

JAIN CONCEPT OF REALITY WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO WESTERN AND INDIAN PHILOSOPHY

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Reality as per Western and Indian philosophy

Since the dawn of civilization, men in different times and different climes, have tried to solve the riddle of the universe. They have tried to find out what the universe was, what was its origin and destiny, its size and shape, who created it, why how and when? The result of these deliberations has given rise to number of theories that have taken the form of different philosophical schools. The answer given by the different schools of thought are at considerable variance from each other, sometimes even contradictory, and the mystery has only deepened rather than getting resolved.

Philosophy means thinking about the universe. Our minds are always in search of the ultimate search for the truth. What is the ultimate reality of the word is the root question and all philosophers and philosophies have attempted to give the so called final answer. Human mind proceeded to think on the subtle at the root of the gross objects. This led to the rise of numerous questions in its mind. Just as several questions arose in the human mind with regards to the deep and extremely subtle form of the external world and the general rules that govern it, several questions arose in the human mind also with the regard to the deep and extremely subtle form of the inner world. The rise of these questions is precisely the first step to the birth of philosophy.

When was this external universe, evidently changing every movement, born? From what was it born? Was it born on its own or some other force gave birth to it? If it is not born, was this universe just the same in the past and is so in the present? With regard to the internal universe also similar questions arose. Which is that element which enjoys this external universe or ponders over it? Is this element without a beginning or born of some cause some – time?

Idealism and Realism

It will not be improper to mention that the entire metaphysical world is divided into Idealism and Realism. If we want to study the essential features of philosophy, we will have to establish a close contact with the main trends of Idealism and Realism. Without a comprehensive and systematic study of these two isms, we cannot grasp the essence of philosophy. Although it seems that Idealism and Realism represent two apparently different lines of approach to the philosophy of life and the universe, yet a tendency to reconcile them is not absent. It has begun in recent years to be thought that the difference between these two currents is not so much in their goal as in their presuppositions and methods of approach.

(a) Idealism

As per Idealism the mind only determines the objects and does not create them, determination and creation are two different things. What needs emphasis at this place is that true Idealism has never disputed the existence of external world.¹ Now the point is quite clear. There is no difference between the Idealistic and Realistic creeds is so far as the reality of material world is concerned; for both there is an external world which is not the creation of our own minds. The defect, as the Idealistic holds, of realism lies in the fact that it does not realize the universe in its completeness. There have been different Idealistic views in Western and Eastern philosophies as follow:

1. Plotonic Ideailsm
2. Idealism of Berkeley
3. Idealism of Kant
4. Bradley on Idealism
5. Idealistic Attitude of Bosaoquet
6. Madhyamika School of Buddhism
7. Yogacara School of Buddhism

Some thinkers maintain that a theory is often called Idealistic in so far as it under estimates the temporal and spatial aspects of the real universe. Some

philosophers are convinced that term Idealism has been used to cover all these philosophies which agree in maintaining that spiritual values have a determining voice in the ordering of the universe.² Others hold that according to Idealism, spirit is terminus and quem of nature.³ Idealism is the belief or doctrine according to which thought is the medium of the self-expression of reality. In other words, reality is such as much necessarily express itself through the ideal or ideals that are organic to the knower's intellectual equipment which may be called thought or reason.⁴ **The mind of the man is the organ through which reality expresses itself; and if it is certain that man alone has the capacity to interpret experience through intellectual ideals, then it follows that it is man alone who can be the organ to reality. He possesses a unique position in the determination of the universe.**

(b) Realism

Realists do not regard only one reality as valid. They establish the theory of the reality of physical objects independent of and entirely different from any mind, intellect, experience, consciousness, individual or spirit. Consciousness is different from its object. The object of a sensation is not the sensation itself. The nature of consciousness is quite different from the nature of material objects. Consciousness is the essence of spirit, i.e., mind, while material objects exist outside the mind. How can these two absolutely different realities be identical? "If consciousness alone" is real, what necessity is of the existence of external objects? It is the external and objective reality that makes a distinction between the two. There have been different Realism views in Western and Eastern philosophies as follow:-

1. Monistic Realism
2. Dualistic Realism
3. Pluralistic Realism
4. Pragmatic view of Realism
5. Conception of Neo-Realism
6. Theory of Immanence
7. Theory of Independence

8. Theory of Critical Realism
9. Selective and Generative Realism
10. Purva Mimansa
11. Sankhya School
12. Ramanuja's Position
13. Vaibhasika and Sautrantika Schools
14. Charvak School
15. Jainism

The general conception of Realism is that whatever is, is real in the sense that it exists and functions independently of any mind and its interference whatsoever. The mind may or may not be present there. Its existence is quite indifferent to the real. Realism seems to represent the most primitive and natural tendency of thought to which what is outside, is first to appeal. It takes the clear and distinct view of reality as it appears. In Western philosophy, as we find, the first Greek philosophers were realists making either water or air or fire to be the ultimate principle of the world existing independently of the mind, and the world with all its complex contents was supposed to owe its origin and growth to this principle.

Jain Concept of Reality

Amongst the multitude of philosophies Jain philosophy provides answer to this questions that appear simple yet logical and convincing . **According to Jain metaphysics the universe is an uncreated entity that has always been in existence and shall always be there. There was neither any beginning of the universe nor is there going to be any end.** In other words neither the universe was created at any time nor will it be destroyed, there being no origin in the past nor any end in the future. Since the universe was never created, the question of creation or a creator do not arise.

All the philosophical problems based upon the conception of universe. No school of thought devices the existence of universe but each tries to prove it by its own point of view. In the Bhagawati Sutra, a question is asked by Gautama in

connection with the conception of universe. Lord Mahavira replied in a direct manner. The conversation is as follow :- Gautama: “O Lord ! What is this universe” ?

Mahavira : “ O Gautama ! this universe is composed of five extensive substances. They are medium of motion, the medium of rest, space, soul and matter.”⁵

In this conversation time is not regarded as a separate substance but is included in both the conscious and non-conscious substances. In some chapters of Bhagwati-Sutra , Time is mentioned as a separate entity.⁶ This two fold classification shows that there are two schools of thought in Jainism. One believed in existence of five extensive substances and the other conceived the universe as composed of six substances. The latter added Time as a separate and independent entity to the five extensive existences without regarding it as an extensive reality. This is a rough estimate of the conception of universe in the Jain canons.

The Jain thinkers have mentioned the word “Sat”, “tattva”, “artha”, padartha”, and “tattvatha” as synonyms for the world reality. They generally did not make any distinction among substance, reality, existence etc. The other Indian systems did not do so in the same sense. In the Vaisasika-Sutra, all the six viz, Substance, quality, action, generality, particularity and inherent relationship are called padarthas, but the term artha reserved only for three padarthas viz., substance, quality and action.⁷ The Naiyayikas call the sixteen principles by the name of sat.⁸ The Sankhya System regards Prakrti and Pursha as tattvas. In spite of being a school Realism Jainism did not make any difference among Reality, Existence, Substance, Object etc.

In Jain thought the shape of universe has been described as that of the figure 8 or a man standing akimbo which is tapering at bottom, middle and top with bulges in between. **The dimension from the top to bottom has been described as 14 Rajjus.** Now the Rajju has got incalculable yet finite dimension. The main differentiating feature between the universe and non-universe is that while the latter is only space the former has got five more elements sharing in the eternity in addition to space-which are:

- i. The living or animates (souls)
- ii. Matter

- iii. Time
- iv. Medium of motion
- v. Medium of rest

Whenever these six elements exist that is the limit up to which the universe extends and beyond, where only space exists, it is non-universe.

According to Umasvati- the prominent Jainacharya the definition of reality is “Sat” i.e. existence.⁹ He did not use the term ‘tattva’ but use the word “dravya” i.e. substance of reality. We have already seen that there is no difference between substance and reality. Reality is substance and substance is reality. In this way, the primary and essential criterion of reality is existence or sata. That which exists is real. In other words, existence is reality or reality is existence. Considering from this point of view, it can be asserted that “all is one” because all exist.¹⁰ This view is taken to be very much similar to Upanisads. In the Jain canon there are some references that indicate this view. As we find in the Sthananga-Sutra: “one soul”, “one universe” etc.¹¹ This conception of oneness is considered to be valid only from the view point of ‘sangrahanaya’. This view point of the Jains reaches near the Absolute Idealism of Indian philosophy and the “experience” of Bradley. Our intellect cannot describe this reality in whole. It can be realized by intuition which is possessed by an omniscient self. Both conscious and non-conscious substances are the attributes of this reality, according to Jainism. Existence is neither “conscious alone” nor “matter alone.” When we analyze reality in this fashion, our stand-point comes in clash with the Absolute Idealism and the absolute materialism. **The Jains hold that existence is all-inclusive.** If you say that it is nothing but pure consciousness, you commit a blunder, if you describe it as pure matter, you are guilty . It is neither sheer consciousness nor mere matter, both consciousness and matter are included in it.

Umasvati defines sat as possessing, origination, decay and permanence.¹² When a substance, conscious or unconscious, originates without living its own nature, it is called origination. As for instance, jar originates from clay without living the nature of clay. **Decay is the name of leaving the former mode.** As for example, clay lives its former mode when it becomes jar. **Permanence is the essential**

characteristic of a substance which remains unchanged in both the conditions viz., origination and decay. It is neither created nor destroyed. It is eternal. It is changeless. As for instance, the essential nature of clay remains unchanged among its various modes.¹³

Six Ultimate Substances

Jains believe in the existence of six ultimate real substances as under. These six substances (elements, dravyas) constitute the whole universe.

S. No.	Substance	Meaning
1.	Dharmastikaya	Medium of motion
2.	Adharmastikaya	Medium of rest
3.	Akasastikaya	Space
4.	Jivastikaya	Psychical Existence (Soul)
5.	Pudgalastikaya	Physical Existence (matter and energy)
6.	Kala	Time

The first five substances are called astikaya, because each of them is a homogeneous continuum composed of multiple parts. Kala (i.e. time) is also included in the above list as the sixth substance, but it is not “astikaya”. The term astikaya is a compound word made up of “asti” and “kaya”, which respectively mean “(real) existence” and “extensive body”. The term astikaya” thus means a real extensive magnitude i.e. having plurality of parts (pradesa) in its constitution. The primal attribute of “Existence” is the fundamental element of the nature of an astikaya (existent). An existent is not a mental or objective reality. While such concepts as: Substance, attribute etc. are no doubt the ways in which the mind works up the data of experience, but this does not mean that they are only mental and have not extra mental reality. Kala, the sixth substance, have neither extension in space nor plurality of parts

and is, therefore, not an astikaya, each of those substances continues to exist as an entity eternally, and though they co-exist spatially and temporally, they are mutually inconvertible.

(1) Dharmastikaya and (2) Adharmastikaya

These are the non-physical real substances as the media of motion and rest respectively. The existence of these two as real is not accepted by any other metaphysical school of thought. The classical physics however, had accepted the existence of substance called ether as a medium of motion. We shall, for the sake of convenience, translate these terms as positive and negative ethers respectively. Each of them is a single, individual, homogeneous continuum pervading entire occupied universe (loka), but does not extend beyond it. In fact, they are the causes of the finiteness of the loka. Temporary they are beginningless and eternal. Being non-physical and non-corporeal (amurta) they are devoid of sense qualities of smell, taste etc., and therefore, imperceptible to the sense organs and physical instruments. Immobile themselves they passively assist the motion or rest of mobile or stationary objects; positive ether, (dharmastikaya) is that of the static state. Not even the minutest vibration is possible without the assistance of positive ether. Hence, where there is no ether, there is neither psychological nor physical existence.

3. Akasastikaya

Know that which is capable of allowing space to the jivas, pudgala, dharma, adharma and kala to be akasa, according to Jainism. Akasa is eternal, all pervasive and all the objects of the universe exist in it and it has no form.¹⁴ It is a single substance having infinite pradesas, hence it is called astikaya. Akasastikaya is of two divisions: lokakasa and alokakasa. Loka is that space in which dharma, adharma, kala, pudgala and jivas exist. That which is beyond lokakasa is called alokakasa¹⁵. Jainism believe in two varieties of space. One is called lokakasa or that space in which all other substances exist. This variety of space is called “Universe” in our ordinary language. Jainism doesn’t believe in this universe-space only but admits space beyond the universe as well. It hold; that the universe space is only lokakasa.

There is alokakasa as well which is pure space, in this space, no substance of the universe exists, hence it is called alokakasa. This division is not in akasa itself but it is due to its relation with the other five substances. Hence akasa is a single substance which has infinite pradesas. When it is relatively divided into lokakasa and alokakasa, lokakas has innumerable pradesas, while alokakasa has infinite pradesas. Having taken innumerable pradesas i.e. the pradesas of lokakasa from akasa as a whole, the remaining pradesas of alokakasa are still infinite.¹⁶ **Space is self supported, while the other substances are not. They are accommodated in it.**

4. Jivastikaya (the animate beings)

The most important rather, central element or substance of the universe is the animate living substance also called the soul or Jiva. These are infinite number of souls each of which has a separate and self sufficient entity. They have been co-existent with the universe and thus they are also beginningless and endless. **At the same time number of souls in the universe like all other substances can neither be increased nor can it be decreased. The soul neither dies nor takes birth, as is apparent when a body dies or takes birth. Soul only changes the body expanding or contracting to suit the body it occupies like the light of a candle.**

While a soul defies complete description it has been mentioned as a formless entity the central quality of which is consciousness (Gyan). The attribute distinguishes the soul or animate being from the other five constituents of universe which have no consciousness. The souls which have realized their true nature, i.e. infinite knowledge, happiness, bliss, etc. are the liberated souls. In the second category are mundane souls which are circulating in the universe and which may be trying to achieve perfection or liberation. Mundane souls are of different classes according to the level of consciousness outwardly manifested by their senses - one sense (touch), two senses (touch and taste), three senses (touch, taste and smell), four senses (touch, taste, smell and sight) and five senses (touch, taste, smell, sight and hear). The reason for transmigration of soul is its association with matter which overpowers the inherent qualities of the soul (by assuming microscopic forms like waves which are known as

karmas). Again this association of the soul and the karma is beginningless, so much so that under the influence of karma the soul has forgotten its real powers.

5. Pudgalastikaya (Matter)

The second important element of universe is matter or Pudgalastikaya. Non-living, inanimate and non-conscious matter has form and can be touched, tasted, seen and smelled. Actually this is the only element with form out of six substances constituting the universe. The smallest particle of matter described in Jain Philosophy to be so fine that we have to adopt its oriental name i.e. the Parmanu. Parmanu, however is the indivisible minuteness particle of the matter and number of parmanus when combined form a pudgala. While the qualities of soul are consciousness, knowledge, perfection, peace and bliss as also formlessness, the characteristic of matter are lifelessness (inanimateness) and form consisting of touch, shape, sound, taste, smell, and color. Though the smallest particles, the parmanus, are very minute, they can combine with each other thus forming different combinations of huge proportions. Jainism recognizes these six combinations of matter which vary from:

1. Fine-fine (parmanu pudgala itself)
2. Fine (waves which cannot be perceived by senses)
3. Fine-gross (sound)
4. Gross-fine (visible things like sun shine)
5. Gross (liquids)
6. Gross- gross (solids)

Everything that is visible in the universe is one form or another of parmanus in any one of the six combinations mentioned above. Though the parmanus may change form they are essentially permanent entities without any beginning or end. **The number of pudgalas in the universe is infinite but again the number can neither be added nor reduced.** The association of matter with a soul is beginningless but once they are divorced it is a final separation. There can be no further association of matter with a liberated soul. However, the parmanus or matter should not be considered as the villains of the piece. It is the soul itself which attracts the pudgalas

as which bind it. It is again for the soul to free itself from the bondage of pudgalas by its activities, the parmanus cannot associate with the soul suo moto.

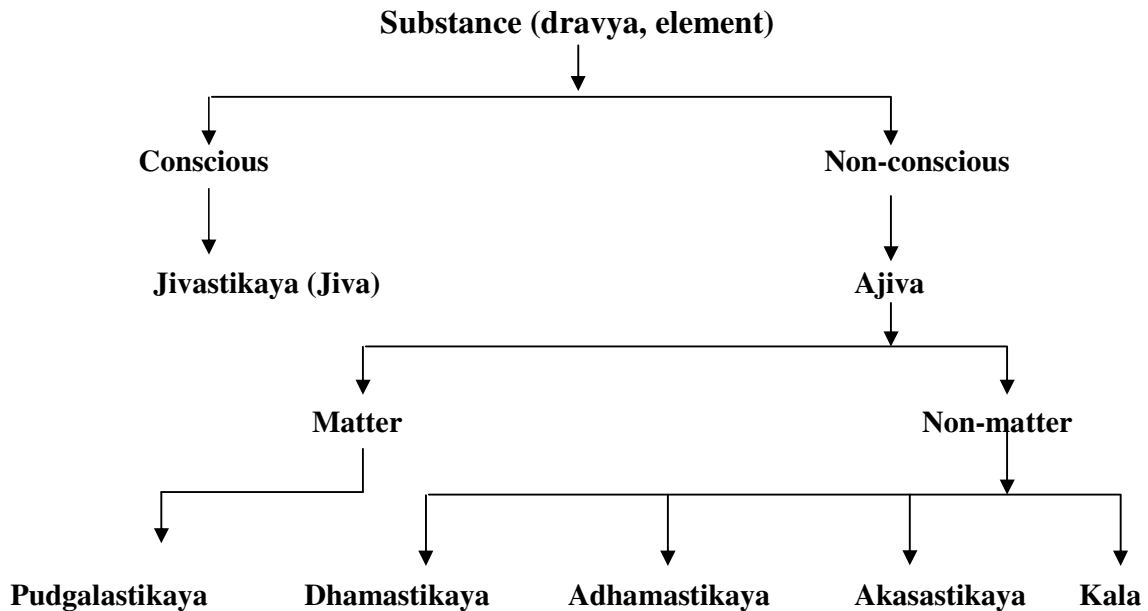
6. Kala (Time)

The last substance constituting the universe is time, there being no time in non-universe. The distinctive mark of time is its passage and by this quality time causes modification in other substances viz. Soul, matter etc. Time is nonmaterial and has no color, smell, touch or taste. Time is eternal but consists of units. The smallest unit being a 'samaya' which is the time taken by one pudgala to travel from one unit of space to the next unit of space. The next bigger unit is nimisha which is equal to innumerable samayas-in practical terms it is the time taken in raising an eyelid. The Jain measures of time are as under:

1. Samaya – The smallest unit as explained above.
2. Nimisha - Innumerable samaya as explained above
3. Kashtha - 15 nimisha
4. Kala - 20 kashtha
5. Ghati - 20 calais and a little over
6. Muharta - 2 Ghatis
7. Day and Night - 30 muhurta
8. Month - 30 days and night
9. Year - 12 months.

It may be mentioned in passing that since the universe is beginningless, time equivalent to innumerable Sagropams has already passed and will continue adinfinitum. However, there are time cycles manifesting themselves which divide the age of the universe in different parts of the time. Of this one cycle consists of two kalas - Avasarpani and utsarpani which are further divided into six Aras of each kala. Needless to add that millions of such Aras and Kalas have passed and will continue to do so.

Six ultimate substances constituting whole universe can be tabulated as follow:



Conclusion:

Philosophy means thinking about the universe. Our minds are always in search of the ultimate search for the truth. What is ultimate reality of the word is the root question and all philosophies have attempted to give the so called final answer. It will not be improper to mention that the entire metaphysical word is divided into Idealism and Realism. If we want to study the essential features of philosophy, we will have to establish a close contact with the main trends of Idealism and Realism. As per Idealism the mind only determines the objects and doesn't create them, determination and creation are two different things. There have been different Idealistic and Realistic views in Western and Eastern philosophies. The general conception of Realism is that whatever is, is real in the sense that it exists and functions independently of any mind and its interference whatsoever.

According to Jain metaphysics the universe is an uncreated entity that has always been in existence and shall always be there. There was neither beginning any of the universe nor is there going to be any end. All the philosophical problems are based upon the conception of universe. No school of thought devices the existence of universe but each tries to prove it by its own point of view. As per Load Mahavira

(founder of Jainism) this universe is composed of five extensive substances – medium of motion (Dharmastikaya), the medium of rest (Adharmastikaya), space (Akasastikaya), soul (Jivahtikaya) and matter (Pudgalastikaya). The latter time was added as a separate and independent entity to the five extensive existences. In Jain thought the dimension of universe (loka) from the top to bottom has been described as 14 Rajjus.

According to prominent Jainacharya Umasvati, the definition of reality is ‘sat’ i.e. existence. According to him ‘sat’ means possession of origination, decay and permanence. When a substance, conscious or unconscious, originates without living its own nature, it is called origination. Decay is the name of leaving the former mode. Permanence is the essential characteristic of a substance which remains unchanged in both the conditions viz., origination and decay.

Jains believe in the existence of six ultimate real substances (elements, dravyas) which constitute the whole universe as under:

S. No.	Substance	Meaning
1.	Jivastikaya	Extensive, conscious, immaterial substance.
2.	Pudgalastikaya	Extensive, unconscious, material substance.
3.	Dharmastikaya	Extensive, unconscious, immaterial substance in the form of the medium of motion.
4.	Adharmastikaya	Extensive, unconscious, immaterial substance in the form of medium of rest.
5.	Akasastikaya	Extensive, unconscious, immaterial substance in the form of space.
6.	Kala	Non-extensive, unconscious immaterial substance in the form of time.

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