Question: What is the Jain philosophy regarding such events? What can we do in the present moment? What can we learn that will help us now and in the future?

The Jain philosophy does not look at these five causes from a single point of view, nor does it consider one cause as the right one. It considers the collective effect as valid and the whole truth. All five causes are functioning simultaneously when any event happens in the universe or in our life.

Now, let’s look at these five Samavayas for COVID-19 situation:

1. Time (Kal): The pandemic was to happen at this time worldwide.
2. Intrinsic nature (Swabhav): It is the intrinsic nature of a human body that it can get infected by such a virus.
3. Predestination (Niyati): It was meant to happen. It was in destiny for such pandemic to occur.
4. Instrumental cause (Nimitta): External causes like being in proximity with someone with the virus, can act as a catalyst for our karma to come into action. And what happens to us will be based on the maturity of our previous Karma.
5. Determination, Self-Effort, or Freewill (Purushartha): Our Purushartha is our power to choose our response to this situation and that’s the only thing in our control right now. Our present efforts should be focused on what can we do now? How can we eliminate the virus? How can we come out of this stronger? How can we help those who are affected? How can we respond with compassion and kindness towards self and others?

This pandemic is due to all the five causes, not any single cause. There are many common misconceptions about considering karma as the only cause for the pandemic situation and overlooking the other samavayas. There is also a widespread notion about group karma, however, there is no mention of group karma in Jain literature. The concept of group karma cannot exist in Jainism because individuals acquire karma based on his/her intentions (bhav), the acquired karmas come into action for those individuals, and the individual karma is self-contained and has no effect on others.

It is useful to know and understand these five causes, but from a spiritual point of view, purushartha, what we do in the present moment is of utmost importance. Spirituality teaches that life is our response to what happens to us. Life is not what happens to us.

Our purushartha / religion/dharma right now is to raise our spirituality such that:

- No kashayas (anger, ego, greed, deceit) arises within us
- We can face the situation with strength and peace
- We don't blame anyone.
• We continue to show compassion towards ourselves, other living beings, and the environment. We have been neglecting to protect and preserve our fellow living beings, environment, and natural resources. Let us change our lifestyle such that we use minimum natural resources for our healthy survival.
• We have the power and courage to do the right thing
• We conduct rituals or practices with spiritual understanding
• We trust in our inner strength and not follow anything blindly. Power and strength are within us and nowhere outside.

We must not violate any guidance from the CDC and government authorities to prevent spreading this virus and help ourselves and others by maintaining social distancing. We want to be part of the solution and look for opportunities to help others.
We should also focus on learning the spiritual lessons that this situation is trying to teach us in a meaningful and encouraging way.

**Inner Resiliency:** Along with keeping our body healthy, we also need to pay equal attention, if not more, to our mind. We need to make our minds strong and resilient. Our thoughts manifest in our physical health. Our thoughts also affect our emotional health, our relationships with others, and our overall well-being. Our inner world has a direct impact on what’s happening outside.

**Soul Consciousness:** In today’s world when the majority of our time and efforts are focused on activities oriented towards the body, we need to have constant realization and awareness of who we really are. If our orientation is only body-focused, and not soul focused, then it is difficult to gain persistent inner resiliency. It is important to ground ourselves to our true nature. Impermanence - Good times and trying times are both temporary. Nothing is permanent. This situation shall pass too but the question is how and what do we want to be during this time? We want to face the situation in a way that we come out of it wiser and more spiritual than what we are today.

**Happiness is within:** Eliminate/reduce our dependencies for happiness on other people, things, various experiences by our sensory organs. Have meaningful connections, where we can learn and grow together. We want to find happiness and joy within and not be in the mad race of do more, acquire more, become more, travel more. We don’t want our lifestyle based purely on monetary and material standards. We want to introspect the purpose and way of our life.

**Our Moral Responsibility:** As the human race, we share this planet with other living beings, we don’t own it. We must protect our environment and natural resources. We should go back to basics - compassion for all living beings, not hoarding more than what we need and not wasting, abusing, or overusing our natural resources.
**Gratitude:** There is so much that we can be grateful for. Human beings often have a negative bias and we get fixated on problems/threats and overlook the good things. We should let go of greed and desires and be content, appreciate, and share what we have with others. This is a difficult and trying time for all of us. We are all faced with the fear of uncertainty and grief of loss. There is so much suffering but also an opportunity to grow spiritually in unprecedented ways. Our inner transformation leads to peaceful families, communities, and overall society.

To read part 1, click [here](https://www.jainism-says.blogspot.com)

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