

The HEART of JAINISM

Where Soul Meets Science

DAAJI

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ANANDA

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A Note to the Reader

This book explores Jain wisdom in relation to modern life. It is written for readers who want to understand the spirit of Jainism in a direct and accessible way. The aim is to bring its deeper principles into conversation with the questions, struggles and realities of the present.

There was a time when spiritual exploration flowed as a single stream, referred to as Sanatana Dharma. Over time, it took on different traditions, identities and labels. While these structures helped preserve knowledge, they also created divisions and rigidity.

Many readers rooted in the Jain tradition may find familiar ideas expressed here in a different light. This has been done so that younger readers and modern seekers can approach the subject more easily and with sincerity.

This book does not claim to be a doctrinal work or a final word on interpretation. It is a reflective work shaped by reverence for the tradition and by

a desire to make its inner depth more available to contemporary readers.

Some readers may agree with every part. Some may not. That, too, is part of the spirit of inquiry. Jain tradition has long made room for many-sided understanding, or *anekantavada*, and this work is offered in that spirit.

It is written with deep respect for the lineage of teachers, practitioners, monks, nuns, scholars and householders who have preserved this wisdom over the centuries.

The approach to the reader is simple: read with openness, look for the intention behind the language and engage with the book in a spirit of reflection.



INTRODUCTION

The Heart's Revolution

Jainism and the Revival of Ancient Wisdom

When I contemplate how human consciousness has evolved, Jainism stands out as a turning point in the spiritual evolution of all people. This ancient path, which may be the oldest ongoing organized spiritual tradition, gave people something remarkable: it encouraged them to look deeply within themselves.

Think of twenty-four strong people who were all born into warrior lineages and taught how to fight and win from a young age. Jain tradition places all these twenty-four Tirthankars in Kshatriya lineages, which are families of warrior rulers known for courage and discipline. Yet their battlefield was within: they conquered anger, pride and attachment. Something

extraordinary happened to each of them. The calm forms of these twenty-four Tirthankars send us a strong message today: ‘We are all meditating. Why not you too?’

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Through the power of meditation, these warriors transformed into living examples of unconditional love. No rule or pressure made the change happen. It was a natural progression of awareness into its optimal state. When someone reaches such a high level of consciousness, ahimsa—meaning non-violence in thought, word and deed—becomes second nature instead of something they have to learn. Jagjit Singh’s ghazal beautifully shows this truth: ‘*Sach muh se nikal jaata hai, koshish nahi karta!*’ Truth emerges spontaneously. Effort is needed only when you have to lie or cause harm. Once you reach your sahaj state, which is a natural, effortless state of being, life becomes as simple as it was meant to be.

Because it was so revolutionary, Jainism left a profound mark. At a time when people turned to the heavens for help, Jainism declared: ‘*There is no god to pray to. The journey is yours alone.*’ This wasn’t nihilism. It was a profound insistence on self-accountability. By removing the safety net of divine

grace, Jainism created something entirely new: a tradition that placed the mind at its centre and taught that real transformation comes from within. You are responsible for your actions. You shape your future. Depending on unseen forces is easier, but it is also a form of escape.

When I contemplate Kaivalya, the state of pure, undivided awareness beyond individuality, it is not really about being alone or the loneliness of a person cut off from others. In that state, even the feeling of ‘I’ as a separate witness falls away. What’s left isn’t *my* awareness or *your* awareness, but just awareness itself, with no centre or circumference.

Kaivalya is spoken of as something beyond even the most radiant of experiences. It is considered something distant, an image of an island of enlightenment, a place to arrive at after long journeys. Yet in Kaivalya, there is no arrival, no destination at all. The island of enlightenment disappears, leaving behind the boundless, infinite ocean.

In the end, no one saves you. What matters is the courage to face yourself fully. Perhaps this is why people began to speak of the spiritual warrior, the one whose battlefield is the kingdom within.

This inner journey led these spiritual warriors to something poignant. Ahimsa naturally arose as awareness deepened. Meditation shows you the interconnectedness of things. Nobody told the Tirthankars to stop eating meat. They were sensitive to the world around them and didn’t want to hurt anyone.

Even within the Jain practice, some aspects remained almost forgotten, awaiting the right moment for remembrance. Among them is a remarkable insight linked to Rishabha Devji, the first Tirthankar, whose vision carried a depth that would only be recognized thousands of years later. He was the seventy-third ancestor of Lord Ram Chandrajī of Ayodhya and taught his followers a holy practice called Raja Yoga, which used *pranahuti*, the Transmission of life force itself.

This was a revolutionary idea that consciousness could be awakened and that the Transmission of life's essence could facilitate the inward journey. *Dhyana*, in Sanskrit, can be understood as a union of two roots: *dhi* and *yana*. *Dhi* refers to higher intelligence or divine wisdom, as invoked in the Gayatri Mantra. *Yana* means a vehicle that carries one to a destination. When these two words come together, we arrive at the word *dhyana* that refers to the means through which consciousness reaches higher wisdom.

Rishabha Devji understood the importance of individual effort, and he also recognized a way to support that effort. He saw that the inner vehicle (*yana*) can be strengthened so that ordinary awareness rises to *dhi*, the state of higher wisdom. In this sense, *dhyana* is not limited to the act of sitting in meditation. It is the means by which higher wisdom is attained. One can witness the striking difference between *dhyana* performed with and without *pranahuti*.

‘Dhyana’ is a simple yet profound word that means ‘the way we reach higher wisdom’. This is the true meaning of dhyana. One can witness the striking difference between *dhyana* performed with and without *pranahuti*.

The reference to *pranasya pranah* or pranahuti can be found in the *Kenopanishad*.

The practice of pranahuti was kept secret for many years, like a river flowing underground, or one may say that the art of transmitting pranahuti was forgotten until the right time came for it to re-emerge. When Shri Ram Chandraji of Fatehgarh, known among his *satsanghis* as Lalaji, rediscovered this gift initially shared by Rishabha Devji and revived pranahuti, he unearthed an old treasure that had been hidden for a long time. Reviving pranahuti was a way to recall the Jain tradition’s most essential truths. Rishabha Devji had given his disciples the power to change their lives. Now, anyone who sought that power could receive it.

Heartfulness continues the same timeless stream found in Jainism. The discipline and self-reflection of the Tirthankars remain essential, and the inner journey, the deepening sensitivity and the natural unfolding of compassion stay ever relevant.

Pranahuti is back in practice, and seekers can now access what was always meant to be part of the spiritual journey. Jainism stresses the importance of personal effort and the same yogic Transmission that Rishabha Devji used to support that effort. This

Transmission helps us acquire the full potential of what was always there.

When we practise Heartfulness today, we follow the same ancient path as the Tirthankars, armed with the tools that time concealed and destiny has now unveiled. Meditation is still meditation. The journey inside is still the most important one. The goal is still to change how people think. The only thing that has changed is that we can now use pranahuti, the holy fuel that can speed up our journey without making it more challenging. Pranahuti works with what we do, like a sail that catches the wind while the rower still rows.

As we meditate with the help of pranahuti today, we pay tribute to both sides of the Jain tradition: a path of discipline rooted in compassion and yet rules of this discipline expressed through gentleness. Effort and grace have always belonged together from the beginning.

The Tirthankars who came after Rishabha Devji worked diligently to achieve their goals. This shows the strength of human will and dedication. In this way, Heartfulness is a return to Jainism's full original evolution.

As spiritual growth unfolds over time, what was hidden comes to light, what was incomplete becomes whole and eternal truth reveals itself anew in every age while remaining unchanged. Rishabha Devji's journey is still unfolding. It has grown over time, but it has always remained true to its roots, providing seekers with everything they were meant to have.

As a result, you no longer need to try to speak the truth (*satya*), practise non-violence (*ahimsa*) or act generously; you become honest and loving, and generosity flows from that state.

Reaching that height of awareness naturally brings truthfulness, compassion, contentment and focus. In other words, the horse should be in front of the cart, not the other way around.

The above statements perform a quiet pivot that is easy to miss. So, let me try to explain it in detail.

The first half speaks of actions: *to speak, to practise, to act*. These are verbs of effort. The second half speaks of states: *you become, you love, generosity flows*. The subject has shifted from one who does to one who is. Morality in the first half is a performance. In the second half, it is a condition of being.

The distinction matters because forced virtue always breaks. The person who resolves, on willpower alone, to be patient finds that the patience holds for two weeks and then shatters under the first real provocation. The Jain philosophers named the underlying tendencies the *kashayas* (कषाय), the passions. A *kashaya* cannot be defeated by suppression. It can only be dissolved at its source. Place a lid on a boiling cauldron, and the pressure builds. When the lid lifts, the eruption is harsher than the natural heat would ever have produced.

The deep philosophy states the principle plainly. Compassion is a by-product of meditation, never its object. When you cultivate compassion directly, you produce a performance. When you sit in silence, compassion arrives on its own, as fragrance arrives once

a rose has opened. The fragrance asks no permission. It is the rose's own nature becoming audible to the air.

The Jain tradition holds the same insight through the word *svabhava* (स्वभाव), the soul's native condition. Honesty, generosity, compassion and contentment: these are never installed. They are uncovered. They lie beneath the layers of impression, the way a diamond lies beneath earth. The task is a gradual uncovering, patient and unhurried.

Heartfulness describes the method. Morning meditation on the heart, evening cleaning of the day's impressions, bedtime prayer, and the quiet support of pranahuti (प्राणाहुति), yogic Transmission. The practice clears the *chitta* (चित्त). And virtues that willpower could never sustain begin to arise by themselves. Truthfulness, *satya* (सत्य). Compassion, *karuna* (करुणा). Contentment, *santosha* (सन्तोष). Focus, *ekagrata* (एकाग्रता). Each is a condition, never a performance.

The horse in the old image is you. The cart is the life you are living. Transform the horse, and the cart moves of its own accord. Try to push the cart while leaving the horse unchanged, and the cart wears down the one who was meant to be pulling it.



Part I

Questions and Foundations



The Meeting at the Sthanak

The marble courtyard of the old Jain Sthanak, a prayer hall in suburban Mumbai, was busier than usual. On most nights, older devotees came for *pratikraman*, but tonight the crowd looked different. A special dialogue on 'Jainism and Modern Life' had been announced, and there were young professionals, college students, and teenagers. A renowned Jain ascetic and teacher, Sadhavi Anandaji, known for her unique approach to teaching Jain philosophy, was waiting for them.

Arjun, who was twenty-eight years old, placed his laptop bag beside him and stretched out his legs on the cold marble floor. Priya sat nearby, fidgeting with her dupatta, unable to settle. Rohan, recently back from his MBA abroad, kept tapping on his phone until his grandmother asked him to stop. Around them, about thirty others waited, uncertain but

curious. When Sadhavi Anandaji entered the room, it fell silent. The faint rustle of her white robes was the only sound in the room. She wore no ornaments, none of the elaborate ritual clothing often associated with *sadhavis*. Instead, she wore simple clothes, and her face radiated a calm joy that immediately drew everyone's attention. She settled onto the low wooden platform and let her gaze move slowly across the room, her eyes warm and kind.

'Welcome,' she said. Her voice was warm, with a firmness that made people sit straighter. 'I can see you have questions. Good. Questions are where wisdom begins.'

Meera, a journalist in her early thirties, raised her hand right away. 'Sadhaviji, please forgive my directness, but why should we care about Jainism today? It seems so old and full of rules and restrictions. How does it affect our lives today?'

The group murmured in agreement.

Sadhavi Anandaji smiled. 'That's a fair question, Meera. But tell me, when you write about climate change, corporate ethics, or mental wellness, aren't you really talking about how to live with less harm, less greed, and more balance?'

'But that's not the same,' Meera said. 'Those are modern problems.'

The Sadhavi leaned forward. 'Are they? Around 2,500 years ago, Mahavir spoke of the interdependence of all life, which we now describe as ecology.'

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‘He urged restraint. Today, you call it sustainability and environmental preservation. He emphasized the importance of mental cleansing. You call it mental health. The ideas remain the same; only the language has changed.’

Arjun leaned forward. ‘But Sadhaviji, look at our neighbourhood. Jainism is disappearing. The old texts say that if even a small number of Mahavir’s followers had started families, there would be more than five million today. There are billions of people following Christianity and Islam. Where did we go wrong?’

‘What makes you think something went wrong?’ Sadhavi Anandaji answered. ‘Maybe Jainism was always meant as a path for sincere seekers rather than a mass movement. It has always valued depth over numbers. However, you do make a good point about how closed we are and how hard it is for us to speak in a language that the world understands.’

Dev, a young business owner, spoke with barely hidden frustration. ‘My parents want me to do all these things, but they can’t tell me why. Don’t eat after the sun goes down. Don’t eat root vegetables. Wear the *muhpatti*. Whenever I ask for a reason, they just say, “tradition”. For my generation, that kind of response is not enough anymore.’

‘Very good,’ said the Sadhavi. ‘You are thinking instead of merely following. Let’s take a look at these habits. Before electricity, people ate dinner by the light of a lamp. These lamps attracted insects, which often fell into the food. So, avoiding meals after sunset made perfect sense. The rule itself may not fit our times, but the spirit behind it still does.’

‘So, you mean we can change the rules?’ Priya asked, shocked.

‘We need to understand the spirit behind the rules. Would Bhagwan Mahavir want us to follow rules without question, 2,500 years later? The Jain principle of anekantavada requires us to view truth from various perspectives, including modern ones.’

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Kavya, a psychology student, spoke up. ‘But our monks and nuns go to great extremes. They walk barefoot and fast for long periods, among other austerities. To many of us today, these practices seem very severe. How should we understand them?’

Sadhavi Anandaji’s expression became thoughtful. ‘You raise an important question, Kavya. Such practices arise from discipline, renunciation and a sincere effort

to cultivate endurance and detachment. They were never meant as displays of suffering. Yet any tradition must remember that the outer form is meaningful only when it reflects inner transformation.'

'The same applies to mental life. Our scriptural debates can sometimes become absorbed in overly fine distinctions, which some scholars regard as a form of intellectual violence. If the mind remains harsh, physical non-violence by itself means very little.'

'What's the answer, then?' Rohan asked.

'We have to understand how people think and how spiritual principles fit into everyday life. People in ancient times had natural ways to release stress, such as working hard, dancing with others, and engaging in creative activities. Today, we have to make that effort consciously. We cannot retreat from the world. We also have to evolve along with it.'

Shreya, an environmental activist, changed the subject. 'Jain ecology is far ahead of its time. But why don't we lead environmental movements? We talk about *jiva* in water and air, but where are Jains when it comes to climate change?'

The Sadhavi said, 'It is because we've become so focused on our own purity that we've forgotten about social engagement. The early Tirthankars worked to improve society. They built communities, established moral business practices, and promoted education. Over time, we reduced that broad vision into a checklist of rules.'

'My boyfriend wants to know why many Jains are wealthy businesspeople if we believe in non-possession,'

said Anita, a fashion designer. ‘It seems like we’re being hypocritical.’

The Sadhavi smiled. ‘That’s the old paradox. Aparigraha doesn’t mean poverty. It means freedom from attachment. A business person who earns honestly, provides work for others, and uses their wealth well may live that truth more fully than someone who owns nothing but is attached to their poverty. It’s not what you possess that matters but whether it possesses you.’

Harsh, a philosophy student, spoke slowly. ‘Sadhaviji, Western philosophy values logic and experience. Jainism speaks of knowledge and Kaivalya. How do we bring together these different ways of seeing the world?’

‘Think about this,’ Sadhavi Anandaji said. ‘Modern neuroscience suggests that what we see and hear is only a small part of reality. We can only see certain ranges of light and hear certain ranges of sound. Kaivalya suggests that consciousness can transcend these limits. It is not opposed to science. It reaches beyond what science knows today. Some interpretations of quantum physics suggest that the observer’s awareness can shape what is observed.’

Harsh frowned slightly. ‘But that’s still just a theory.’

The Sadhavi replied, ‘Jain thinkers discussed concepts of atomism and the eternal nature of matter long before modern science. They spoke about paramanu (atoms) and how they combine to form matter. This is mentioned in texts such as the *Tattvartha Sutra* and the *Bhagavati Sutra*. They thought of time as

relative, space as infinite and the universe as eternal. These are ideas that physics has only recently come to understand.'

Priya steered the conversation back to real-life problems. 'How can we make Jainism interesting to young people without losing its essence?'

'By showing why it matters,' Sadhavi Anandaji said with conviction. 'When young people see that *samyak darshan* is in line with meditative awareness backed by neuroscience, they connect. They get involved when they see ahimsa as a means of protecting the environment and animals. Anekantavada gains meaning when it is used to settle disagreements in our divided world.'

'But won't traditionalists fight back?' Deepak, whose family was orthodox, asked.

'Yes, change does cause problems. But don't forget that Mahavir was a revolutionary. He went against Brahmanical supremacy, included women and people from all castes, and spoke in a language that everyone could understand instead of only Sanskrit. Jainism is progressive because it looks for truth beyond what is normal.'

Meera, the journalist, looked up from her notes. 'What about habits? And Jain meditation is so dull. There is no music, movement, or any sense of joy.'

The Sadhavi asked, 'Who told you that Jain meditation has to be joyless? Yes, *kayotsarga* involves being still, but *preksha dhyana* also involves breathing exercises, body awareness, and colour visualization. We can apply what modern neuroscience calls neural

plasticity to understand how these methods work. Ancient Jains used mantras and visualizations. Discipline and joy can exist together.’

‘The purpose of dhyana is to allow our consciousness to expand. When one meditates with the help of pranahuti, a subtle yogic Transmission of life energy, the need for external aids, such as mantras, japam, or music, becomes unnecessary. Young people should approach it like Bhagwan Mahavir: with a scientific mind. Try various meditation methods, with and without pranahuti, and confidently draw your own conclusions based on your experience.’

Nikhil, a civil servant, said, ‘This sounds very different from what traditional monks teach.’

Sadhavi Anandaji said, ‘But the essence remains the same. A traditional monk preserves the teachings. I help make them accessible. Both roles are necessary. They keep the teachings pure; we help others to walk the path easily. Neither is higher nor lower, just different views within anekantavada.’

The mood in the room had changed. People who had been doubtful were now very interested. Frustration gave way to hope.

Vidya, who had been silent until then, spoke softly. ‘How do we start? I want to practise in a way that makes sense, but I don’t know where to start.’

The Sadhavi said, ‘Choose one principle that feels close to you. Do it regularly for a month.’

‘If it is ahimsa, start by paying attention to what you eat.’

‘If it is aparigraha, work on clearing up your mind of everyday clutter.

‘If you’re interested in anekantavada, try to look at things from more than one point of view. Make it more than just an idea.

‘Meditate with pranahuti.

‘Clean the daily accumulation of complexities and impurities that you may have collected in your consciousness, knowingly or unknowingly.

‘Offer a prayer just before you go to bed in a supplicant mood. Contemplate the meaning of the prayer and go to sleep.’

‘Will you lead us again?’ many people asked at once.

Sadhavi Anandaji promised, ‘We’ll meet once a week. But more importantly, you’ll support each other. Share your experiences, ask questions, and form study groups. Listening is no longer enough. This is the time to explore for yourselves. And before we finish, let me share something important.

There is a natural progression in learning: Shravanam, Mananam, and Nidhidhyasan.

These three form a systematic approach:

Shravanam: First, we hear the truth.

Mananam: Then, we think about removing doubts.

Nidhidhyasan: Finally, we meditate until what we have understood becomes part of how we live.

All three are essential on the path to *moksha* (liberation). They transform information into understanding and understanding into wisdom.

Jainism speaks of a threefold path known as the Ratnatraya or the Three Jewels:

- Samyak darshan (Right perception)
- Samyak jnana (Right knowledge)
- Samyak charitra (Right conduct)

According to this, faith, understanding, and action are the basis of liberation. The Vedantic triad is a helpful parallel, but the Ratnatraya is Jainism's foundation.'

Arjun asked one final question. 'How should we relate to other religions? It seems like Jains stand apart.'

A gentle smile touched the Sadhavi's face. 'That's a thought provoking question to end with,' she said. Anekantavada in Jainism makes us natural bridge-builders. Truth can be seen from multiple perspectives. Instead of separating ourselves, we should open conversations with people of different faiths. Our principle of *parasparopagraho jivanam* (mutual interdependence) also applies to communities, religions and societies.'

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As the session drew to a close, no one hurried to leave. People got together, exchanged numbers, formed study groups, and discussed the ideas that had been shared. Their old Sthanak felt alive.

Sadhavi Anandaji watched happily. These young people weren't rejecting tradition; they were just trying to understand it. They weren't rebels, but reformers. They weren't sceptics, but seekers.

Priya came forward. 'Sadhaviji, you've given us hope that we can be true Jains and still be modern.'

'Beta, you already are,' the Sadhavi smiled. 'Your questions show more respect for the Tirthankars' search for truth than blind faith ever could. Keep in mind that "Mahavir" means "great hero". Heroes don't follow paths; they make their own.'

As the group left for the night, they didn't carry the burden of old traditions. Instead, they carried the lightness of living wisdom. The old path had new feet.

A quiet revolution had begun.



The bull, the symbol of the first Tirthankar, Rishabha Dev, reminds us to live a life of balance where material life and spiritual growth are in harmony.

