UNIT 4  JAINISM

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4.0. OBJECTIVES

The main objective of this unit is to introduce students to the Jaina philosophical system in general. This chapter gives a small historical background of the school of Jainism with its development and different sects. It discusses the general characteristic features of Jainism and also examines its epistemology, metaphysics and ethics. Key notions like syadvada, saptabhanginaya and anekantavada are also analyzed in detail.

4.1. INTRODUCTION

The Jainas strongly believe in the teachings of the twenty four Tirthankaras. Rishabhadeva was the first Tirthankara. The last teacher or the Tirthankara was Vardhamana who was given the title Mahavira meaning ‘the great hero’. He is believed to have lived in the sixth century B.C. during the time of Buddha. Vardhamana was preceded by Parsvanatha who lived in the ninth century B.C. The remaining 22 teachers or the Tirthankaras are believed to have belonged to a much earlier period. The word Jaina came from the root word Jina which etymologically means a conqueror. It is the common name given to all the twenty four Tirthankaras since they all had conquered passions and thereby attained liberation.

The Jainas did not believe in God. They are liberated souls who were once upon a time in bondage but later through their own efforts became free, perfect, omniscient, omnipotent and blissful. In due course of time the followers of Jainism got divided into two well known sects namely Svetambaras and the Digambaras. Their basic distinction lies in the minor details of faith and practice. While the Svetambaras are more accommodative and down to earth the Digambaras are more strict and orthodox. The Digambaras hold that the followers of their sect should renounce all attachments, possessions and even clothes for that matter. On the other hand the Svetambaras insist that their followers should wear only white clothes.

The philosophical outlook of Jainism is based on a common sense type of realism and pluralism. For them the objects in this world are many in number and are also real. The world consists of
two kinds of substances namely jiva and ajiva. All living beings have a soul (Jiva). They give extreme importance to the concept of Ahimsa, Syadvada and Anekantavada.

4.2. EPISTEMOLOGY OF JAINISM

Consciousness is the inseparable essence of every soul. It is like the sun’s light capable of manifesting itself and also every other thing, unless it is obstructive. The reason is that omniscience is a natural property of the soul. In an unobstructed state, the soul is in a position to know things but when it is imprisoned in the body its nature of omniscience is obstructed. In other words it can know things only through the apparatus of the senses. The obstacles are created by the different karmas of the soul. These karmas obstruct the natural consciousness of the soul in different degrees and that determines the type of knowledge that the soul can get.

The Jainas admit twofold classification of knowledge — namely mediate and immediate knowledge. Under mediate knowledge they categorize inference and other such knowledge which are derived through the medium of some other knowledge. On the other hand immediate knowledge refers to perception. Perceptual knowledge is said to be immediate because we get knowledge of both external and internal objects through the senses and mind. In some cases the soul is also in a position to apprehend. In other words immediate knowledge is direct and mediate knowledge is indirect. Under immediate knowledge we have again two kinds namely ordinary immediate knowledge, extraordinary immediate knowledge; ordinary immediate knowledge, is that type of knowledge which the soul gets when bound by the karma obstacles. Under this type of knowledge we can classify mati jnana and sruta jnana. Mati Jnana includes any kind of knowledge obtained through the senses and mind. It even includes memory, recognition etc. On the other hand sruta jnana involves knowledge derived from an authoritative person or text. One may argue that listening to a person or reading a text is also a part of perceptual knowledge. Even sruta jnana can be brought under mati jnana but the Jainas reply that sruta jnana is different from mati jnana because it involves the text of an authoritative person, that is why it needs special mention.

Immediate knowledge is also classified as absolute or paramartika immediate knowledge or extraordinary immediate knowledge. This knowledge is possible after the soul is purged of the impurities namely the karma obstacles. In such a state the soul’s consciousness becomes immediately related to objects without the medium of the senses. In the case of ordinary immediate knowledge the soul is caged in the body and as a result, it can be related to objects and thereby know them only through the senses. In that stage the soul’s knowledge is not only obtained through the sense organs but is also guided by the karma obstacles. On the other hand, the soul is said to obtain extraordinary knowledge directly. We can explain this with an example. When a person is standing inside a room he can know the outside world only through the openings in that room such as windows, and doorways. Once the four walls that surround him are removed he can know much more about the world than what he knew earlier. In other words, man is able to see everything around him provided he is free. Similarly soul’s consciousness is capable of knowing everything directly but when it is inside the body it is limited, it is not in a position to exercise its full power. When ones karma obstacles are removed he is in the path towards extraordinary knowledge which of course is immediate par excellence. The Jainas talk about this in stages because this immediate extraordinary knowledge is not to be got overnight. It needs the gradual destruction of the karma obstacles. The Jainas mention three such stages as

(i) Avadhi
After the partial destruction of karmas one acquires the power of knowing objects which are too far away and obscure for the normal sense organs. This stage of extraordinary knowledge is *avadhi*. The second stage is *manah paryaya* wherein one has direct access to others' minds. This can happen only after that person overcomes hatred and jealousy. In other words, in the first stage, we are able to know some distant gross objects with a form. In the second stage we are able to know or probe deeper into subtle level. Finally when all karmas are destroyed completely, then absolute knowledge or omniscience arises. That stage is *kevala jnana*. Only the liberated souls possess this kind of extraordinary knowledge.

The Jainas accept three *pramanas* or sources of knowledge namely perception, inference, and testimony. Perceptual knowledge is direct which involves the sense organs and therefore acceptance of perception as an independent source of knowledge need not be elaborated. But definitely we must examine the refutation of Carvaka’s position by the Jainas regarding inference and testimony. The Jainas ask whether perception is a valid source of knowledge. Definitely according to Carvaka, perception is a valid source of knowledge because it is uncontradicted and at the same time not misleading. Now the Jainas point out that the reasons for the validity of perception itself shows that the Carvaka resorts to inferential knowledge. Furthermore even perceptual knowledge can at times be contradicted and misleading as in the case of the perception of a mirage. So the Jainas point out that if perception can be contradicted and misleading but still held as a source of knowledge why not inference and testimony be regarded as independent sources of knowledge.

Therefore according to Jainism the only reasonable conclusion that we can draw is that any source of knowledge, be it perception, inference or testimony, should be regarded as valid in so far as it yields knowledge that does not prove misleading. Therefore the criterion of validity should be the harmony of knowledge with the practical consequences to which that knowledge leads.

### 4.3. THE JAINA THEORY OF JUDGMENT OR SYADVADA

It is the conception of reality as extremely indeterminate which is the basis of *syadvada*. According to this theory every judgment is only partial or relative. The term “syat” is derived from the Sanskrit root “*as*” which means “to be”. The present tense form of this verb ‘*as*’ is ‘*asti*’ which can be translated as “is”. The potential mood of this verb form is ‘syat’ which means “may be”. The Jainas use this theory to signify that the universe can be looked at from many points of view and that each view yields a different conclusion. In other words they believe that there can be a variety of doctrines depending upon the points of view. This is known as *ane-kantavada*. This doctrine indicates an extreme caution and signifies an anxiety to avoid absolute affirmation and absolute negation. Here one must see the conditions under which this doctrine was passed in order to understand its significance. There were two important extreme views concerning reality. At one point of time namely the *Upanishadic* view and at another point the *Buddhistic* view. The *Upanishadic* view of reality upholds the concept of “Being”. On the contrary the Buddhists deny such a “Being”. According to Jainism both these theories are only partially true. So the Jainas consider reality to be so complex that every one of these theories is true as far as it goes. But none is absolutely true. So the Jainas make out a series of partially true statements without committing to any of these exclusively. This series is explained in seven steps
or sevenfold formula called saptabhanginaya. “Naya” means partial knowledge about some object while “bhangi” means different and “sapta” seven.

Judgment based on any partial knowledge is also called naya. When we consider every judgment to be unconditionally true then it leads on to quarrel. In this way the various schools of philosophy have come to quarrel with each other since they believe that their judgment of reality is final; when they realize that their knowledge is partial the conflict is no longer there. In view of this fact the Jainas insist that every judgment should be qualified by some words like “somehow” or “may be” so that the limitation of every judgment as also the possibility of other judgments is recognized. Thus syadvada is the theory which holds that every judgment is only partially true. Thus we have the judgment “the elephant is like a pillar” is changed into “may be or somehow the elephant is like a pillar”. On the basis of this theory the Jainas classify seven kinds of judgments though logic recognizes only two namely affirmative and negative. The seven types of judgments are as follows:

a) syat asti – ‘somehow S is P’. A jar is red
b) syat nasti – ‘somehow S may not be P’. A jar may not be red.
c) syat avaktavyam – ‘somehow S may be indescribable’. The redness of jar cannot be described adequately.
d) syat asti ca nasti ca – ‘somehow S may be or may not be P’. This argument does not involve contradiction. Normally logic considers a judgment to be contradictory only when it holds that ‘S’ is both ‘P’ and ‘not P’, because the same ‘S’ is ‘P’ from one angle and ‘not P’ from another angle. That is why this judgment is accepted by the Jainas.
e) syat asti ca avaktavyam ca – somehow ‘S’ is ‘P’ and is indescribable.
f) syat nasti ca avaktavyam ca- somehow ‘S’ is ‘not P’ and is indescribable.
g) syat asti ca nasti ca avaktavyam ca- somehow ‘S’ is ‘P’, ‘not P’ and indescribable. These seven steps form a part of what is known as saptabhanginaya or the seven fold judgments.

According to this theory every judgment is only partial or relative.

4.4. THE JAINA METAPHYSICS OR THE THEORY OF SUBSTANCE

Every substance has got innumerable characters of which some are positive and others are negative. As in common conversation so also in philosophy a distinction is made between the characters and that which possesses these characters. We call that which possesses characters as substance or dravya. The world consists of different substances. Each of these substances have qualities which are essential along with qualities that are accidental. The essential quality is called guna. The accidental quality is called paryaya. The essential qualities are those that remain in the substance as long as the substance exists. In other words they are inseparable from the substance. On the other hand the accidental qualities are those which come and go. In so far as the essential characters of the ultimate substance are abiding, the world is permanent. In so far as the accidental qualities undergo modifications, the substance also changes. According to Jainas both change and permanence are real. When we apply syadvada the seeming contradiction between change and permanence vanishes. The Jainas reject both kshanikavada (theory of momentariness of Buddhists) and reject nityavada (theory of permanence of the vedantins).

Substances can be classified as both extended and non-extended. Among substances time alone is devoid of extension. All other substances are considered to be extended. Extended substances are innumerable and are referred to by the general name astikaya because every substance exists like a body. Kaya means that which possesses extension. The word astikaya means anything that
occupies space or has some pervasiveness. Such objects which are extended are classified by the Jainas as animate (jiva) and inanimate (ajiva). We may call them as the living being or the non-living matter. The Jainas consider soul or jiva as an extended substance. This is not without reason. Normally we understand soul as being opposed to body; since body is extended we conclude that its opposite namely the soul is non-extended. But according to Jainism souls also expand and contract according to the dimensions of the body which they occupy. It is only in this sense that the Jainas regard souls to be extended. Even among such souls the Jainas differentiate between the emancipated and fettered souls. Once the souls are emancipated or liberated none of the impurities attach to them. That is the highest state of jiva. But the jiva has to transcend various levels before reaching this state. So the Jainas attribute such states to the souls in bondage. Fettered souls are either moving or immobile.

Among the non-moving fettered souls the Jainas consider those living in bodies made of earth, water, fire, and air or plants. All such non-moving substances (sthavara) have one-sensed, namely that of touch. On the contrary moving substances (trasa) are two-sensed namely worms, three-sensed like ants, four-sensed like bees and five sensed like man. This distinction among moving substances is based on the senses that are active. For instance in the case of worms the sense of touch and taste alone are at work. In the case of ants the senses of touch, taste and smell. That is why ants have been classified under three-sensed and similarly bees are four-sensed because they also have sight. The immobile living substances have the most imperfect kind of bodies when compared to the mobile living substances. The Jainas regard even the four elements as being animated by souls, that is the particles of earth etc have soul in the sense that there is consciousness present in them although this consciousness is not as differentiated as in the case of a higher being. We may call such substances as elementary. They just live and die. Their functions are not clearly demarcated, or well defined. These elementary lives are either gross or subtle. Gross objects are distinguished from subtle on the basis of their visibility and knowability. On the contrary the mobile living substances have bodies of different degrees of perfection.

Soul or jiva – Generally jiva is a conscious substance. It is also extendable in space because souls expand and contract according to the dimensions of the body. According to the Jainas the essence of soul is consciousness or in other words consciousness is present in the soul everywhere. The Jainas arrange the soul theoretically in a continuous series according to the degree of consciousness. At the highest end of the scale would be the perfect soul that has overcome all karmas and attained omniscience and at the lowest end would be the most imperfect soul such as the single sensed souls. In this state consciousness is in the dormant form due to the interference of karma obstacles.

The soul knows, performs, enjoys, suffers and illumines itself and other objects. Like a light it has no form of itself but it takes the form of the body. It is in this sense that the soul is said to occupy space in its pure states, the soul as infinite bliss and infinite power. Except a few souls all other souls are in bondage because of karma or matter which has been accumulated in the past. The Jainas view that consciousness or soul has extension and the soul primarily is a living being which has consciousness in every part of the living body. Consciousness is the essential quality of the soul.

Proofs for the existence of Soul:
1. The existence of the soul is directly perceived by experiences such as “I feel pleasure, pain” etc., when a quality is perceived we say that along with it a substance is also perceived.

2. We can also prove the existence of the soul from inference. If we take a body as an instrument there must be someone to control it and that which controls the body is the soul.

3. The body also performs many actions that are guided; this enables us to infer the existence of soul as the guiding factor.

4.5. INANIMATE SUBSTANCE (OR) AJIVA

Among the extended substances we have seen jiva and its various facts. Now let us take a look into another category of extendable substance namely the inanimate substance or ajiva. Even these substances occupy space and is referred to as astikaya. The Jainas classify this kind of substance into four namely, Pudgalastikaya, Akasastikaya, Dharmastikaya, Adharmastikaya

Pudgalastikaya

The word “pudgala” means matter and since it occupies space it is astikaya. Etymologically it means that which is liable to integration and disintegration. Material substances combine together to form larger wholes and can also break up into smaller and smaller parts. The smallest part of matter which cannot be further divided is called an atom (Anu). Pudgala is made up of such atoms. The Jainas call atoms and combination of atoms by this single term pudgala. All material substances are produced by the combination of atoms. Our bodies and objects of nature are such compounds of material atoms. So even they are called as pudgala. Even mind, speech and breath are products of matter. The atoms are eternal and possess qualities like touch, taste, smell and colour. Therefore we find these qualities in the compounds of atoms. Here according to Jainas, sound is not an original quality. It is an accidental modification of matter.

Dharmastikaya and Adharmastikaya

The terms dharma and adharma should not mislead us into thinking about merits and demerits. Instead these two terms are used to denote two kinds of inanimate substances which are known and proved inferentially. They stand for mobility and immobility. The Jainas argue that the movement of a fish in the water, though initiated by the fish, would not be possible without the medium of water. Here water is a necessary condition. Similarly the movement of any soul or material thing needs a necessary condition without which movement would not be possible. Such a condition is dharma. Nevertheless, dharma cannot cause movement in a non-moving object. It only favours the movement of objects in motion. On the other hand adharma is the substance that helps in the immobility of objects or the restful state of objects, just as the shade of a tree helps the traveler to take rest. However adharma cannot arrest the movement of any moving object. These two are pervasive in nature. In other words these two are passive conditions for movement and the state of rest respectively. Water cannot compel a fish to move nor can the shade compel a person to take rest. Similarly dharma and adharma do not compel movement and immobility actively but help objects to move or not to move passively. The necessity for admitting these two categories seems probably to have been felt by the Jainas on account of their notion that the inner activity of jiva or the atoms, require for its exterior realization the help of
some other entity. Moreover since the jivas were regarded as having inherent activity they would be found to be moving even at the time of liberation which is undesirable.

**Akastikaya or Space**

The function of akasa is to afford room for the existence of all extended substances. It is based on this category that the Jainas classify substances as astikaya. Soul, matter, dharma and adharma exist in space. The existence of space is inferred and not perceived because substances which are extended can have extension only in space, and that space is called akasa. Here akasa is a necessary condition. Likewise, if we say that substances are those that pervade, then there must be something that is pervaded. That which pervades is called substance while that which is pervaded is space. Jainas distinguish two kinds of space namely lokakasa and alokakasa. Lokakasa stands for space containing the world and alokakasa stands for empty space that exists beyond lokakasa.

**Time or Kala**

It is the only non-extendable substance according to the Jainas. Time makes possible continuity modifications etc. Like space time is also inferred. It is inferred as the condition without which we cannot speak about continued existence of things or modification of things. For instance mango became ripe implies that mango was in an unripe state at one point of time which became ripe at a later time. But time according to Jainas is non-extendable (anastikaya) because time is an indivisible substance. It cannot be characterized by space. It is irreversible. The Jainas distinguish between real time (i.e) paramartika kala and empirical time vyavaharika kala. Continuity or duration is the measure of real time. But on the other hand, changes of all kinds characterize empirical time. According to the Jainas empirical time is conventional i.e. divided into hours, minutes and seconds. It is limited by a beginning and an end. Real time on the other hand, is eternal and formless.

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**Check your Progress-I**

1. What is meant by dravya, guna and paryaya?

2. Write short notes on jiva.

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**4.6. JAINA ETHICS**

This is the most important aspect of the Jaina philosophy. For them metaphysics or epistemology is useful only in so far as it helps man to right conduct. What is meant by right conduct? According to the Jainas right conduct enables man to liberate himself from bondage. Bondage in Indian philosophy means the liability of the individual to birth and all consequent sufferings. But the suffering individual is a conscious substance (jiva) who possesses infinite perception, infinite knowledge, infinite power and infinite bliss. Despite these perceptions the soul suffers in birth because of karma obstacles. If the soul has to regain its inherent qualities then these obstacles
must be removed. This situation is like that of the sun’s light which becomes brighter and brighter as soon as the clouds are cleared. In order to know how these obstacles can be cleared let us analyze what these obstacles are in reality. The Jainas assert that the obstacles are constituted by matter particles which infect the soul and overpower its natural qualities. In other words we can say that body which is made up of matter particles (pudgala) is responsible for limiting the soul. Each body is made up of a particular combination of matter particles which depend on the soul’s passion. The karma or the sum of past life of the soul generates a craving which attracts particular pudgala to the soul. The soul becomes the efficient cause and pudgala becomes the material cause. It is our past karmas that determine the family in which we are born as well as the nature of our body such as its colour, shape, longevity, the number and nature of sense organs etc. For instance gotra–karma determines the family into which the soul is to be born and ayush - karma determines the length of life.

**Liberation**

Bondage, we have seen is the association of soul with matter and liberation therefore should be the complete dissociation of the two. This can be achieved by stopping the influx of new matter into the soul as well as by complete elimination of the old matter with which the soul has become already mingled. Passions of the soul lead to association. What is the cause of this passion? Passions spring from our ignorance about the real nature of our soul. It is knowledge that alone can remove ignorance. Therefore the Jainas stress the need for right knowledge of reality (samyag – jnana). Right knowledge is the detailed cognition of the real nature of ego and non-ego, which is free from doubt, error uncertainty etc. It can be obtained only by studying carefully the teachings of the omniscient Tirthankaras or teachers who have already obtained liberation and therefore are fit to lead others out of bondage. When do we accept a knowledge? Only when we have a preliminary belief in that. Then that preliminary faith should be supported by right knowledge again for having right faith based on general acquaintance (samyag- darsana) in support of right knowledge. Right faith does not imply that one must blindly follow the Tirthankaras. But one must have the right attitude of respect towards truth. Further by studying the teachings of the Tirthankaras one can strengthen his belief. But these two are rendered useless unless they are followed by rigorous practice. Right conduct is the third indispensable (samyag-caritra) condition of liberation. It is this that enables one to stop the influx of new karmas and also to eradicate old ones. It consists in the control of passions, senses, thought, speech etc. Right conduct is therefore described as refraining from what is harmful and doing what is good. The Jaina prescription for right conduct: One must follow the five great vows namely the panca-mahai-vrata for the perfection of right conduct. They are Ahimsa, Sathyam, Asteyam, Brahmacaryam and Aparigraha.

**Ahimsa**

It denotes abstinence from all injuries to life – either trasra or sivavara. That is why a Jaina muni breathes through a piece of cloth in order not to inhale or destroy any life in the air. It must be followed in thought, word and deed. That is why they practice extreme caution in speaking, walking or even in answering calls of nature so as to avoid injury to any life whatsoever. Sathyam: It is abstinence from falsehood. It is speaking what is true, good and pleasant. Otherwise truthfulness is of no use. To maintain this vow one must conquer greed, fear and anger. Asteyam: It refers to abstinence from stealing. Human life requires some form of wealth for their survival. Depriving another man of his wealth is morally wrong. By stealing his belongings it deprives him of an essential condition of life. Brahmacaryam: This pertains to
abstinence from sensual and casual pleasures. One must refrain himself from *karma* of any form altogether either in speech, talk or action. *Aparigraha*: This means abstinence from all kinds of attachments. It lies in giving up attachment for the objects of five senses.

Right faith, knowledge and conduct are inseparably bound up with one another and the progress and degeneration of the one affects the other two. A person must harmoniously develop all these three together. Only when the soul overcomes passions and *karmas* (both old and new) it becomes completely free from bondage to all forms of matter and reaches its inherent potentiality. It is finally here that the soul attains the fourfold path of perfection (*Ananta catustaya*) as follows: *Ananta Jnana* (infinite knowledge), *Ananta darsana* (infinite faith), *Ananta virya* (infinite power), *Ananta sukha* (infinite bliss). These three (right knowledge, right faith and right conduct) are known as *Triratnas* – or the three gems of Jainism.

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<th>Check Your Progress-II</th>
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<td>1. What is the cause of bondage according to Jainism?</td>
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<td>2. Discuss the Jaina concept of liberation.</td>
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4.7. LET US SUM UP

In this unit we have tried to give a detailed historical account of Jainism and an analysis into the various concepts of the Philosophy of the Jainism. We have discussed at first the Jaina epistemology. We have also analysed key concepts like *Syadvada*, *Anekantavada*, *Saptabhanginaya*, under the different kinds of judgments and finally have evaluated the concept and importance of *Ahimsa* along with the role of *Pancamahavrata*, in attaining liberation.

4.8. KEY WORDS

| Tirthankaras: | One who has conquered all passions, *raga* and *dvesa*. |
|-consciousness: | The inseparable essence of every soul. |
| Syadvada: | The theory that every judgment is relative. |
| Suptabhanginaya: | Seven different forms of judgment relating to nature of reality. |
| Substance: | One which possesses of some essential characters (*gunas*) and also changing modes (*paryaya*) |
| Astikaya: | Substances having extension. |
| Anastikaya: | Substances devoid of any extension. |
| Ahimsa: | Non-violence or non-injury to any living beings. |
**Anekantavada:** The metaphysical theory of reality as many–faced.

**Jiva:** Soul

**Ajiva:** Matter

**Triratna:** Right faith, Right knowledge and Right conduct (Three gems of Jainism)

### 4.9. FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

