

= Anekantavada =

Anekantavada (Sanskrit : अनेकान्तवाद , " many @-@ sidedness ") refers to the principles of pluralism and multiplicity of viewpoints , or vantage points , the notion that reality is perceived differently from diverse points of view , and that no single point of view is the complete truth , yet taken together they comprise the complete truth . It is one of the most important and fundamental doctrines of Jainism .

Jains contrast all attempts to proclaim the sole monopoly on truth with andhagajanyah , which can be illustrated through the parable of the " blind men and an elephant " . In this story , each blind man felt a different part of an elephant (trunk , leg , ear , etc .) . All the men claimed to understand and explain the true appearance of the elephant , but could only partly succeed , due to their limited perspectives . This principle is more formally stated by observing that objects are infinite in their qualities and modes of existence , so they cannot be completely grasped in all aspects and manifestations by finite human perception . (This is the Absolute Truth .) According to the Jains , only the Kevalis ? omniscient beings ? can comprehend objects in all aspects and manifestations ; others are only capable of partial knowledge . Consequently , no single , specific , human view can claim to represent absolute truth .

The origins of anekantavada can be traced back to the teachings of Mahavira (599 ? 527 BCE) , the 24th Jain Tirthankara . The dialectical concepts of syadvada " conditioned viewpoints " and nayavada " partial viewpoints " arose from anekantavada , providing it with more detailed logical structure and expression . The Sanskrit compound an @-@ eka @-@ anta @-@ vada literally means " doctrine of uncertainty " (an- " not " , ekanta " certainty " or " single @-@ natured " , vada (" school of thought " or " thesis ") ; it is roughly translated into English as " non @-@ absolutism " . An @-@ ekanta " uncertainty , non @-@ exclusivity " is the opposite of ekanta (eka + anta) " exclusiveness , absoluteness , necessity " (or also " monotheistic doctrine ") .

Anekantavada encourages its adherents to consider the views and beliefs of their rivals and opposing parties . Proponents of anekantavada apply this principle to religion and philosophy , reminding themselves that any religion or philosophy ? even Jainism ? which clings too dogmatically to its own tenets , is committing an error based on its limited point of view . The principle of anekantavada also influenced Mahatma Gandhi to adopt principles of religious tolerance , ahimsa and satyagraha .

= = Philosophical overview = =

The etymological root of anekantavada lies in the compound of two Sanskrit words : anekanta (" manifoldness ") and vada (" school of thought ") . The word anekanta is a compound of the Sanskrit negative prefix an , eka (" one ") , and anta (" attribute ") . Hence , anekanta means " not of solitary attribute " .

The Jain doctrine lays a strong emphasis on samyaktva , that is , rationality and logic . According to Jains , the ultimate principle should always be logical and no principle can be devoid of logic or reason . Thus , the Jain texts contain deliberative exhortations on every subject , whether they are constructive or obstructive , inferential or analytical , enlightening or destructive .

= = = Jain doctrines of relativity = = =

Anekantavada is one of the three Jain doctrines of relativity used for logic and reasoning . The other two are :

syadvada ? the theory of conditioned predication and ;
nayavada ? the theory of partial standpoints .

These Jain philosophical concepts made important contributions to ancient Indian philosophy , especially in the areas of skepticism and relativity .

= = = Syadvada = = =

Sy?dv?da (Sanskrit : ? ? ??? ? ???) is the theory of conditioned predication , which provides an expression to anek?nta by recommending that every phrase or statement be expressed in the optative mood (the equivalent of the subjunctive mood in Latin and other Indo @-@ European languages) , i.e. generally by prefacing each sentence with the verb sy?t , the third person singular optative of the Sanskrit verb as , " to be " . (In Sanskrit , sy?t becomes sy?n when followed by an " n " , and sy?d when followed by a non @-@ nasal voiced consonant or vowel .) According to Jain texts , a thing or object of knowledge has infinite characters (i.e. , it is anek?nt?tmaka) ; each character can be analysed and grasped individually . Each individual character is called a naya . Jains asserts that a naya reveals only a part of the totality , and should not be mistaken for the whole . A synthesis of different viewpoints is said to be achieved by the doctrine of conditional predications (sy?dv?da) wherein every viewpoint is able to retain its relative importance . Highlighting the indispensability of sy?dv?da , Acharya Samantabhadra asserts :

Affirmation , when not in conflict with negation , yields the desired result of describing truly an object of knowledge . Only when affirmation and negation are juxtaposed in mutually non @-@ conflicting situation , one is able to decide whether to accept or reject the assertion . This is how the doctrine of conditional predications (sy?dv?da) establishes the truth . ?

Sy?dv?da is not only an extension of anek?nta ontology , but a separate system of logic capable of standing on its own . As reality is complex , no single proposition can express the nature of reality fully . Thus " sy?t " should be prefixed before each proposition giving it a conditional point of view and thus removing any dogmatism in the statement . Since it ensures that each statement is expressed from seven different conditional and relative viewpoints or propositions , sy?dv?da is known as saptibha?g?n?ya or " the theory of seven conditioned predications " . These saptibha?g? are :

sy?d @-@ asti ? in some ways , it is ,
sy?n @-@ n?sti ? in some ways , it is not ,
sy?d @-@ asti @-@ n?sti ? in some ways , it is , and it is not ,
sy?d @-@ asti @-@ avaktavya? ? in some ways , it is , and it is indescribable ,
sy?n @-@ n?sti @-@ avaktavya? ? in some ways , it is not , and it is indescribable ,
sy?d @-@ asti @-@ n?sti @-@ avaktavya? ? in some ways , it is , it is not , and it is indescribable ,

sy?d @-@ avaktavya? ? in some ways , it is indescribable .

Each of these seven propositions examines the complex and multifaceted nature of reality from a relative point of view of time , space , substance and mode . To ignore the complexity of reality is to commit the fallacy of dogmatism .

The phrase ? in a way ? (sy?t) declares the standpoint of expression ? affirmation with regard to own substance (dravya) , place (k?etra) , time (k?la) , and being (bh?va) , and negation with regard to other substance (dravya) , place (k?etra) , time (k?la) , and being (bh?va) . Thus , for a ? jar ? , in regard to substance (dravya) ? earthen , it simply is ; wooden , it simply is not . In regard to place (k?etra) ? room , it simply is ; terrace , it simply is not . In regard to time (k?la) ? summer , it simply is ; winter , it simply is not . In regard to being (bh?va) ? brown , it simply is ; white , it simply is not . And the word ? simply ? has been inserted for the purpose of excluding a sense not approved by the ? nuance ? ; for avoidance of a meaning not intended . The phrase ? in a way ? is used to declare that the ? jar ? exists in regard to its own substance etc. and not also in regard to other substance etc .

According to the Jains , Sy?dv?da and kevalajñ?na (omniscience) are the foundational facts of knowledge . In this regard , ?ch?rya Samantabhadra writes :

Sy?dv?da , the doctrine of conditional predications , and kevalajñ?na (omniscience) , are both illuminators of the substances of reality . The difference between the two is that while kevalajñ?na illumines directly , sy?dv?da illumines indirectly . Anything which is not illuminated or expressed by the two is not a substance of reality and hence a non @-@ substance (avastu) .

= = = = Nayav?da = = = =

Nayav?da is the theory of partial standpoints or viewpoints . Nayav?da is a compound of two Sanskrit words ? naya (" reason " or " method ") and v?da (" school of thought or thesis ") . It is used to arrive at a certain inference from a point of view . An object has infinite aspects to it , but when we describe an object in practice , we speak of only relevant aspects and ignore irrelevant ones . This does not deny the other attributes , qualities , modes and other aspects ; they are just irrelevant from a particular perspective . Authors like Natubhai Shah explain nayav?da with the example of a car ; for instance , when we talk of a " blue BMW " we are simply considering the color and make of the car . However , our statement does not imply that the car is devoid of other attributes like engine type , cylinders , speed , price and the like . This particular viewpoint is called a naya or a partial viewpoint . As a type of critical philosophy , nayav?da holds that all philosophical disputes arise out of confusion of standpoints , and the standpoints we adopt are , although we may not realise it , " the outcome of purposes that we may pursue " . While operating within the limits of language and seeing the complex nature of reality , Mah?v?ra used the language of nayas . Naya , being a partial expression of truth , enables us to comprehend reality part by part .

= = = Syncretisation of changing and unchanging reality = = =

The age of Mah?v?ra and Buddha was one of intense intellectual debates , especially on the nature of reality and self . Upanishadic thought postulated the absolute unchanging reality of Brahman and ?tman and claimed that change was mere illusion . The theory advanced by Buddhists denied the reality of permanence of conditioned phenomena , asserting only interdependence and impermanence . According to the ved?ntin (Upanishadic) conceptual scheme , the Buddhists were wrong in denying permanence and absolutism , and within the Buddhist conceptual scheme , the ved?ntins were wrong in denying the reality of impermanence . The two positions were contradictory and mutually exclusive from each other 's point of view . The Jains managed a synthesis of the two uncompromising positions with anek?ntav?da . From the perspective of a higher , inclusive level made possible by the ontology and epistemology of anek?ntav?da and sy?dv?da , Jains do not see such claims as contradictory or mutually exclusive ; instead , they are seen as ekantika or only partially true . The Jain breadth of vision embraces the perspectives of both Ved?nta which , according to Jainism , " recognises substances but not process " , and Buddhism , which " recognises process but not substance " . Jainism , on the other hand , pays equal attention to both substance (dravya) and process (paryaya) .

This philosophical syncretisation of paradox of change through anek?nta has been acknowledged by modern scholars such as Arvind Sharma , who wrote :

Our experience of the world presents a profound paradox which we can ignore existentially , but not philosophically . This paradox is the paradox of change . Something ? A changes and therefore it cannot be permanent . On the other hand , if A is not permanent , then what changes ? In this debate between the " permanence " and " change " , Hinduism seems more inclined to grasp the first horn of the dilemma and Buddhism the second . It is Jainism that has the philosophical courage to grasp both horns fearlessly and simultaneously , and the philosophical skill not to be gored by either .

However , anek?ntav?da is not simply about syncretisation or compromise between competing ideas , as it is cooperatively about finding the hidden elements of shared truth between such ideas (such as naturalism ? relative to pantheism and sanctuary ? although its basis in simplicity may be described with the scientific principle of Occam 's razor ? whereas science is likewise paradoxical in nature ? relative to nonviolence) . Anek?ntav?da is not about denying the truth ; rather truth is acknowledged as an ultimate spiritual goal . For ordinary humans , it is an elusive goal , but they are still obliged to work towards its attainment . Anek?ntav?da also does not mean compromising or diluting ones own values and principles . On the contrary , it allows us to understand and be tolerant of conflicting and opposing views , while respectfully maintaining the validity of ones own view @-@ point . Hence , John Koller calls anek?ntav?da as ? " epistemological respect for view of others " . Anek?ntav?da , thus , did not prevent the Jain thinkers from defending the truth and validity of their

own doctrine while simultaneously respecting and understanding the rival doctrines . Anne Vallely notes that the epistemological respect for other viewpoints was put to practice when she was invited by ?c?rya Tulsi , the head of the Ter?panth? order , to teach sadhvis the tenets of Christianity . Commenting on their adherence to ahi?s? and anek?ntav?da , she says :

The Jain sama??s of Ladnun uncompromisingly maintain ahi?s? to be an eternal and unchangeable moral law . Other views and beliefs that contradict this belief would certainly be challenged , and ultimately rejected . But what is significant , is that both the rejection and retention of views is tempered by the belief that our perception conveys only a partial reality , that reality itself is manifold , and that to assume one particular viewpoint is final , is to hold a limited picture of reality .

Anek?ntav?da is also different from moral relativism . It does not mean conceding that all arguments and all views are equal , but rather logic and evidence determine which views are true , in what respect and to what extent (as truth in relativism , itself) . While employing anek?ntav?da , the 17th century philosopher monk , Ya?ovijaya Ga?i also cautions against an?bhigrahika (indiscriminate attachment to all views as being true) , which is effectively a kind of misconceived relativism . Jains thus consider anek?ntav?da as a positive concept corresponding to religious pluralism that transcends monism and dualism , implying a sophisticated conception of a complex reality . It does not merely involve rejection of partisanship , but reflects a positive spirit of reconciliation of opposite views . However , it is argued that pluralism often degenerates to some form of moral relativism or religious exclusivism . According to Anne Vallely , anek?nta is a way out of this epistemological quagmire , as it makes a genuinely pluralistic view possible without lapsing into extreme moral relativism or exclusivity .

= = = Parable of the blind men and elephant = = =

The ancient Jain texts often explain the concepts of anek?ntv?da and sy?dv?da with the parable of the blind men and an elephant (Andhgajany?yah) , which addresses the manifold nature of truth .

A group of blind men heard that a strange animal , called an elephant , had been brought to the town , but none of them were aware of its shape and form . Out of curiosity , they said : " We must inspect and know it by touch , of which we are capable " . So , they sought it out , and when they found it they groped about it . In the case of the first person , whose hand landed on the trunk , said " This being is like a drain pipe " . For another one whose hand reached its ear , it seemed like a kind of fan . As for another person , whose hand was upon its leg , said , " I perceive the shape of the elephant to be like a pillar " . And in the case of the one who placed his hand upon its back said , " Indeed , this elephant is like a throne " . Now , each of these presented a true aspect when he related what he had gained from experiencing the elephant . None of them had strayed from the true description of the elephant . Yet they fell short of fathoming the true appearance of the elephant .

Two of the many references to this parable are found in Tattvarthaslokavatika of Vidyanandi (9th century) and Sy?dv?damanjari of ?c?rya Mallisena (13th century) . Mallisena uses the parable to argue that immature people deny various aspects of truth ; deluded by the aspects they do understand , they deny the aspects they don 't understand . " Due to extreme delusion produced on account of a partial viewpoint , the immature deny one aspect and try to establish another . This is the maxim of the blind (men) and the elephant . " Mallisena also cites the parable when noting the importance of considering all viewpoints in obtaining a full picture of reality . " It is impossible to properly understand an entity consisting of infinite properties without the method of modal description consisting of all viewpoints , since it will otherwise lead to a situation of seizing mere sprouts (i.e. , a superficial , inadequate cognition) , on the maxim of the blind (men) and the elephant . "

= = History and development = =

The principle of anek?ntav?da is the foundation of many Jain philosophical concepts . The development of anek?ntav?da also encouraged the development of the dialectics of sy?dv?da (

conditioned viewpoints) , saptibha?g? (the seven conditioned predication) , and nayav?da (partial viewpoints) .

== = Origins == =

The origins of anek?ntav?da lie in the teachings of Mah?v?ra , who used it effectively to show the relativity of truth and reality . Taking a relativistic viewpoint , Mah?v?ra is said to have explained the nature of the soul as both permanent , from the point of view of underlying substance , and temporary , from the point of view of its modes and modification . The importance and antiquity of anek?ntav?da are also demonstrated by the fact that it formed the subject matter of Astinasti Prav?da , the fourth part of the lost Purva that contained teachings of the T?rtha?karas prior to Mah?v?ra . German Indologist Hermann Jacobi believes Mah?v?ra effectively employed the dialectics of anek?ntav?da to refute the agnosticism of Sañjaya Bela??haputta . Suttrakritanga , the second oldest canon of Jainism , contains the first references to sy?dv?da and saptibha?g? . According to S?trakritanga , Mah?v?ra advised his disciples to use sy?dv?da to preach his teachings :

A monk living single should not ridicule heretical doctrines , and should avoid hard words though they be true ; he should not be vain , nor brag , but he should without embarrassment and passion preach the Law . A monk should be modest , though he be of a fearless mind ; he should expound the sy?dv?da , he should use the two permitted kinds of speech , living among virtuous men , impartial and wise .

== = Early history == =

The early Jain canons and teachings contained multitudes of references to anek?ntav?da and sy?dv?da in rudimentary form without giving it proper structure or establishing it as a separate doctrine . ?v?t?mbara text , Suttrakritanga contains references to Vibhagyav?da , which , according to Hermann Jacobi , is the same as sy?dv?da and saptibha?g? . Bhagvatis?tra mentions only three primary predications of the saptibha?g?naya . After Mah?v?ra , Kundakunda (1st century CE) was the first author ? saint to expound on the doctrine of sy?dv?da and saptibha?g? and give it a proper structure in his famous works Pravacanas?ra and Pancastikayas?ra . Kundakunda also used nayas to discuss the essence of the self in Samayas?ra . Proper classification of the nayas was provided by the philosopher monk , Um?sv?ti (2nd century CE) in Tattv?rthas?tra . Samantabhadra (2nd century CE) and Siddhasena Div?kara (3rd century CE) further fine @-@ tuned Jain epistemology and logic by expounding on the concepts of anek?ntav?da in proper form and structure .

?c?rya Siddhasena Div?kara expounded on the nature of truth in the court of King Vikram?ditya :
Vikram?ditya : What is ' truth ' ? That which is said repeatedly , that which is said loudly , that which is said with authority or that which is agreed by the majority ?

Div?kara : None of the above . Every one has his own definition of ' truth ' and that it is conditional .

Vikram?ditya : How about traditions ? They have been established by our ancestors and have passed the test of time ?

Div?kara : Would the system established by ancestors hold true on examination ? In case it does not , I am not here to justify it for the sake of saving the traditional grace of the dead , irrespective of the wrath I may have to face .

In Sanmatitarka , Div?kara further adds : " All doctrines are right in their own respective spheres ? but if they encroach upon the province of other doctrines and try to refute their view , they are wrong . A man who holds the view of the cumulative character of truth never says that a particular view is right or that a particular view is wrong . "

== = Age of logic == =

The period beginning with the start of common era , up to the modern period is often referred to as the age of logic in the history of Jain philosophy . By the time of Akalanka (5th century CE) , whose

works are a landmark in Jain logic , anek?ntav?da was firmly entrenched in Jain texts , as is evident from the various teachings of the Jain scriptures .

?c?rya Haribhadra (8th century CE) was one of the leading proponents of anek?ntav?da . He was the first classical author to write a doxography , a compendium of a variety of intellectual views . This attempted to contextualise Jain thoughts within the broad framework , rather than espouse narrow partisan views . It interacted with the many possible intellectual orientations available to Indian thinkers around the 8th century .

?c?rya Amrtacandra starts his famous 10th century CE work Purusathasiddhiupaya with strong praise for anek?ntav?da : " I bow down to the principle of anek?nta , the source and foundation of the highest scriptures , the dispeller of wrong one @-@ sided notions , that which takes into account all aspects of truth , reconciling diverse and even contradictory traits of all objects or entity . "

?c?rya Vidy?nandi (11th century CE) provides the analogy of the ocean to explain the nature of truth in Tattvarthaslokav?rtikka , 116 : " Water from the ocean contained in a pot can neither be called an ocean nor a non @-@ ocean , but simply a part of ocean . Similarly , a doctrine , though arising from absolute truth can neither be called a whole truth nor a non @-@ truth . "

Ya?ovijaya Ga?i , a 17th @-@ century Jain monk , went beyond anek?ntav?da by advocating madh?yastha , meaning " standing in the middle " or " equidistance " . This position allowed him to praise qualities in others even though the people were non @-@ Jain and belonged to other faiths . There was a period of stagnation after Yasovijayaji , as there were no new contributions to the development of Jain philosophy .

= = = Role in ensuring the survival of Jainism = = =

Anek?ntav?da played a pivotal role in the growth as well as the survival of Jainism in ancient India , especially against onslaughts from ?aivas , Vai??avas , Buddhists , Muslims , and Christians at various times . According to Hermann Jacobi , Mah?v?ra used such concepts as sy?dv?da and saptbhangi to silence some of his opponents . The discussions of the agnostics led by Sañjaya Bela??haputta had probably influenced many of their contemporaries and consequently sy?dv?da may have seemed to them a way out of ajñ?nav?da . Jacobi further speculates that many of their followers would have gone over to Mah?v?ra 's creed , convinced of the truth of the saptbhanginaya . According to Professor Christopher Key Chapple , anek?ntav?da allowed Jains to survive during the most hostile and unfavourable moments in history . According to John Koller , professor of Asian studies , anek?ntav?da allowed Jain thinkers to maintain the validity of their doctrine , while at the same time respectfully criticizing the views of their opponents .

Anek?ntav?da was often used by Jain monks to obtain royal patronage from Hindu Kings . ?c?rya Hemacandra used anek?ntav?da to gain the confidence and respect of the C?lukya Emperor Jayasimha Siddharaja . According to the Jain text Prabandhacantamani , Emperor Siddharaja desired enlightenment and liberation and he questioned teachers from various traditions . He remained in a quandary when he discovered that they all promoted their own teachings while disparaging other teachings . Among the teachers he questioned was Hemacandra , who , rather than promote Jainism , told him a story with a different message . According to his story , a sick man was cured of his disease after eating all the herbs available , as he was not aware which herb was medicinal . The moral of the tale , according to Hemacandra , was that just as the man was restored by the herb , even though no one knew which particular herb did the trick , so in the kaliyuga (" age of vice ") the wise should obtain salvation by supporting all religious traditions , even though no @-@ one can say with absolute certainty which tradition it is that provides that salvation .

= = Influence = =

Jain religious tolerance fits well with the ecumenical disposition typical of Indian religions . It can be traced to the analogous Jain principles of anek?ntav?da and ahi?s? . The epistemology of anek?ntav?da and sy?dv?da also had a profound impact on the development of ancient Indian logic and philosophy . In recent times , Jainism influenced Gandhi , who advocated ahi?s? and

satyagraha .

= = = Intellectual ahimsa? and religious tolerance = = =

The concepts of *anekāntavāda* and *syādvāda* allow Jains to accept the truth in other philosophies from their own perspective and thus inculcate tolerance for other viewpoints . *Anekāntavāda* is non @-@ absolutist and stands firmly against all dogmatisms , including any assertion that Jainism is the only correct religious path . It is thus an intellectual *ahiṃsa*? , or *ahiṃsa*? of the mind . Burch writes , " Jain logic is intellectual *ahiṃsa*? . Just as a right @-@ acting person respects the life of all beings , so a right @-@ thinking person acknowledges the validity of all judgments . This means recognizing all aspects of reality , not merely one or some aspects , as is done in non @-@ Jain philosophies . "

Mahāvīra encouraged his followers to study and understand rival traditions in his *Acaranga Sutra* : " Comprehend one philosophical view through the comprehensive study of another one . "

In *anekāntavāda* , there is no " battle of ideas " , because this is considered to be a form of intellectual *himsa* or violence , leading quite logically to physical violence and war . In today 's world , the limitations of the adversarial , " either with us or against us " form of argument are increasingly apparent by the fact that the argument leads to political , religious and social conflicts . *Śrītraktiṅga* , the second oldest canon of Jainism , provides a solution by stating : " Those who praise their own doctrines and ideology and disparage the doctrine of others distort the truth and will be confined to the cycle of birth and death . "

This ecumenical and irenic attitude , engendered by *anekāntavāda* , allowed modern Jain monks such as Vijayadharmaśūri to declare : " I am neither a Jain nor a Buddhist , a Vaisnava nor a Saivite , a Hindu nor a Muslim , but a traveler on the path of peace shown by the supreme soul , the God who is free from passion . "

= = = Contemporary role and influence = = =

Some modern authors believe that Jain philosophy in general and *anekāntavāda* in particular can provide a solution to many problems facing the world . They claim that even the mounting ecological crisis is linked to adversarialism , because it arises from a false division between humanity and " the rest " of nature . Modern judicial systems , democracy , freedom of speech , and secularism all implicitly reflect an attitude of *anekāntavāda* . Many authors , such as Kamla Jain , have claimed that the Jain tradition , with its emphasis on *ahimsa*? and *anekāntavāda* , is capable of solving religious intolerance , terrorism , wars , the depletion of natural resources , environmental degradation and many other problems . Referring to the September 11 attacks , John Koller believes that violence in society mainly exists due to faulty epistemology and metaphysics as well as faulty ethics . A failure to respect the life and views of others , rooted in dogmatic and mistaken knowledge and refusal to acknowledge the legitimate claims of different perspectives , leads to violent and destructive behaviour . Koller suggests that *anekāntavāda* has a larger role to play in the world peace . According to Koller , because *anekāntavāda* is designed to avoid one @-@ sided errors , reconcile contradictory viewpoints , and accept the multiplicity and relativity of truth , the Jain philosophy is in a unique position to support dialogue and negotiations amongst various nations and peoples .

Some Indologists like Professor John Cort have cautioned against giving undue importance to " intellectual *ahiṃsa*? " as the basis of *anekāntavāda* . He points out that Jain monks have also used *anekāntavāda* and *syādvāda* as debating weapons to silence their critics and prove the validity of the Jain doctrine over others . According to Dundas , in Jain hands , this method of analysis became a fearsome weapon of philosophical polemic with which the doctrines of Hinduism and Buddhism could be pared down to their ideological bases of simple permanence and impermanence , respectively , and thus could be shown to be one @-@ pointed and inadequate as the overall interpretations of reality they purported to be . On the other hand , the many @-@ sided approach was claimed by the Jains to be immune from criticism since it did not present itself as a philosophical or dogmatic view .

== Influence on Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi ==

Since childhood , Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was exposed to the actual practice of non @-@ violence , non @-@ possession and anek?ntav?da by his mother . According to biographers like Uma Majumdar , Rajmohan Gandhi , and Stephen Hay , these early childhood impressions and experiences contributed to the formation of Gandhi 's character and his further moral and spiritual development . In his writings , Mahatma Gandhi attributed his seemingly contradictory positions over a period of time to the learning process , experiments with truth and his belief in anek?ntav?da . He proclaimed that the duty of every individual is to determine what is personally true and act on that relative perception of truth . According to Gandhi , a satyagrahi is duty bound to act according to his relative truth , but at the same time , he is also equally bound to learn from truth held by his opponent . In response to a friend 's query on religious tolerance , he responded in the journal " Young India ? 21 Jan 1926 " :

I am an Advaitist and yet I can support Dvaitism (dualism) . The world is changing every moment , and is therefore unreal , it has no permanent existence . But though it is constantly changing , it has something about it which persists and it is therefore to that extent real . I have therefore no objection to calling it real and unreal , and thus being called an Anek?ntavadi or a Sy?dvadi . But my Sy?dv?da is not the Sy?dv?da of the learned , it is peculiarly my own . I cannot engage in a debate with them . It has been my experience that I am always true from my point of view , and am often wrong from the point of view of my honest critics . I know that we are both right from our respective points of view . And this knowledge saves me from attributing motives to my opponents or critics . The seven blind men who gave seven different descriptions of the elephant were all right from their respective points of view , and wrong from the point of view of one another , and right and wrong from the point of view of the man who knew the elephant . I very much like this doctrine of the manyness of reality . It is this doctrine that has taught me to judge a Musulman from his standpoint and a Christian from his . Formerly I used to resent the ignorance of my opponents . Today I can love them because I am gifted with the eye to see myself as others see me and vice versa . I want to take the whole world in the embrace of my love . My Anek?ntav?da is the result of the twin doctrine of Satyagraha and ahi?s? .

== Criticism ==

The doctrines of anek?ntav?da and sy?dav?da are often criticised on the grounds that they engender a degree of hesitancy and uncertainty , and may compound problems rather than solve them . It is also pointed out that Jain epistemology asserts its own doctrines , but at the cost of being unable to deny contradictory doctrines . Furthermore , it is also argued that this doctrine could be self @-@ defeating . It is argued that if reality is so complex that no single doctrine can describe it adequately , then anek?ntav?da itself , being a single doctrine , must be inadequate . This criticism seems to have been anticipated by ?c?rya Samantabhadra who said : " From the point of view of pramana (means of knowledge) it is anek?nta (multi @-@ sided) , but from a point of view of naya (partial view) it is ekanta (one @-@ sided) . "

In defense of the doctrine , Jains point out that anek?ntav?da seeks to reconcile apparently opposing viewpoints rather than refuting them .

Anek?ntav?da received much criticism from the Vedantists , notably Adi Sankar?c?rya (9th century C.E.) . Sankara argued against some tenets of Jainism in his bhasya on Brahmasutra (2 : 2 : 33 ? 36) . His main arguments centre on anek?ntav?da :

It is impossible that contradictory attributes such as being and non @-@ being should at the same time belong to one and the same thing ; just as observation teaches us that a thing cannot be hot and cold at the same moment . The third alternative expressed in the words ? they either are such or not such ? results in cognition of indefinite nature , which is no more a source of true knowledge than doubt is . Thus the means of knowledge , the object of knowledge , the knowing subject , and the act of knowledge become all alike indefinite . How can his followers act on a doctrine , the matter

of which is altogether indeterminate ? The result of your efforts is perfect knowledge and is not perfect knowledge . Observation shows that , only when a course of action is known to have a definite result , people set about it without hesitation . Hence a man who proclaims a doctrine of altogether indefinite contents does not deserve to be listened any more than a drunken or a mad man .

However , many believe that Sankara fails to address genuine *anekāntavāda* . By identifying *syādvāda* with *sansayavāda* , he instead addresses " agnosticism " , which was argued by Sañjaya Belaṭṭhaputta . Many authors like Pandya believe that Sankara overlooked that , the affirmation of the existence of an object is in respect to the object itself , and its negation is in respect to what the object is not . Genuine *anekāntavāda* thus considers positive and negative attributes of an object , at the same time , and without any contradictions .

Another Buddhist logician Dharmakīrti ridiculed *anekāntavāda* in *Pramāṇavarttikakārikā* : " With the differentiation removed , all things have dual nature . Then , if somebody is implored to eat curd , then why he does not eat camel ? " The insinuation is obvious ; if curd exists from the nature of curd and does not exist from the nature of a camel , then one is justified in eating camel , as by eating camel , he is merely eating the negation of curd . Ācārya Akalanka , while agreeing that Dharmakīrti may be right from one viewpoint , took it upon himself to issue a rejoinder :

The person who criticises without understanding the *prima facie* view is acting like a jester and not a critic . The Buddha was born a deer and the deer was born as Buddha ; but Buddha is adorable and deer is only a food . Similarly , due to the strength of an entity , with its differences and similarities specified , nobody would eat camel if implored to eat curd .