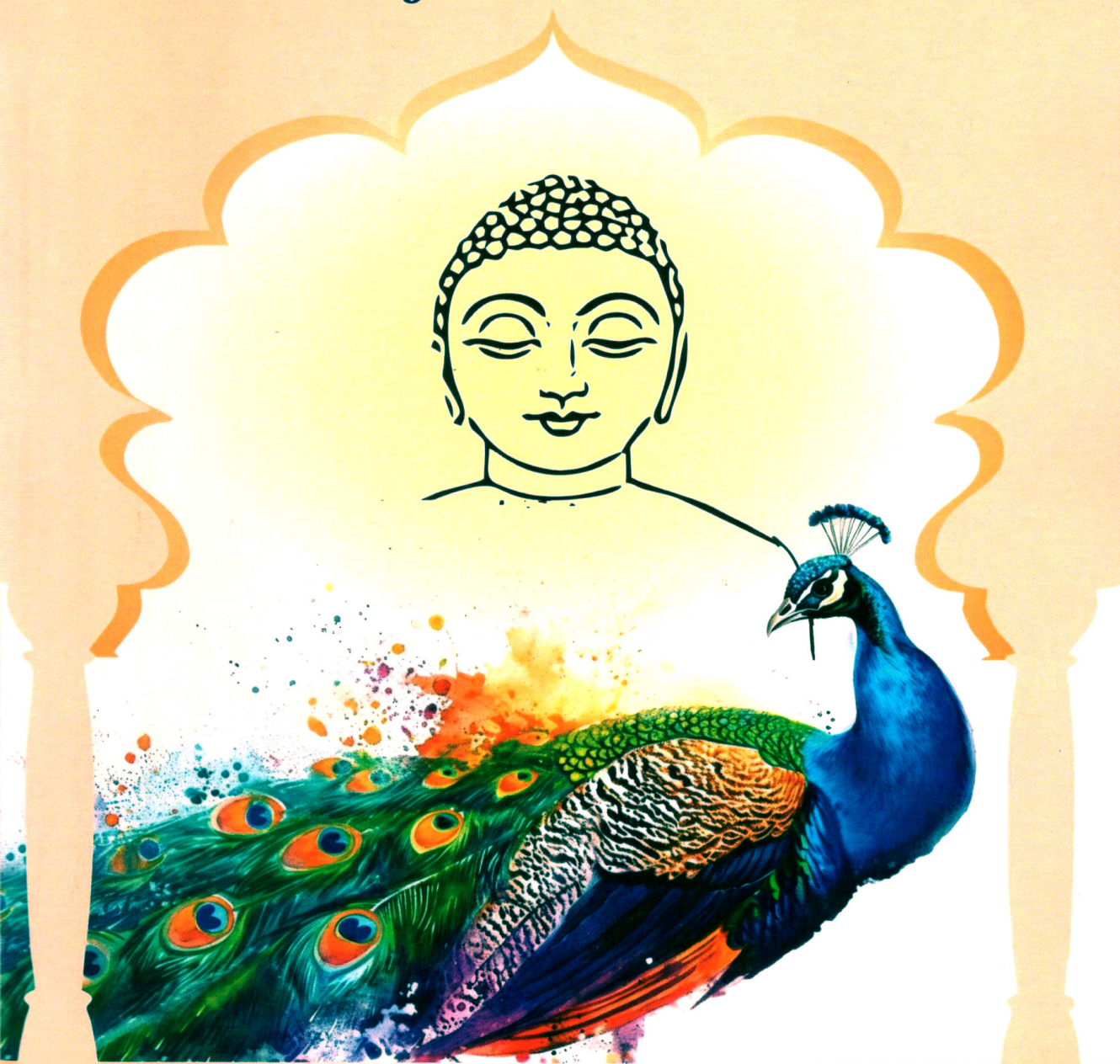


Applications of **MLBD** **ANEKĀNTAVĀDA**

Jain Pluralism



Edited by
SHUGAN C. JAIN • PREETI RANI JAIN

Applications of Anekāntavāda

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Foreword

A Sanskrit aphorism from the Rigveda states: *Ekam Sat Vipraha Bahudhā Vadanti*, meaning that truth is one, but different people understand and speak it differently. Similarly, the term *anekāntavāda* is translated by scholars as the doctrine of “many-sidedness,” “non-one-sidedness,” or “many-pointedness.” The origins of *anekāntavāda* can be traced back to the teachings of Mahāvīra (599–527 BCE), the 24th Jain Tīrthaṅkara. The dialectical concepts of *syādvāda* (conditioned viewpoints) and *naṇavāda* (partial viewpoints) arose from *anekāntavāda* in the medieval era, providing Jainism with a more detailed logical structure and expression. The details of the doctrine emerged in Jainism in the 1st millennium CE from debates between scholars of Jain, Buddhist, and Vedic schools of philosophy.

Anekāntavāda is described as a Jain philosophical concept that originated in ancient India, describing the nature of reality as complex and multi-faceted. The concept is based on the idea that no single perspective can contain the whole truth, and to arrive at absolute truth, one should consider all possible angles of vision. It also suggests that it is possible for more than one person to be correct or at least partially correct.

I was born and raised in a Jain family in India. During my upbringing, I often heard the words *ahimsā* and *anekāntavāda* during religious lectures by sādhus and Jain scholars. While I observed many concepts of *ahimsā*, *anekāntavāda* generally remained an enigma to me. In the last few decades, I have noticed a resurgence of significant interest in *anekāntavāda* by many Indian and Western scholars. Some scholars completed their PhD on *anekāntavāda* and began giving talks, lectures, and publishing articles and books. Practically every scholar used and referred to the picture and example of an elephant and six blind men, a story I have heard and

read at least one hundred times.

Anekāntavāda is often considered a core part of Jain philosophy, and some say it has the potential to bring world peace. It is also one of the three A's, along with *ahiṃsā* (non-violence) and *aparigraha* (non-possessiveness), often introduced to those who study Jain theory or attend Jain pathshālā as children. Jainism advocates the theory of multiplicity and relativity of viewpoints. Knowledge knows no limitations or boundaries. Religion and philosophy are not limited to a particular country, period, or group. Because of this philosophy, Jainism has never actively sought converts and has thus been able to live in harmony with Hinduism and all other religions. *Anekāntavāda* stresses that different points of view are mere additions to human knowledge.

Anekāntavāda is intellectual humility that empowers the user. It is an essential part of being nonviolent in our thoughts and words. It shows us why we shouldn't cling to rigid opinions that disconnect us from reality and stifle the pursuit of fuller understanding. Non-one-endedness encourages us to examine and be critical of all beliefs and claims from many different angles, helping us to recognize the value of others' views and opinions as well as the limitations of our own. This means respecting a person's individuality by discovering his or her concept of the world and trying to see things through that model.

The word *anekānt* may be literally translated as “non-one-sidedness doctrine” or “the doctrine of not-one-side.” Some scholars have praised this philosophical gift by the Jains. *Anekāntavāda* has also been interpreted to mean non-absolutism, “intellectual *ahiṃsā*,” religious pluralism, as well as a rejection of fanaticism that leads to terror attacks and mass violence. Modern revisionism has attempted to reinterpret it with religious tolerance, open-mindedness, and pluralism. Some scholars have also called it *sanshaya-vāda* (confusion), implying uncertainty or relativism in truth.

Some scholars argue that even if there were a hundred blind people touching various parts of the same elephant, they might still

be unable to fully comprehend and define the elephant. However, the truth remains that there is an elephant, not some other animal such as a cow or a lion. This implies that there is a true reality, and none of us may fully understand and comprehend that reality.

With the renewed interest in *anekāntavāda* and its other limbs (*syādvāda*, *nayavāda*), nearly all publications and presentations have dealt with the theoretical and philosophical aspects of *anekāntavāda*, with little focus on its true application in day-to-day life and society. This is somewhat akin to many scientific discoveries, where the real benefits to society manifest only when those discoveries are converted to practical applications.

To the best of my knowledge, the present volume titled “Applications of *Anekāntavāda*: Jain Pluralism” is the first attempt to fill this gap. The many articles in this volume by nearly two dozen Indian and Western authors describe practical applications in Philosophy and Spirituality, Health and Wellness, Education, Physics and Mathematics, Judiciary and Democracy, Sociology, Business, and Mass Media. It is hoped that this first attempt will lead to many more publications dealing with applications and actual case histories.

Thus, *anekāntavāda* teaches us that the kingdom of truth can be reached through different ways. It also teaches us that we should not impose our thoughts or views on others but should try to reconcile with the thoughts or viewpoints of others. If earnestly put into practice, this principle shows us how to remove our shortsighted, selfish, and partial outlook. It shows us how to remove discord and disharmony and establish concord and harmony in life by being tolerant in our outlook and attitude towards others. The principle of *anekāntavāda* can be applied to every field of life. It shows us how to respect the candid opinions of all free thinkers of the world, and therefore, the roots of modern democracy can be traced to this Jain principle. It establishes unity in diversity. It promises reconciliation of divergent or conflicting statements, thoughts, ideologies, systems,

religions, etc. The principle of *anekāntavāda*, therefore, can be a great instrument for peaceful coexistence and unity in the world.

Non-one-endedness (*anekāntavāda*) and *syādvāda* (relativity) are the unique Jain perspectives.

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Preface

Since its establishment in 2005, the International School for Jain Studies (ISJS) has dedicated itself to globalising the teaching, research, organisation of seminars, and undertaking projects in Jain philosophy, religion, and various aspects of Jain studies and their relevance to today's lifestyle and society. Over the years, ISJS has organized many seminars addressing diverse dimensions of Jainism, including Jain antiquity, the art of peaceful and pious death (*santhārā/sallekhanā*), determinism, and the application of Jain principles in social and scientific research, while also promoting social harmony. Additionally, ISJS has published numerous books exploring these facets, enriching Jain studies, and publishes a quarterly online research journal. ISJS offers summer and winter schools, providing experiential knowledge of Jainism to international graduate and postgraduate students and researchers. Furthermore, through the Bhagwan Mahavira Fellowship to Study Prakrit in India, a nine-month residential program, ISJS aims to cultivate a global cadre of serious Jain scholars proficient in Prakrit, the Jain agamic language, and prepare them to be internationally recognised Jain scholars.

Jainism, known for its realistic and pluralistic philosophy, offers profound insights through its core principles. For centuries, Jain thinkers and, more recently, Western scholars have explored the theoretical aspects of one of these core principles, *anekāntavāda* or multiplicity of viewpoints/pluralism. However, its practical applications remain underexplored. Recognizing this principle's transformative potential in addressing everyday challenges, ISJS initiated a project to explore practical applications of *anekāntavāda*. This anthology aims to fill that gap, offering valuable insights for both the Jain and non-Jain communities alike. This anthology on the application of *anekāntavāda* is the culmination of ISJS's efforts, developed in consultation with an advisory board comprising

global community members and academic experts. A roadmap was established for soliciting and finalising papers, and contributions were sought from esteemed experts across various fields who combined their disciplinary expertise with a profound understanding of Jain philosophy. The selection process included rigorous three-stage reviews: a preliminary review, blind peer review, and advisory suggestions. This ensured the work's quality and integrity, resulting in the selection of twenty-five papers from a large number of abstracts and submissions received. After more than a year of dedicated effort and multiple revisions, overcoming challenges such as avoiding redundancy in theoretical discussions and maintaining a focus on practical applications, we hope to present a compelling exploration of non-absolutism (*anekāntavāda*) and its applications across diverse domains.

Key Features of the book

1. **Interdisciplinary Perspective:** This book brings together diverse voices from academia and beyond to comprehensively explore the relevance of *anekāntavāda* across different domains.
2. **Practical Insights:** By examining real-world scenarios and practical applications, the contributors offer valuable insights into how *anekāntavāda* can be integrated into everyday life and professional practice.
3. **Accessibility:** Written in clear and accessible language, the book is designed for a broad audience, including scholars, students, policymakers, and general readers interested in philosophy, ethics, and promoting cross-cultural dialogue.

Content Overview

The anthology is organised into seven major themes, encompassing twenty-five articles in total. The themes cover a wide range of fields, including Philosophy and Spirituality, Health/Medicine,

Education, Physics and Mathematics, Judicial/Democracy, Sociology, and Business/Mass Media. Here is a glimpse of each section:

1. **Philosophy and Spirituality:** Explores practical applications of *anekāntavāda* in understanding religious traditions, promoting dialogue across diverse faiths, and integrating Jain principles into contemporary discourse. Prof. Christopher Key Chapple discusses practical applications of *anekāntavāda* in understanding religious traditions, highlighting inclusivism, tolerance, and syncretism. He draws insights from “*Yogabindu*” by Haribhadra Virahāṅka and “*Yogaḍṛṣṭisamuccaya*” by Haribhadra Yākinī Putra. Prof. Jeffery Long examines Jain principles to build dialogue between religions and science. He argues for a paradigm shift towards mutual respect and understanding, where differing worldviews are seen as complementary rather than conflicting. Prof. G.R. Krishnamurthy and Prof. Chandrashekhar V. Murumkar discuss the contemporary relevance of *anekāntavāda* in promoting pluralism and non-violence, linking insights to Jiddu Krishnamurti’s teachings. Dr. Patricia Rodrigues de Souza provides insights into *anekāntavāda* through a sensory knowledge perspective, emphasizing its role in understanding subjective perceptions influenced by cultural and environmental factors. Author Saathvik introduces *anekāntavāda* and *syādvāda* as tools to mitigate cognitive biases in Philosophical Counseling, proposing the “*Syād-Narrative*” method to enhance decision-making processes.
2. **Health/Medicine:** This section of the book examines *anekāntavāda*’s role in enhancing wellness, addressing vaccine hesitancy, and exploring the spiritual dimensions of food and fasting in Jainism. Dr. Shugan C. Jain analyses multifaceted causes of pain and pleasure in life through Jain

philosophy and sees reality as a stochastic process, putting forth philosophical, psychological and spiritual insights to optimize personal well-being. Dr. Ana Laura Funes Maderey applies *anekāntavāda* to understand vaccine hesitancy amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, advocating for inclusive dialogue in addressing community health concerns. Dr. Priyadarshana Jain's drawing on Jain scriptures and ascetic traditions examines how dietary regulations and fasting practices contribute to spiritual evolution, emphasising the multi-dimensional approach offered by *anekāntavāda* in understanding their impact on spiritual liberation.

3. **Education:** Articles in this section discuss *anekāntavāda*'s promotion of linguistic diversity in education and its application in higher education teaching philosophies. Ms. Lee Anne McIlroy explores *anekāntavāda*'s role in promoting multilingualism and challenging colonial legacies in education. Dr. Melanie Barbato presents five ways *anekāntavāda* can enrich teaching in higher education, advocating a balanced approach to navigating diverse perspectives.
4. **Physics and Mathematics:** This section consists of four articles that explore *anekāntavāda*'s interpretations in scientific and mathematical contexts, including quantum physics and data science. Prof. Narendra Bhandari discusses how *anekāntavāda* underpins the universe's diversity, drawing parallels with quantum physics and natural processes. Prof. Ashok Kumar Jain offers a quantum interpretation of Jain principles, proposing a refined framework consistent with quantum mechanics. Scholar Anthony Ruda examines *anekāntavāda*'s role in understanding reality through mathematics, linking Jain concepts with Pythagorean, Platonic, and contemporary theories. Author Divya Premalbhai Shah highlights the

integration of *anekāntavāda* in data science, illustrating how multiple perspectives enhance understanding and application of data-driven techniques.

5. **Judiciary/Democracy:** This section analyses *anekāntavāda*'s implications for political discourse and judicial processes, advocating for pluralism, non-absolutism, and inclusive decision-making. Prof. Yashwant Kumar Malaiya argues for multi-party democracies to embrace *anekāntavāda* in managing political polarization effectively. Prof. Asha Gupta critiques reliance on precedents in legal systems and advocates for *anekāntavāda*'s emphasis on multiple perspectives to achieve accurate and just decisions. Dr. Wm. Andrew Schwartz discusses how *anekāntavāda* can address the roots of violence in political discourse by promoting non-absolutism and peaceful resolution of differences. Dr. Arihant Kumar Jain examines *anekāntavāda*'s philosophical alignment with democratic values, enhancing decision-making quality and protecting minority rights. Author Kshitij Jain addresses challenges posed by absolutist approaches in public discourse.
6. **Sociology:** This section highlights *anekāntavāda*'s application in societal contexts, including political polarization, and sectorial differences within communities. Dr. Elisa Eastwood discusses how Jains in the U.S. promote *anekāntavāda* to reduce political polarisation, developing respect and empathy in public discourse. She applies theories of decision-making formulated by sociologists and animal behaviourists to group dialogue in human beings, specifically the “wisdom of crowds” and the “principle of many wrongs.” Dr. Anupam Jash explores how *anekāntavāda* might benefit personal and religious life, reduce socioeconomic inequities, and lead to tolerance, peace, and unity in societies. Dr. Navin Parekh addresses sectorial differences within Jain

communities, stressing the need to apply *anekāntavāda* practically to resolve disputes and promote unity.

7. **Business/Mass Media:** Here challenges to monotheistic approaches in business science are discussed and an exploration to see how *anekāntavāda* can enrich mass media representations is conducted. Prof. Atul K Shah challenges the predominant monotheistic approach of business science, which often imposes a singular, universal economic theory devoid of cultural and contextual complexities. His advocacy for *anekānta* aims to dismantle the narrow framework of business education. Dr. Hemali Sanghavi examines how *anekāntavāda* can enrich mass media representations by advocating for the inclusion of multiple viewpoints by drawing parallels with concepts like the Rashomon effect and the post-truth era. Author Shreyansh Jain in his article highlights that integrating *syādvāda* could enhance economic theory's relevance, policy-making effectiveness, and understanding of global economic dynamics.

Thus, this book demonstrates how *anekāntavāda*, a central principle of Jainism emphasizing the multiplicity of reality and the acceptance of multiple perspectives, serves as a guiding principle in addressing contemporary challenges and promoting harmony in various contexts. Reality encompasses both permanence and impermanence. Substance, the essence of reality, manifests through attributes that may exhibit opposing characteristics. This understanding aligns with the stochastic nature of life's processes, suggesting that reality or truth is vast and cannot be comprehensively known by any individual. Recognizing our limited knowledge and the multiplicity of perspectives, *anekāntavāda* promotes intellectual humility and non-violence in thought and speech. It encourages respect for diverse viewpoints and reconciliation of differences through dialogue - a path to tolerance, peace, and mutual understanding in our pursuit of truth. By integrating multiple perspectives, we

can address conflicts and promote harmonious coexistence. This principle is applicable in every field of life, offering a foundation for modern democracy and unity in diversity. *Anekāntavāda* stands as a versatile philosophical tool transcending disciplinary boundaries, offering pathways to inclusivity, understanding, and harmonious coexistence in an interconnected world.

We hope this work will inspire further research and deeper understanding of the practical significance of *anekāntavāda*. While we have strived to ensure the accuracy of the information presented, any remaining errors are sincerely regretted. We welcome feedback and corrections to enhance future editions of this work.

We extend our sincere thanks to Shri Abhay Firodia, Chairman, Amar Prerana Trust, Pune for providing financial support for the entire project. We also express heartfelt gratitude to all contributors, team members, advisory board members, esteemed reviewers, and administrative staff whose dedication and hard work have been indispensable in bringing this anthology to fruition. Their contributions have been invaluable in shaping this work.

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