

Jain Reality or Existence

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Structural View of the Universe

Jain Philosophy does not give credence to the theory that God is a creator, survivor, or destroyer of the universe. On the contrary, it asserts that the universe has always existed and will always exist in exact adherence to the laws of the cosmos. There is nothing but infinity both in the past and in the future.

The world of reality or universe consists of two classes of objects:

- Living beings - conscious, soul, chetan, or jiva
- Non-living objects - unconscious, achetan, or ajiva

Non-living objects are further classified into five categories; Matter (Pudgal), Space (Akas), Medium of motion (Dharmastikay), Medium of rest (Adharmastikay), Time (Kal or Samay).

The five non-living entities together with the living being, totaling six are aspects of reality in Jainism. They are known as six universal entities, or substances, or realities.

These six entities of the universe are eternal but continuously undergo countless changes. During the changes, nothing is lost or destroyed. Everything is recycled into another form.

Concept of Reality

A reality or an entity is defined to have an existence, which is known as Sat or truth.

Each entity continuously undergoes countless changes. During this process the old form (size, shape, etc.) of an entity is destroyed, the new form is originated. The form of a substance is called Paryaya.

In the midst of modification of a substance, its certain qualities remain unchanged (permanence). The unchanged qualities of a substance are collectively known as Dravya.

Hence, each entity (substance) in the universe has three aspects:

- Origination - Utpada
- Destruction - Vyaya
- Permanence - Dhruvya

Both Dravya (substance) and Paryaya (mode or form) are inseparable from an entity. The same principle can be explained differently as follows:

An entity is permanent (nitya) from the standpoint of its attributes or qualities (Dravya). This is known as Dravyarthik-naya. An entity is transient (anitya) from the standpoint of its form or modification (Paryaya). This is known as Paryayarthik-naya. The modification that an entity undergoes either naturally or artificially is nothing but the transformation of its various shapes, sizes, and forms.

A natural description of reality takes into consideration these three aspects:

- Permanence in the midst of change
- Identity in the midst of diversity
- Unity in the midst of multiplicity

Examples: A human being through the process of growth undergoes various changes, such as childhood, youth, and old age. These changes are natural modifications.

- Childhood, youth, and old age are transient forms known as Paryaya or mode
- Soul of a living being is permanent and known as Dravya.

Clay is molded by a potter into a pot. Gold is crafted by a goldsmith into various ornaments.

These changes are artificial modifications of the nonliving substances.

- Ornaments and pot are transient forms known as paryaya
- Gold and clay are permanent and known as dravya

While undergoing various modifications, either natural or artificial, the basic dravya of a substance remains unchanged and is permanent.

To be continued...