
UNIT 2 PHILOSOPHY OF JAINISM

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2.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit enumerates the philosophy behind the religion of Jainism. Jain philosophy deals extensively with its own perspective on metaphysics, epistemology and ethics. Like any other religion, Jainism also has its foundation in philosophical concepts.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Jainism is the name of one of the religious traditions that has its origin in the Indian subcontinent. According to its own traditions, the teachings of Jainism are eternal, and hence have no founder; however, the Jainism of this age can be traced back to Mahavira, a teacher of the sixth century BCE, a contemporary of the Buddha. Like those of the Buddha, Mahavira's doctrines were formulated as a reaction to and rejection of Brahmanism (a religion based on the Hindu scriptures, the Vedas and Upanishads) which was then taking shape. The Brahmans taught about the division of society into rigidly delineated castes, and a doctrine of reincarnation guided by *karma* or merit, brought about by the moral qualities of actions. Their schools of thought, since they respected the authority of the Vedas and Upanishads, were known as '*orthodox darsanas*' (*darsana* literally means view). Jainism and Buddhism, along with a school of materialists called *Carvaka*, were regarded as the '*unorthodox darsanas*', because they taught that the Vedas and Upanishads, and hence the Brahman caste, had no authority. Like Buddhism, Jainism belongs to the *sramanic* tradition. Buddhism and Jainism, together with materialism (*Carvaka*), are traditionally designated as unorthodox or heterodox systems because of their refusal to accept Vedic authority.

The main teachings are that there is a sharp distinction between souls and matter; that souls are normally implicated through *karma*, in the painful round of reincarnation; and that through the practice of virtue, meditation, and great austerity the ultimate release of the soul is possible. Jainism is atheistic but does not deny the existence of gods as beings inside the cosmos. The word *Jainism* or *jaina* is derived from *jina*. The etymological meaning of the word *jina* is conqueror. It is the common name given to the twenty four teachers (*tirthankaras*), because they conquered all passions (*raga* and *dvesa*) and attained liberation. Jainism is often classified as a philosophy, a way of life, rather than a religion. In Jainism, religion is not different from the practice of the realization of our own essential nature. It puts great emphasis on the practice of good life. According to Jainism, the guiding principle of one's life should be: *mitti me sarvabhuesu* (May I have a friendly relation with all beings.)

2.2 JAINISM

Jainism makes a distinction between *Jivas* and *Ajivas*. Therefore, it is dualism. It is also pluralism as it recognizes an infinite number of animate and inanimate substances. It is also metaphysical realism. They also hold that every atom has a soul but it is not *Jiva*, because they do not have sense organs. The soul is both permanent and changing. Based on extension, Jainism divides substance into two classes, those that are extended in space and those that are not. Although Jainism recognizes souls, it rejects the notion of an ultimate, universal soul.

2.3 JAINA EPISTEMOLOGY

In the Indian system, knowledge has been accounted as a path of liberation. In Jainism, knowledge is considered as one of the means to attain liberation. Jainism has a totally different view of knowledge. Knowledge is not something to be grasped and possessed by the soul, but is a state of the soul itself. Knowledge is the essence of the soul. The liberated soul alone knows all objects in all aspects. Consciousness is the inseparable essence of every soul which is able to manifest itself and other objects. Jainism propagates the theory of 'The Doctrine of Relativity of Knowledge and Judgments.' Jainism divides all knowledge into two classes, the mediate (*paroksa*) and the immediate (*aparoksa*). Mediate knowledge is any knowledge which the soul comes to have by the mediation of sense organs; any knowledge whose acquisition involves something other than the soul itself. On the other hand, immediate knowledge is that which the soul obtains without the intervention of the sense organs. The Jaina classification of knowledge is based on the manner of acquiring knowledge, rather than on the objects of knowledge. The basic difference between these two main types of knowledge rest on the way it is perceived; the former is cognized with the help of senses, while the latter is cognized without any help of the senses.

Knowledge by direct perception, internal or external, which is regarded by many schools as immediate knowledge, is regarded as mediate by Jainism, since the sense and mind (things other than the soul itself) play a role in it. Sometimes Jainism speaks of such perceptual knowledge as relatively immediate and as distinct from absolutely immediate knowledge, which the soul has in virtue of that consciousness attained by freeing itself from all the karmic obstacles. We may call the absolutely immediate knowledge 'supra-sensual, non-conceptual,

non-perceptual, intuitive knowledge (*kevala-jnana*)’ (see *Puligandha*, 43). So, knowledge is not something external to be grasped and possessed by the soul, but is a state of the soul itself. Immediate knowledge is divided into *Avadhi*, *Manahparyaya*, and *Kevala*; and mediate knowledge into *Mati* and *Shruta*.

Avadhi: Clairvoyance: When a person is partially freed from the influences of the karmas, he acquires the power of knowing objects which have forms, but are too distant, or minute, or obscure to be observed by the senses or mind. Such immediate knowledge is limited, and is therefore called *avadhijnana*.

Manahparyaya: Telepathy: *Manahparyaya* is direct knowledge of the thoughts of others. When a person has overcome hatred, jealousy, etc. (which create obstacles that stand in the way of knowing other minds), he can have direct access to the present and past thoughts of others. This knowledge is called *manah-paryaya* (entering a mind). In both *Avadhi* and *Manahparyaya*, the soul has direct knowledge unaided by the senses or the mind. Hence they are called immediate, though limited.

Kevala: Omniscience: When all *karmas* that obstruct knowledge are completely removed from the soul, there arises in it the absolute knowledge or omniscience. This is called *Kevalajnana*. It is unlimited and absolute knowledge. These three are extraordinary or extra-sensory perceptions which are immediate. But in addition to these, there are two kinds of ordinary knowledge possessed by an average person. They are called *mati* and *sruta*.

Mati: Sensuous Cognition: *Mati* is known as sensory comprehension. Here, sense organs and the mind are the essential aid for cognition. Ordinarily, *mati* means any kind of knowledge which we can obtain through the senses or through *manas*. Jains give an account of the process by which *mati* takes place, in the following way. At first there is only a sensation, and it is not yet known what it means. This primary state of consciousness is called *avagraha* (sensation). Then arises query. This questioning state of the mind is called *iha* (speculation). Then comes a definite judgment. This is called *avaya* (removal of doubt). Then what is ascertained is retained in the mind. This is called *dharana* (retention).

Check Your Progress I

Note: Use the space provided for your answer

1) Write a short note on Jaina epistemology?

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2) What is *Avadhi: Clairvoyance* and *Manahparyaya: Telepathy*?

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3) What is *Kevala*: Omniscience and *Mati*: Sensuous Cognition?

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Srutajnana: *Sruta* is knowledge obtained from authority. This is usually interpreted as knowledge obtained from what is heard from others. This includes all kinds of knowledge derived from spoken or written authority. As the understanding of any authority is dependent on the perception of sounds or written letters, *sruta* is said to be preceded by *mati*. These two kinds of ordinary knowledge (namely, *mati* and *sruta*), as well as the lowest kind of immediate extraordinary knowledge (namely, *avadhi*), are not absolutely free from chances of error. But the two higher kinds of immediate extra-sensory knowledge (*manahpariyaya* and *kevala*) are never liable to any error.

For ordinary purposes, knowledge may be again divided into two kinds – *Pramana* or knowledge of a thing as it is, and *Naya* or knowledge of a thing in its relation. The Jains accept the general view that there are three *pramanas*, namely, perception, inference, and testimony. *Naya* means a standpoint of thought from which we make a statement about a thing. In all the systems of Indian philosophy, there is a clear cut distinction between ‘valid’ and ‘invalid’ knowledge. Valid knowledge always stands for that form of cognition which reveals reality in its true colour (*yatharthyaena*) and leads us to successful activity in the light of it. The result of such valid knowledge is technically called *prama*. Invalid knowledge falls short in its grasp of reality and fails to lead us to successful activity, and the result of invalid knowledge is technically called *aprama*. The sources or methodology of valid knowledge has therefore been called *pramana*.

Syadvada: The Jaina Theory of Judgment

Every judgment that we pass in daily life about an object is therefore, true only in reference to the standpoint occupied and the aspect of the object considered. In view of these facts, the Jain insists that every judgment (*naya*) should be qualified by some word like ‘somehow’ (*syat*, that is to say, in some respect), so that the limitation of this judgment and the possibility of other alternative judgments from other points of view may be always clearly borne in mind. The Jaina view that all our ordinary knowledge is necessarily partial, being always relative to some particular point of view and about particular aspects of objects, is known as *syadvada*, the doctrine of relativity of knowledge and judgements (*syad* : relative to some standpoint, *vada* : doctrine, theory, view). In terms of the seven-fold formula, they supported their view that every proposition is only conditional and no proposition can be either absolutely affirmed, or absolutely negated. In each case, Jainas qualify the assertion with (*syat*) ‘somehow’, or ‘in a certain sense’. The sevenfold classification of predications can be schematized as follows:

1. Somehow a thing exists.
2. Somehow a thing does not exist.
3. Somehow a thing both exists and does not exist.

- 4. Somehow a thing is indescribable.
- 5. Somehow a thing exists and is indescribable.
- 6. Somehow a thing does not exist and is indescribable.
- 7. Somehow a thing both exists and does not exist and is indescribable.

The truth conveyed by each of these predications is not the absolute truth but only a relative one, leaving room for the other alternative truths. In the first predication we choose to make a statement of affirmation about a pot (or some other thing) according to its 'substance, place, time, and nature'. But since the pot does not exist in the form of another substance, place, time, or nature, the second negating statement can also be made. In the first two forms of predication we have come to the idea that the jar enjoys a somewhat existence and somewhat non-existence. By applying the method of succession to the first two categories we have the third predication. Possibly the jar exists and possibly the jar does not exist. In the fourth predication, inexpressibility (*avaktavyata*) is developed as a new category. The indescribability is due to the equal importance of existence and non-existence, simultaneously conceived in the one and the same real. This can be enumerated with an example. A jar is black when raw and red when it is baked. But if we are asked what the real color of the jar is always or under all conditions, the only honest reply would be that the jar cannot be described under the condition of the question. The last three predications are the combination of indescribability with the first three. The doctrine of *syadvada* is often criticized as skeptical or agnostic. But it should be noted that a Jaina is not skeptic. It is not the uncertainty of a judgment, but its conditional or relative character that is emphasized in this particular doctrine.

Check Your Progress II

Note: Use the space provided for your answer

1) What is *Srutajnana*?

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2) Give a short note on *Syadvada* or the Jaina theory of judgment?

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3) What is the sevenfold classification of predications in *Syadvada*?

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2.4 METAPHYSICS

Jaina metaphysics is both realistic and pluralistic. It draws a sharp distinction between animate substances (*jivas* : souls) and inanimate substances (*ajivas* : non-souls). Jainism is basically dualistic. It is also pluralistic (*anekantavada*) in that it recognizes the existence of an infinite number of animate and inanimate substances, each possessing an infinite number of characteristics of its own. Since it teaches that the infinite number of substances exists independently of our perceptions or awareness of them, Jainism may also be described as epistemological and metaphysical realism (see, Puligandla, 37). The universe functions through the interaction of living souls and the five categories of non-living entities: ether (*akasa*), the means or condition of movement (*dharmā*), the means or condition of rest (*adharma*), time (*kala*), and matter (*puṅgava*). Souls are not only the property of animal and plant life, but also of entities such as stones, rocks, running water, and many other natural objects not looked upon as living by other sects.

2.5 CONCEPT OF SUBSTANCE

Jainas accept the common philosophical view of substance. But they point out that two types of characters are found in every substance, essential and accidental. The essential characters of substance remain as long as it remains the same. Without these the substance will cease to be what it is. But the accidental characters of substance will come and go; they succeed one another. Desire, pain, etc. are some of the accidental qualities and these accidental characters are possessed by the soul-substance. It is through such characters that a substance undergoes change or modification. The Jainas call an essential unchanging character *guṇa*, and an accidental one or changing character *pariyāya*. So a substance is defined as one that possesses qualities or *guṇa*, as well as modes or *pariyāya*.

According to them the world is composed of different kinds of substances. Insofar as the essential characters of the ultimate substances are abiding, the world is permanent; and insofar as fiction, the world also changes. And they say that the change and permanence are both real. It should not be thought contradictory to say that a particular substance (or the universe as a whole) is both subject to change and free from it. Change is true of the substance in one respect (*syāt*), whereas permanence is true in another respect (*syāt*). The contradiction vanishes when we remember that each prediction is relative and not absolute, as taught by *syādvāda*.

Reality consists of three factors: permanence, origination, and decay. In substance there is unchanging essence and therefore it is permanent. There are again the origin and a decay of its changing modes (*pariyāya*). Hence all the three elements that characterize are there in a substance. They say that casual efficiency cannot be a mark of reality as the Buddha thinks. And they also denied Buddha's theory of momentariness, and against the one-sided theory of momentariness the Jainas also adduce the following arguments. 1) If everything is momentary, the soul also would be so and then we could not explain memory, recognition, the immediate feeling of personal identity, etc. 2) Liberation would then be meaningless, because there would be no permanent soul to be liberated. 3) No moral life would be possible then, because a momentary person cannot

attempt to attain any end. 4) Consequently there would be no moral law; the consequences of one's own action would be lost to him and the consequences of another person's action would befall him. 5) Neither perception nor inference reveals the existence of anything in the world in which there is only change and no element of continuity.

2.6 CLASSIFICATION OF SUBSTANCES

The classification of substances, according to a Jaina, is into the extended and the non-extended. There is only one substance, namely, time or *kala*, which is devoid of extension. All other substances possess extension. They are called by the general name *astikaya*, because every substance of this kind exists (*asti*) like a body (*kaya*), possessing extension. Substances possessing extension are subdivided into two kinds, namely, the living (*jiva*) and the non-living (*ajiva*). For the living, the Jainas accept the common philosophical view of substance. But they point out that two types of characteristics are found in every substance, essential and accidental. The essential characters of a substance remain as long as it remains the same. Without these the substance will cease to be what it is. But the accidental characters of substance will come and go; they succeed one another. Desire, pain, etc. are some of the accidental qualities and these accidental characters are possessed by the soul-substance. It is through such characters that a substance undergoes change or modification. The Jainas call an essential unchanging character, *guna*, and an accidental changing character, *pariyaya*. So a substance is defined as one that possesses qualities or *guna*, as well as modes or *pariyaya*.

Substances possessing extension are subdivided into two kinds, namely the living (*jiva*) and the non-living (*ajiva*). Substances (*jiva*) are identical with souls or spirits. The souls can again be classified into those that are emancipated or perfect (*muktha*) and those that are in bondage (*baddha*). The souls in bondage are again two kinds; those that are capable of movement (*trasa*) and those that are immobile (*sthavara*). The immobile living substances have the most imperfect kinds of bodies. They live in the five kinds of bodies made of earth, water, fire, air, or plants, respectively. They have only the sense of touch and so possess tactile consciousness. The mobile living substances have bodies of different degrees of perfection and variously possess two, three, four, or five senses. Non-living substances possessing extension are *dharma*, *adharmas*, *akasa*, and *pudgala*.

2.7 THE SOUL OR JIVA

Jiva or soul is a conscious substance. Consciousness is the essence of the soul. It is always present in the soul, though its nature and degree may vary. Souls may be theoretically arranged in a continuous series, according to the degrees of consciousness. At the highest end of the scale would be perfect souls that have overcome all *karmas* and attained omniscience. At the lowest end would stand the most imperfect souls which inhabit bodies of earth, water, fire, air, or vegetable. In them, life and consciousness appear to be absent. But really, even here, consciousness of a tactile kind is present; it is just that the consciousness is in a dormant form owing to the overpowering influence of karma-obstacles. These souls have two to five senses, like worms, ants, bees, and men.

It is the soul that knows things, performs activities, enjoys pleasures, suffers pains, and illumines itself and other objects. The soul is eternal, but it also undergoes a change of states. It is different from the body and its existence is directly proved by its consciousness of itself. Like a light it illuminates or renders conscious the entire body in which it lives. Though it has no form (*murti*) it acquires the size and form of the body wherein it lives. It is in this sense that a *jiva* is said to occupy space or possess extension. The *jiva* is not infinite but co-extensive with the body, as it can immediately know objects only within the body. Consciousness is not present everywhere but only in the body.

The soul is naturally bright, all-knowing, and blissful. There are an infinite number of souls in the universe; all fundamentally equal, but differing owing to the adherence of matter in a fine atomic form. This subtle matter, quite invisible to the human eye, is *karma* - the immaterial clouded over by karmic matter - and thus acquires first a spiritual and then a material body. The obfuscation of the soul is compared to the gradual clouding of a bright oily surface by dust. *Karma* adheres to the soul as result of activity. Any and every activity induces *karma* of some kind, but deeds of a cruel and a selfish nature induce more dangerous *karma* than others. The *karma* already acquired leads to the acquisition of further *karma*, and thus the cycle of transmigration continues indefinitely.

On these premises, transmigration can only be escaped by dispelling the karma already adhering to the soul and by ensuring that no more is acquired. This is a slow and difficult process and it is believed that many souls will never succeed in accomplishing it, but will continue to transmigrate for all eternity. The annihilation (*nirjara*) of *karma* comes about through penance, and the prevention (*samvara*) of the influx (*asrava*) and fixation (*bandha*) of *karma* in the soul is ensured by carefully disciplined conduct, as a result of which it does not enter in dangerous quantities and is dispersed immediately. When the soul has finally set itself free, it raises at once to the top the universe, above the highest heaven where it remains in inactive omniscient bliss through all eternity. This, for the Jaina, is *Nirvana*. The soul has two important characteristics. They are: 1) the soul does not fill space like matter and 2) the soul is present in space like light.

2.8 THE INANIMATE SUBSTANCES OR AJIVA

The physical world in which souls live is constituted by the material bodies that the souls occupy and the other material objects that form their environment. But in addition to these material substances, there are space, time, and the conditions of motion and rest, without which the world and its events cannot be fully explained. Following are the different substances:

Matter or Pudgala: Matter, in Jaina philosophy, is called *pudgala*, which means 'that which is liable to integration and disintegration'. Material substances can combine together to form larger and larger wholes and can also break up into smaller and smaller parts. The smallest parts of matter which cannot be further divided, being part less, are called atoms (*anu*). Two or more such atoms may combine together to form compounds (*sanghata* or *skandha*). Our bodies and the objects of nature are such compounds of material atoms. Mind (*manas*), speech and breath are also the products of matter. A material substance (*pudgala*) possesses the four qualities - touch, taste, smell, and color. These

qualities are possessed by atoms and also by their products, the compounds. The Jaina points out that sound is not an original quality like these four, and they say that sound along with light, heat, shadow, darkness, union, disunion, fineness, grossness, and shape is produced later by the accidental modifications of matter.

Space or Akasa: The function of space is to afford room for the existence of all extended substances. Soul, matter, *dharma*, and *adharmā*, all exist in space. Space is a formless entity where other categories can exist and function. Space has *loka* and *aloka*. *Loka* is the material universe which has three levels: the underworld or hell (*adholoka*) where the wicked souls live, the terrestrial level in the middle (*urdhvaloka*), and *aloka* or the empty non-world which demarcates the end of the universe. The liberated state is above all these three levels. It is the *siddhaloka*, and is the ultimate goal of our existence. This world is supposed to be in the shape of a bowl.

Time or Kala: Time is eternal and formless. As in Hinduism, Jainism too believes that time is cyclical. Time is first of all conceived as the sequence of events in the past, present, and future. Secondly, it is conceived in a wide context as cosmological, which is like a wheel's twelve spokes representing twelve ages. Six of them are the ascending part of the cycle or wheel (*utsarpini*), and six are the descending part of the same (*avasarpum*). Time is the necessary condition of duration, change, motion, newness, and oldness. Like space, time is also inferred though not perceived. It is inferred as the condition without which substances could not have the characters just mentioned; though it is true that time alone cannot cause a thing to have the characters. Without time a thing cannot endure or continue to exist; duration implies moments of time in which existence is prolonged. Modification or change of states also cannot be conceived without time. And lastly, the distinction between the old and the new cannot be explained without time. These are, therefore, the grounds on which the existence of time can be inferred.

Time is not extended in space. It is not regarded as an *astikaya*, which means that time is one indivisible substance. One and the same time is present everywhere in the world. Unlike all other substances called *astikayas*, time is devoid of extension in space. The Jaina sometimes distinguishes between real time (*paramarthika*) and empirical or conventional time (*vyavharika*) which is the mark of real time. It is the latter (*samaya*) which is conventionally divided into moments, hours, etc., and is limited by a beginning and an end. But real time is formless and eternal. By imposing conventional limitations and distinctions on real time, empirical time is produced.

Dharma and Adharma: As *karma* has a specific and unique meaning in Jainism, so too does it propose a unique meaning for *dharma* and *adharmā*. *Dharma* is motion and *adharmā* is rest; or *dharma* is action and *adharmā* is inaction. Mobility and immobility, motion and rest, are the grounds of such inference. The movement of a soul or a material thing requires some auxiliary condition in itself, without which its motion is not possible. Such a condition is the substance called *dharma*. *Dharma* can only favor or help the motion of moving objects; it cannot make a non-moving object move; just as in contrary, it is the substance that helps the restful states or immobility of objects, just as the shade of a tree helps a traveler to rest, or the earth supports things that rest on it. It cannot, however, arrest the movement of any moving object. *Dharma* and *adharmā*, though they are opposed, are also similar insofar as both are eternal, formless,

non-moving, and both pervade the entire world-space (*lokakasa*). As conditions of motion and rest, both are here in their technical senses, and not in their ordinary moral senses. Space, time, *dharma*, and *adharm*a are remote and passive instrumental conditions. Relative character is emphasized in this particular doctrine.

Check Your Progress III

Note: Use the space provided for your answer

1) What do you mean by the concept of substance? Write the classifications of substance?

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2) Provide a short note on the concept of soul or *jiva*?

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3) Write a short note on inanimate substances or *ajiva*?

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2.9 LET US SUM UP

The philosophy of Jainism lays a strong foundation for the beliefs, practices ,and generally, the religion of Jainism. The metaphysics of Jain philosophy deals with the fundamental distinction between the living and non-living beings. The epistemology of Jainism is non-absolutistic and is with the specific logic of *syadvada*. The ethics of Jainism deals with the three famous gems and the five great vows.

2.10 KEY WORDS

kevala-jnana: Intuitive knowledge, *Avadhi*: Clairvoyance, *Manahparyaya* Telepathy, *Kevala* : Omniscience, *Mati* : Sensuous Cognition, *Sruta* : knowledge obtained from authority, *syad* : relative to some standpoint, *vada* : doctrine or theory or view, ether : *akasa*, matter: *pudgala*, possesses qualities : *guna*, modes : *paryaya*, emancipated : perfect : *muktha*, bondage :*baddha*, capable of movement : *trasa*, immobile :*sthavara*, annihilation : *nirjara*,

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