eternal only if they are based on laws of nature. Those religions, which are consistent with the laws of nature are eternal (*sanātan*), as Hinduism is claimed to be.

There are three distinct methods to arrive at the laws of nature: scientific enquiry based on observation of nature, Philosophy based on mental constructs and extrapolations, again based on observations, and thirdly, meditation what ancient Seers, and Jain Tirthankars could 'see' or discover, after purification of their body, mind and soul. There conclusions obviously depend on the degree of their psychological purity and unbiased objectivity and only in the case of Tirthankars (or kevalis), the body, mind and soul are perfectly pure, devoid of any emotions, ambitions or prejudices.

This way one can arrive at the perfect understanding of all the contents and laws of nature, and the direction in which the nature is going, its past, present and future, defined as omniscience, which then leads to eternal bliss. Differences in purity can lead to differences in understanding nature and this is the cause for different philosophies differing in their narratives.

Observation of nature and defining Dharma

We illustrate the scientific methodology and the omnipotent nature of nature by quoting the example of evolution of life on earth, i.e. starting with a single celled fungi evolution to a complex, all comprehending human being, during the bio-geological history of the earth during the past 4.5 billion years, since the earth came into existence. This sequential evolution is shown in Fig. 1.

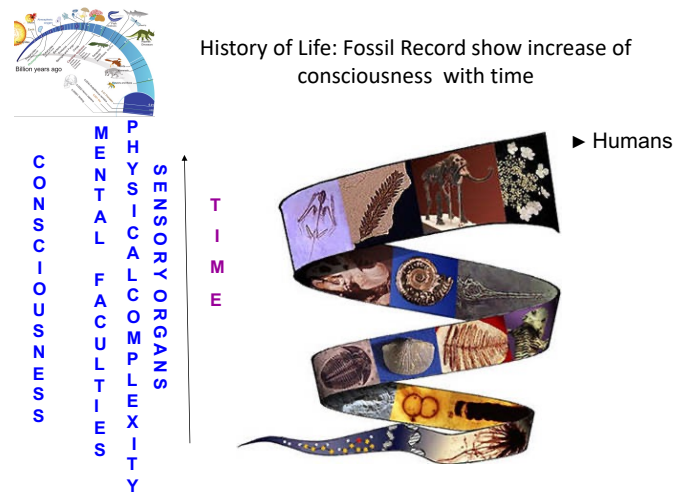


Fig 1. Evolution of consciousness in species over the geological past, based on fossil records in Earth's sediments.

From this record, we see that life first appeared on the Earth approximately 3.5 billion years ago, a billion year after the earth was formed from the solar nebula, as a monocellular fungi, and has gradually evolved with time into a complex human system, with brain having a neural network (*sangni jiva*). With this increase of physical complexity, the level of consciousness has also increased enormously (Fig. 1). The other point to note is that this evolution has been punctuated by 5 mass extinction events and four major revolutions, every time leading to evolution of better species. These aspects have been discussed in detail in Bhandari et al, 2022 and Bhandari, 2024 and therefore we make only two brief points here. Firstly, the nature which has developed *homo sapiens* from a single celled species has a singular goal of evolving consciousness gradually to an ever increasing level and our existence on this planet is due to this goal of nature. This observation enables us to define 'dharma': Anything which helps nature pursue its goal of evolving consciousness to a higher level is 'dharma'. Adharma, therefore, is interfering with nature in its objective of evolving higher level of consciousness. We must also note that nature has strange ways to accomplish its goal, sometimes even resorting to extreme destruction in form of mass extinction, but, this is always followed by an abrupt increase in consciousness in form of newer and more complex species with higher consciousness. The second point is that in view of the definition of dharma mentioned above, all religions must be based on the laws of nature. That is how it is, as we argue below.

2. Basic concepts of all religions:

In spite of the fact that all religions are fundamentally the same, a study of various religious practices show that there are severe and some times insurmountable differences between them. These apparent differences have cropped up because political, social, national, supremacy, and domination agendas that have been added to the basic concepts. We illustrate it by taking the cases of Islam and Hinduism.

The basic tenet of Islam is that there is formless, indescribable entity, Allah or 'Khuda', who controls everything, and without his 'will' not a leaf will turn. For self, the word 'khud' is used indicating that everyone possesses a part of Khuda. Rationally speaking, and

considering only the characteristics, this is the same as Brahm of Hinduism. Thus in the most fundamental way, there is no conceptual difference between the two. In some other philosophies, samkhya, for example, *Prakruti* and *Purush*, the two together play a vital role whereas in other oriental darshans, everything is explained based on one of them, which is considered prominent and the other becomes insignificant.

In Jain and Buddhist philosophies, this 'omnipotent entity' is replaced by 'Laws of nature' by which all the phenomena in the universe are governed and this way they do away with an 'Almighty God', the creator, sustainer and destroyer; The all pervading, overpowering law of Karma (causality) is such an example. In many other religions, specifically in Vedas, when people could not understand certain phenomena, they invoked 'God' and/or specific deities, to be responsible for phenomena like rains, dawn, sun, fire etc.

The Jain Tirthankaras found the way of meditation to objectively understand various phenomena, after cleaning their minds from any biases (emotions, prejudices, instincts etc.), and after purification of their souls and this way they could enunciate the basic laws by which all the processes are governed all over the universe. We will describe some of them below in section 3.

We thus come to the conclusion that the basic concept of all religions is the same (a formless entity), although they call it by different names. Different religions emphasise different aspects of various practices developed from their basic concepts. Buddhism, for example, gives preference to Karuna (compassion), Christians and Sikhism to service to fellow beings and Jainism to gyan (pure knowledge) and ahimsa. These points are elaborated in detail elsewhere, and hence, we summarise below some laws common to Jainism and Science, to show their similarity.

3. Scientific foundation of Jain Darshan

Jainism and science do not postulate any God, the creator, and ascribe all processes to certain laws. Some laws, common to both, science and Jainism are listed in Table 1.

Table 1. Common laws between science and Jainism

Science (material world)	Jainism (living and non-living)
Causality: cause and effect relation	<i>Karmavād</i>
Law of Conservation	<i>Tripadi, Eternal nature of Dravyas</i>
Complementarity	<i>Anantdharmitā (Anekāntavād)</i>
Determinism	<i>Krambaddha paryāy</i>
Entanglement	<i>Parasparopagraho jivānām</i>

Besides these laws, there are certain doctrines, which are unique to Jain darshan, but their concept also exists in modern physics as in quantum physics, Special Theory of Relativity (STR) and Standard model of Particle physics. These are compared in Table 2.

Table 2. Some common concepts between Science and Jainism

Science	Jainism
Indiscribability in quantum domain	Indescribability (<i>spatabhangi; 7 modes of existence</i>)
Limits of knowledge	<i>Syādvād</i>

Inertial frame of reference (STR)	Mental frame of reference, <i>Nayavād</i>
Planck length and Planck time	Quantised space & time units (<i>Pradesa, kālānu</i>)
Bose statistics	<i>Apritghāti</i> nature of paramānu

This similarity (Table 1, 2) shows that Jain darshan is as rational as scientific logic. Based on these laws (Gyan) the large edifice of Jain philosophy has been constructed, as found in Svetambar and Digambar canons. In stead of sequential evolution of samyak darshan to gyan to charitra (*Samyagdarshangyancharitrani mokshamargah: Tattvarthsutra 1.1*), ahimsa, only a practical aspect of lifestyle, has been given the nodal importance and that too is confined to dietary practices, rituals and *jiva-daya*. There is much interfaith mingling of concepts and practices, which has further reduced the rigour of the basic tenets of Jain darshan.

We show below in section 4 that Jain darshan and its practice, usually projected as very difficult to follow, is rational, simple and easy. Understanding Jain darshan correctly is the prime challenge of modern times.

4. Jain darshan, its merits and relevance to the modern civil society

Firstly, as pointed out above, Gyan or True knowledge (samyak gyan) is the foundation of Jain darshan. As clearly defined in the opening shloka of Tattvarth sutra, Darshan, Gyan and Charitra is the sequence by which worldly attachment (moh) can be destroyed (kshaya) and one can attain moksha, and not the other way around. Thus proper conduct must be preceded by gyan and darshan; charitra then automatically follows.

The essence of Jain Darshan can be simply summarised in four sutras:

1. Sansar sutra: Everything in this world ultimately leads to misery; even the events of happiness finally turn into sorrow.
2. Karma sutra: The cause of this sorrow is one's own karma.
3. Gyan sutra: Karmas can be destroyed by gyan.
4. Dhyan sutra: Gyan can be obtained by dhyan (meditation).

These four sutras define the conceptual aspects of Jainism. On practical side, two points are important to note:

1. The nature is omnipotent; Everything, big or small, significant or trivial, happens according to the laws of nature, as described above. Therefore one must never interfere with nature. Minimalisation, *ahimsa*, *aparigrah*, *anekantavad* etc. all have been formulated to have minimum disturbance in natural processes, with material (pudgal) and living (jiva) parts of the universe. One must live and consume material products or interact with others, as if one does not really exist, i.e. without hurting. Jain sadhus and sadhvis are living examples of this life style.

2. Jain Darshan propounds that the soul (atma) has infinite potential and powers. Forty seven *shaktis* have been defined in Samaysar. The Jain darshan prescribes procedures for developing these powers. The Jain practices are aimed at developing these powers to the fullest, as has been demonstrated by Tirthankars, who realised the potential to the fullest by practicing ahimsa, self discipline and austerities (*Dhammo mangal mukkhitam, ahimsa, sanjamo, tavo*). Purify the body by Tapas, mind by self discipline and atma by ahimsa. This

principle and the methodology of developing powers of the soul are unique to Jainism and is its basic practical application.

We can also see practical demonstration of increased memory power in *shatāvadhān*, or *sahasrāvadhān* (Pokharna, 2022). I had the good fortune of witnessing two sessions of 500 and 1000 *avadhāns* by Muni Shri Ajitchandrasagarji, who developed this unique faculty under the guidance of Pujya Nay chandra sagarji. They have also developed a procedure for memory improvement in school going children by 'Saraswati sadhana', and practically demonstrated, by statistically significant results in batches of practicing and control groups. Such improvement of memory can play an important role in studies as well as in professional work with higher success rate, than otherwise possible.

5. Relevance of Jain philosophy to the modern civil society

Apart for various techniques for developing personal faculties, some of which have been mentioned above, the Jain darshan is quite relevant to the modern civil society. We mention seven unique features of Jain philosophy below

1. **Equality:** (i) Equality of all species: all species have the same powerful soul.

(ii) Equality of all living beings before universal laws, such as Law of Karma.

(iii) Equality of gender : male and female.

2. Responsibility:

(i) One is responsible for his/her own deeds. No one, including GOD can do anything good or bad to any one (**Karma Theory**).

(ii) **Purushārtha:** One's own efforts are required for anything one want to achieve. One can even attain omniscience (Godhood) by adequate efforts.

3. Equidistribution: *Aprigrah*

It is the best form of voluntary socialism, without compulsion. It has enormous benefits: (i) Creates harmony in the society (ii) Avoids over-exploitation of resources.

4. **Anekantavād:** This all inclusive principle amounts to respecting everyone's views

(i) Creates harmony at the individual, family and society level, and nationally and internationally.

(ii) leads to tolerance, fearlessness.

(iii) Avoids conflicts : good for mental peace.

5. **Ahimsa:** All life is sacred; avoids or minimises hurting or killing of living beings, howsoever insignificant : enshrined in the iconic shloka ***Parasparopagraho jivanam-Ajivanam***

(i) **vegetarianism:** good for health, environment and resources

(ii) **Jiva daya:** compassion establishes friendship and resonance with all living beings and they all reciprocate in wellbeing of the practitioner.

(iii) **Forgiveness/Vinay:** epigenetic effects of forgiveness: activates one's dormant genes and increases the personal capabilities.

6. **Anusashan (आत्मनःशसन):** self restraint: minimum interference with nature

(i) gives control of various personal faculties

(ii) develops confidence

(iii) preserves environment by minimum use of resources

7. Personal ethics : *Brahmcharya*:

- (i) conserves physical energy which can be used for better purposes.
- (ii) brings harmony in married life, and in society.
- (iii) Results in safety of men and women.
- (iv) leads to wellbeing of children and future generations.

6. Challenges facing the Jain society and their solutions

In spite of such positive and unique features, not found in any other religion or philosophy of the world, Jainism is facing severe and growing challenges in modern times, too many to be discussed in this article. We discuss only a few issues below, which are very challenging in our opinion. This is a topic which must be debated intensively between Jain academicians and leaders of the community, and we end this article by mentioning a few solutions which may be helpful.

1. Jain Darshan is very vast and touches all aspects of life and universe. Effects of **Jain practices on physical and mental health** largely remains to be documented.

2. **Jain darshan is very simple**, as discussed above but it is not available in understandable form and is difficult to connect with school or college education. The idea that religion is different from science, embedded in our minds, is incorrect because both are engaged in search of truth, albeit with different methodologies. Generally, traditions and rituals govern our life style although there is logic behind them and they have been developed for our benefit. Jain concepts contained in agamas and canonical texts should be available in simple understandable form, in modern context and needs to be documented and popularised.

3. Jain darshan has all the elements of a modern civil society (section 5) but it is not being propagated globally and is confined within the narrow boundaries of various Jain sects.

4. Practical aspects of Jain practices in enhancing and **sharpening memory (*avadhan*, for example), developing psychological powers (premonition, intuition)** etc. which can bring success in life have not been documented or developed for training or teaching in a proper course.

5. **Jain life style**, in spite of its simplicity, is projected as difficult to follow. Its benefits have to be provided logical foundation, research and documentation.

6. **Jain followers are shrinking rapidly** and it is projected that if the current female fertility rate continues, their number, presently about a crore, will reduce to 100,000 only in the next 40 years (Bhandari, 2022). If this happens, the Jain concepts, philosophy, and ethics which took thousands of years to develop, will be lost. It may be noted that in the 6th century BCE, during the period of Mahavira and Buddha, both Jainism and Buddhism were at the peak, but today Jainism has a lowly following of about a crore, while Buddhism with its 500 million followers is the 6th largest religion, and growing. Study by JAS suggests that the main reason for this rapid decline of Jains is, because unlike Buddhists, who produced scholars in abundance in every country where it went and reinterpreted Buddha concepts in local context, Jains failed to do so and remained within the narrow boundaries, not producing scholars and reinterpreting their philosophy in contemporary context.

7. **Jain Heritage** is very rich and profound and Jain philosophy dominated the Indian subcontinent from about 600 BCE to 600 CE. but it does not find its rightful place in the mainstream curriculum in schools or colleges and is not covered in Indian or world history

books. In a recent study (JAS Proceedings,2025) we have concluded that **These 1000 years, a golden period in Indian history from governance, spiritual and prosperity point of view, should be declared as Jain era in Indian history.**

8.**Jain philosophy and concepts are scientific** and show the way the nature works. It has the potential of guiding further scientific research. This aspect needs to be documented, substantiated, and propagated. The current period in the world is the century of knowledge and the whole world is ready to accept knowledge based suggestions, provided it is logical and properly placed on the global platforms. By proper dissemination of Jain philosophy, the current century can become the **century of Jain philosophy.**

9.Jain darshan has all the ingredients of resolving various global problems, like intolerance, social disharmony, environmental degradation, gender inequality etc. discussed in section 5, the world is facing today, but Jain concepts and practices are not known globally and are not taught in schools. Jain life style has the potential of ushering peace, prosperity and harmony in the war-torn world.

9.The number of **Jain scholars** worldwide is limited and even in India, the number of Acharyas and Pandits is large but Jain scholars who can present Jain concepts in modern, jargon-free language, reinterpret Agams in current context, carry out research projects, and place the Jain concepts on logical and scientific foundation is negligible. Noble prizes are being awarded for concepts which are singularly related to Jain philosophy and practices. Autophagy (Noble prize in physiology and medicine, 2016), Circadian rhythm (2017), Bose statistics for Paramanu like Bosons and life in plants etc. may be quoted as prime examples of Jain concepts (see Appendix for more examples, in Bhandari, 2017). The world is eager to adopt many concepts mentioned in Jain texts and agams but we do not have qualified scholars to take them on global platforms.

10. Several unknown, uncared Jain heritage sites, **neglected Jain idols, historical sites, caves** and abandoned temples exist throughout India and its neighbourhood. They need to be documented and should form part of Indian heritage.

11. Jains have a vast network of temples and sthanaks, which are currently used only for rituals and Bhakti. These can be modernised to be used for personal development of individuals, as also for educational and social purposes. A model temple activity blue print, with gyan centre, dhyana centre, Bhakti center, and social wing is available with JAS, for implementation, if required.

12. Some work is being done to resolve the above problems by a many individuals and organisation but it's global impact is negligible. To have sufficient impact, it is felt that there should be at least one Global non-sectarian apex platform which takes care of various problems of Jains society and represents them in **ONE VOICE**. A blue print is available with JAS if required for further debate.

7. Plausible Solutions

To resolve some of the problems, JAS has proposed an Apex Gyan kendra, serving as a global platform for exchange of ideas, interfaith discussions and for preparing a hundred scholars in the next 5 years. This Top-down approach will quickly help restore the glory of Jainism back in the limelight. Most importantly Jains should open their doors to everyone in the world and not remain within their self-imposed boundaries.

7. Conclusions

In this article, we have shown that Jain philosophy is based on same concepts on which the nature operates. we have also discussed many recent developments in physics and philosophy by western researchers and find that they are consistent with some Jain concepts. It is desirable to integrate them for a better understanding of the various phenomena and for better understanding Jain philosophy in the modern context. We have discussed several such concepts, like theory of matter (Bhandari, JAS Proceedings 2024), theories of consciousness, Jain theory of knowledge, body-mind interactions etc. and highlighted some similarities and discrepancies which exist between Jainism and modern theories. Several questions emerge from this discussion which require further research and correct interpretation of Jain concepts.

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