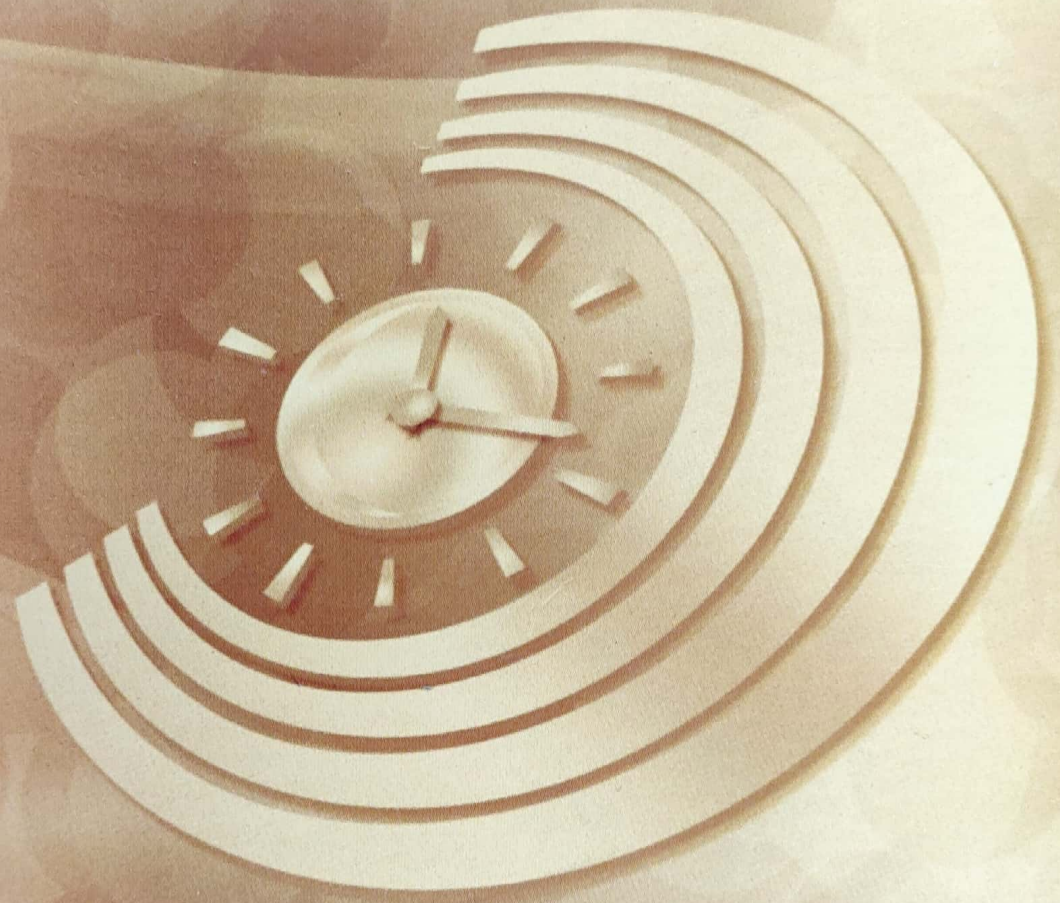


JAINISM IN MODERN PERSPECTIVE

**An Enquiry into the Relevance of Jainism
in the Modern Context of the World**



Editors

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Anekānta : A New Paradigm of Philosophy of Co-existence and Non-absolutism

Samani Dr. Chaitanya Prajna

The time of Bhagavān Mahāvīra, 6th BCE, can be identified as the age of diverse religions and philosophical traditions. This was the time when the religious and philosophical plurality in India reached its climax. According to the Jain literature, there were 363 schools of thought prevailing at that time.¹ Most of them maintained mutually conflicting outlooks in dealing with the individual and cosmic realities. Each school extolled its importance and sole validity at the expense of others. This way of dealing, whether it is absolutism, agnosticism, skepticism or nihilism, with the problems results in a clash of outlook and total confusion on religious and philosophical matters. This brings in an urge for a holistic approach in practice that is intended, ideally, to see the truth in wider spectrum and thereby to create an environment of mutual dialogue and understanding among different schools of thought.

With this backdrop, Bhagavān Mahāvīra propounded the doctrine of *Anekānt* (Non-absolutism) initially presented as *Syādvāda* i.e. the theory of Conditional Dialects or Relativity and *Nayavāda* i.e. the theory of Philosophical Standpoints. Truth, he said, is dual and multifaceted, and therefore cannot be comprehended from one point of view.² Besides, language has its own limitations, it cannot express more than one facet of a reality at a time. To express all the facets of the reality is beyond the capacity of even an omniscient. Thus, whatever goes by the name of truth in common parlance

are only sparkles of the truth, relative to one context or another.³ This great and infallible realization of Bhagavān Mahāvīra has its echo even in the mind of a twentieth century scientist Albert Einstein when he said, "We can know only relative truth, the universal truth can be known only by the universal observer." In simpler terms, it is resonated in the analogy of the five blind men who try to understand an elephant by touching different parts and come away in complete disagreement about what the elephant looks like.

The non-absolutistic paradigm evolved by Bhagavān Mahāvīra was formally recognized as the doctrine of *Anekānta* by Ācārya Siddhasena Divakar in 6th century CE.⁴ Today, in the twenty first century, *Anekānta* has been rigorously and quite successfully developed into a philosophy of peaceful co-existence by Acharya Mahaprajna, the philosopher-saint.⁵

As the world is fractured by socio-political tensions and spiraling conflicts rooted in religious diversity, *Anekānta*, as a philosophy of mutually respectful co-existence, is urgently relevant and has the potential to bring great benefit to societies. The Christian theologians have articulated three paradigms for inter-religious relationships: the exclusivistic, inclusivistic and the relativistic.⁶ However, these have been found to be inadequate.

The exclusivist paradigm is characterized primarily by a strong faith in, and a firm commitment to, the founder, teachings, rituals and culture of one particular tradition. A particular religious tradition in this paradigm is said to contain the only and whole truth. In contrast, an inclusivistic approach ends up appropriating all the credit for the goodness found among people of other faiths, and distorts the original significance of the treasures of other religions by imposing the group-specific interpretation on them. So far as the relativistic approach

is concerned, in it there is no scope for the absolute or transcendental truths.

The need has been felt for a paradigm that would maintain the integrity of a particular tradition as well as respect the distinctive identities, cultures and religiosities of people of other faiths. It is also expected that such a paradigm would foster global harmony and sustainable development. On these measures, the theory of *Anekānt* seems most adequate and relevant not only in the time of Bhagavān Mahāvīra but also today. It is a need of the time to develop a comprehensive or holistic approach in communities and relationships for doing justice to the phenomenon of ideological and cultural diversity. An understanding of such a paradigm is presented in this paper on the basis of the doctrine of *Anekānta* propounded by the seers and sages of Jain tradition from the time of Bhagavān Mahāvīra, as documented in religious texts, down to Acharya Mahaprajna.

1. The Meaning of Paradigm and Anekānta

The term 'paradigm' pertains originally to the theories of scientific knowledge as presented by Thomas Kuhn, the physicist and historian of science. According to him, a paradigm is "the entire constellation of beliefs, values, and techniques and so on shared by members of a given community".⁷ In other words, a paradigm can be understood as a model of interpretation of the context and the realities of existence as perceived and adhered to by a group of people. It is a frame of reference for intellectual activity, which gives direction to a community's life and work.

Doctrine of *Anekānta* has been developed by the Jain seers as a paradigm within the tradition. It not only articulates Jain perspective of the understanding of truth but also the perspectives of the understanding of truth of other schools of thought.

It is intuitive to see that a holistic approach must preserve the integrity of a particular tradition without harming the legitimacy of others. It must respect and put a high premium on the distinctive identities of others in terms of their cultures, faiths and religions, while preserving its own identity. It is clear that such a paradigm would foster global harmony and sustainable development. In this respect, doctrine of *Anekānta* appears, by far, to be the ideal paradigm of thinking not only in a particular field of human life but in any field whatsoever. It is very likely to be successful if utilized as a panacea to all the evils of conflicts, discord and tension which beset present day world. Although the emergence of this paradigm dates back to the time of Bhagavān Mahāvīra, it can safely claim to have the character of being a new paradigm against the present background of *ekāntavāda* i.e exclusive thinking everywhere. This paper is devoted to espousing the continued relevance of this paradigm on the basis of the interpretation of the doctrine of *Anekānta* given by Ācārya Siddhasena and Acharya Mahaprajna.

2. Paradigm of Philosophy of Co-existence and Non-absolutism

The term 'co-existence' affirms that both unity and diversity are equally real and relevant. The term 'non-absolutism' affirms multiplicity of reality and thereby accepts ideological differences regarding one and the same reality. Thus, Jain seers and philosophers were very clear from the very beginning that the reality is not only multiple but also diverse in nature. There are opposites inbuilt in the reality. Each reality has its internal as well as external opposites.⁸ However, in contrast to opposites which are contradictory, the opposites necessary for an existent reality are always non-contradictory or more precisely speaking, complementary. On the basis of non-

contradiction found in reality Jains have articulated Anekānta as a new paradigm of philosophy of co-existence and pluralism and have always been strict to it.⁹ They have applied this new approach not only to deal with metaphysical problems but also to deal with the problems of ethics, epistemology, logic and practical life.

The thing noticeable in this paradigm is that while a phenomenon has its own contribution to make to the metaphysical or social edification and growth of different philosophies yet, it is always relative. Here the term 'relative' does not mean uncertainty as it is understood in popular parlance. In the context of Anekānta, it means the particular context or reference of the truth stated. Whatever is said is said in a particular context or reference. It, therefore, is capable to reconcile diverse views and maintain healthy relation among the different aspects of the truth. Relativity implies that each phenomenon remains determinate and true in its sphere and false in a different context.¹⁰ For example, one can be son for his father but it is not true in context of his wife.

The term 'relative' also is meant to open the doors for new possibilities regarding the phenomenon. One's view of a phenomenon may evolve as one explores newer and deeper aspect, and gains different insights about reality at different points of time or in different contexts. For example, a bud becomes a flower, which becomes a raw fruit and then ripens. The reality of existence of those few cubic inches of space changes over time, and yet each stage is real in its own right. Similarly, a block of metal is a solid at one scale of view, a highly porous structure made of atoms at another scale of view, and an uncertain collection of waves at a third scale of view. It is a cool grey solid at one temperature, a red hot glowing structure at another, and a molten liquid at a third. And yet, each

view is authentic in its own context, and all these opposing facts together comprise the whole truth. Thus, the co-existential non-absolutistic paradigm seeks to do ideological and social justice to the contextual phenomenon. According to it, each phenomenon and statement, if taken independently and isolated from the other, can never yield an adequate idea of the real concerned.¹¹

This paradigm leaves room for difference of opinion – in fact promotes and to some extent mandates it – thus providing the ideal platform for inter-cultural dialogue which, in turn, enables communities to mutually edify and reform religious and philosophical traditions to proceed towards greater or holistic truth. It also addresses the problem of conflicting truth-claims of philosophies, creating the goal of seeking a non-absolutistic approach to dissolve these differences. Furthermore, it encourages inter-cultural reflection of contextual problems and challenges, and promotes relative and holistic thinking by relevantly addressing those issues.¹² This is the reason why the present day world needs to reflect on the implications of the co-existential pluralistic paradigm.

3. The Perspectives of the Co-existential and Non-absolutistic Paradigm

The paradigm begins with the observation that philosophical traditions represent different perceptions and conceptions of, and correspondingly different responses to, the real.¹³ These experiences of the real and the responses made thereto, take place within different substantial-model, spacio-temporal, socio-cultural, and politico-economic contexts.¹⁴ Each of these traditions provides answers to the mystery of life and the world in their own context. These answers, developed through a history of hundreds of years, seem to generally satisfy their adherents. And so, within each tradition the

transformation of human existence is taking place and also the search of truth is continued.

It is also a fact that in terms of the philosophical insight, intellectual power, cultural richness and social solidarity, none of the people of one culture considers his respective tradition to be in any way superior or inferior to any other culture. Thus, each philosophical or religious tradition is to be regarded as an alternative way of finding truth, without fearing that one would dilute the legitimacy of one's own tradition or culture by acknowledging the legitimacy of another. Contrary to it, by acknowledging other they become more authentic.¹⁵ Following the way one can find salvation, liberation, and enlightenment or fulfillment of any other specific goal set by the particular tradition. And yet, the people of different ideologies and faiths live together in society sharing with one another the struggles and sufferings of human existence as well as its joys and deeper quests for the truth. Thus, they constantly interact with, and mutually influence one another.

Co-existence and co-operation are necessary for life and also for the smooth functioning of society and world at large. The urgent demands for eco-human justice, peace, growth and spiritual development compel the people of different cultures with enriched potentials and treasures to enter into mutual relationships.¹⁶ In course of this relationship they can and must develop mutual understanding, learning and also the respect for the attitude of non-interference in the edifying interests of others. They would also find greater strength in maintaining their distinctive resources working for individual and societal holistic transformation. In other words, no particular culture or religion would claim absolute propriety and validity for itself at the cost of others. Each culture or religion emphasizes one particular aspect of the truth. And since the truth is multifaceted, no

aspect of it should be derogated as going against truth, within the limitations of common sense.

4. Religious or Philosophical Implications of the Paradigm

The co-existential non-absolutistic paradigm has important religious and philosophical implications. It brings out the distinctive, contextual, relative and yet, valuable characteristics of differences in philosophies and legitimizes their metaphysical and ideological differences. Practically it promotes non-interference, forgiveness and tolerance in the sense of respect for the differences.

Co-existential non-absolutism holds that neither do all philosophies and religions conceive of the 'Real' in the same way, nor do they produce the same human response to the 'Real', nor do they have the same expectations concerning the future of human beings beyond this life. In short, co-existential pluralists, unlike the absolutists, do not assert that a particular philosophical idea is only the truth. The paradigm also does not accept that all the ideas or truth-claims are of same value and validity.¹⁷ However, in terms of relationship with one another, the non-absolutists accord parity of status and mutual respect to people of different ideas and faiths.

The non-absolutistic paradigm presupposes a wider metaphysical, epistemological, contextual, linguistic, cultural, philosophical, religious, historical and social multiplicity. As people, cultures, countries, experiences, conceptualizations and histories are numerous and diverse. It is thus natural and reasonable for philosophical traditions to be multiple and varied.¹⁸ Multiplicity and diversity are essential characters of existence, both human and cosmic, and cannot be humanly – or even supernaturally – resolved into a single and final uniform oneness.¹⁹ All the philosophical and religious traditions are different expressions of the on-going interaction of individuals or

communities with what is considered the Ultimate, through the medium(s) of revelation, enlightenment, and empowerment within their historical and geographical context. Therefore, the context of time, space and the entire milieu of the birth of an individual become a decisive factor in determining one's ideological orientation and integral commitment. A person's race, color, caste and religion are certain 'givens' of life.²⁰ Individuals usually find meaning and fulfillment in life through the belief-systems and cultures in which they are born.

The co-existential non-absolutistic paradigm is critical of the absolutistic assumptions in which the truth perceived is only the ultimate and perfect or final truth, and only one institution or philosophy is considered a gateway to the Ultimate and not other.²¹

Non-absolutists also acknowledge that it is possible for people to change willingly from a nominal commitment to a vibrant faith. It is unjust to compel them to adopt any idea or religion by force or coercion because they have accepted and faithfully followed the 'given' religious factors of life, and because they have failed to comprehend and follow any other way of life.²²

Furthermore, the non-absolutist Jains hold that since every philosophy or religious tradition is a contextual response to a particular community's attempt to form a relationship with the Real, its adherents cannot claim that their particular view and way of life have wholly experienced, completely understood, and so fully expressed the nature and purpose of the Ultimate. The ineffable mystery of truth cannot be totally possessed by one particular tradition. Even the non-absolutist Jains regard that even a particular standpoint can exhaust the Ultimate if and only if the standpoint does not deny other viewpoints regarding the Ultimate. In this sense, every

philosophy or religion is a systemic whole. Though the search of truth is main purpose of all the religious and philosophical traditions, yet the articulation of truth in its entirety is almost impossible because human nature and existence are finite and contextually limited. The canon *Prajñāpanā* rightly remarks: "Truth is infinite, only an infiniteth part of it is articulable. What is expressed is, in fact, an infinitely small fraction of the infiniteth part of the articulable."²³

No particular religious tradition, therefore, can have the 'only' or 'final' word of authority on the understanding of, and relationship with, the Real. There is no question of 'absoluteness', 'superiority', 'discontinuity' or 'fulfillment' on the part of adherents of one philosophical and religious tradition in relation to others. No single philosophical or religious tradition can be universally decisive for all people and for all times. Indeed the phenomenon of ideological differences stems from partial and finite presentations of the infinite truth.²⁴

Every philosophical or religious tradition treasures a unique experience, understanding and expression of the Ultimate. It reflects or partakes of something of the Real. Each tradition has a certain unique distinctiveness in relation to others. That distinctiveness establishes it as an independent philosophy. Expressing this truth Acharya Siddhasena Divakara writes:

"There are as many angles of perceiving the truth as there are the ways of expression and there are as many philosophies as there are the angles of perceiving the truth."²⁵

All thoughts of school could be said to have a river-bank like character. A river has only two banks, but these may change character continuously as the river travels. As the river travels different states or countries becomes a bank

of the river. Thus, the river has many banks which increases its utility, while if there would be a single bank, it might not have rendered access to bigger population. The claim that this is my river may though be seen in political arena but is factually not righteous. Similarly, as there are many banks of the same river in different lands, there are many aspects or thought process of the same truth as different religious and philosophical traditions. Different religions are just different paths to help people of different interests to realize truth. Hence, the non-absolutists are critical of the traditional views of those philosophers or priests who assert that their particular experience of the Ultimate is only the truth.

Thus, in the co-existential non-absolutistic perspective every philosophical or religious tradition is an expression of the inter-play of the relative and absolute truth. Each religion relativizes the Real and at the same time transcends it. In other words, every philosophical idea or religion is a relative absolute.²⁶

Given the existential validity of the different philosophical and religious traditions as relative absolutes for their respective adherents, and the multiple nature of human and cosmic existence, the co-existential non-absolutistic paradigm holds the phenomenon of philosophical or religious differences to be permanent. It is, therefore, suspicious of any attempts to evolve a single world ideology and religion or any syncretistic religion, which indiscriminately patches up incompatible beliefs and practices. Non-absolutists advocate that people can live within the tradition through which they find meaning, power and existence-fulfilling transformation; at the same time they can be open to other philosophical or religious traditions for critical development and edifying enrichment.

5. Ethical Implications

In spite of being critical of the dogmatic or absolutistic approach of other schools of thought, the co-existential non-absolutists call for a positive dialogue and relationship through conditional dialects and relative approach.²⁷ Their goal is to leverage dialogue to lead to the evolution of a new society fostering mutual respect, understanding, peaceful co-existence and open mindedness in search of the truth.

The non-absolutist Jains recognize the right of every person to accept and practice a philosophical or religious view and a way of life relevant to his/her own context and helpful to harmonious peaceful co-existence. Asserting the multiple character of society, they do not approve of any undesirable dichotomies such as the "we-they", "right-wrong" and "superior-inferior" in the society as we see in the approaches of the exclusivists and inclusivists. Nor do they approve of any premature, unauthoritative, unilateral declarations, and judgments made by people of one tradition about others.²⁸

The co-existential perspective disapproves of all kinds of expressions which are absolutely exclusive.²⁹ It emphasizes to perceive truth in terms of identity cum difference. It is also critical of such traditional attitude which discriminates mankind on the basis of cast, creed, color, country and culture and overlooks the importance of humanity above all the differences.³⁰ The non-absolutists emphasize that people of other faiths should be seen as the member of one class and that is human class. Being rooted in distinct faiths they possess a distinctive uniqueness, a radiant vitality and a sense of purpose in life. People of other faiths are not some strangers living in distant lands; rather they are humans having the same bones and blood, living in the same community in which one lives, and related to one another.

in the daily struggles and joys of life. Indeed they should be regarded as 'own', 'neighbours', or 'brothers and sisters'.³¹

It would be better if people of different faiths can be treated as co-pilgrims or co-operators.³² As co-pilgrims, they journey together giving expression to their faiths and continuing the quest for deeper experiential knowledge of the Real. They also commit to be more authentic, relevant and holistic in their expressions of the Real. Therefore the co-existential non-absolutistic paradigm recommends that people of one tradition enter into genuine friendly, non-violent and co-operative relationships with people of other faiths. Such a relationship begins with the acknowledgement of equality of status for all people in the community. Certain commitments in life, while they demand the special loyalties of a person, also require the acknowledgement that other people could have similar commitments. Mutual recognition of one another's special commitments and loyalties is the only guarantee for order, harmony, and growth in society. For example, one's dedication to his/her family requires the due recognition of other people's dedication to their respective families. Philosophical and religious commitment also belongs to this category. Parity of status implies mutual respect, tolerance, forgiveness, and co-existence among people of different faiths. Not only does the ethics of inter-personal religious relationships demand it, but also the distinctive values and rich treasures of the different traditions command such respect, tolerance etc.

In the non-absolutistic paradigm, respect involves appreciation of all that which is true, good and noble in the different traditions. Due to this respect Jain thinkers could appreciate monism of Vedanta and fluxism of Buddhist philosophy. However, such appreciation does not remain silent about what may be considered evil, erroneous or objectionable within the tradition and in other

traditions.³³ Therefore, non-absolutists call for co-operative, mutually supportive, respectful, critical, creative, and mutually edifying fellowships among people of different faiths. The non-absolutistic paradigm is critical of the fallacious absolutist or relativistic model which affirms that all religions are the same. Such a position removes the necessity for inner struggle, mutual criticism, decision, and commitment. Rather, a blanket unifying statement fosters a shallow friendliness or sterile co-existence, thus producing philosophical and theological confusion as well as spiritual poverty.

The ethical implications of the non-absolutistic paradigm go beyond the concerns for wholesomeness in inter-personal relationships only among the partners in dialogue to the greater demands of justice, liberation, and humanization in the world. People of different faiths would have to mutually engage themselves in addressing the urgent challenges which mankind faces. Hence, the vision of the co-existential pluralistic paradigm consists of a genuinely ecumenical community, which would usher in a society of non-violence (sympathy, sensitivity and compassion), justice, friendliness and wholesome growth. However, the fulfillment of the ecumenical vision of the non-absolutists is beset with difficulties because of the ambiguous character of religions.

6. Problems of the Diverse Cultures

The co-existential pluralistic paradigm acknowledges the truth that religions could be involved in communal tensions and conflict in society if they are taken in the sense of sectarianism. In fact, religions are meant to promote peace, harmony and growth in society as Acharya Mahaprajna writes, "The main strengths of religion are non-violence, friendliness and fraternity."³⁴ Religions can thus be instruments of deception, oppression and conflict as well as agents of truth, liberation and peace

in society. In such a situation, non-absolutists advise a comprehensive analytical study of the factors which cause tension in society.

There are ideological causes, such as, the exclusivistic or inclusivistic attitudes that people of one philosophical affiliation adopt in relation to other people. Philosophical dogmatism or religious fundamentalism arise due to undue weightage by a particular group of people on a few tenets of their faith ignoring its limitation. Religious communalism is the political action of a religious group against members of other groups in a state of hostility and against other groups as such based upon the understanding of its superiority over others or exclusive status. It may be based upon the feeling that the other groups are infringing upon their rights or threatening their religion.

There are also social causes for tension in society. For example, the ignorance (and consequent fear) of one group of people about others could lead to misunderstanding and stereotyping of others, fear, and hatred. This ignorance could also be coupled with absence of self-criticism. Historical factors such as bitter memories of past instances of conflict could also be a source of social tension. Political forces could also cause divisions in society; they could politicize religion, exploiting religious elements and sentiments for the sake of power. Society could experience tension and conflict because of economic reasons as well. Therefore communal conflicts in society should not be naively interpreted as a religious phenomenon. While it is true that religions themselves can be forces of divisiveness, more often it is the inter-play of political, economic, and social forces, which are responsible for disharmony and conflict in society. These forces misuse religions for their selfish and unjust purposes.

In the context of communal division, tension and conflict, the non-absolutistic paradigm holds a more open

conceptual framework which could hold together the attitudes of different people in healthy relation and not in hostile conflict.³⁵ According to it, most of the philosophies and religions are originally distinct responses to the ultimate reality and so the partial truth is present in all of them.³⁶ To bring peace and harmony in society the paradigm insists on mutual dialogue and non-insistence in thinking.

Conceptual frameworks are most effective in fostering healthy interaction among people of different faiths when supported by constitutional frameworks. As an example, the Indian Constitution seeks to foster equal respect for all religious traditions to ensure non-interference of the government in religious affairs and non-discrimination among the citizens on the basis of religious affiliation. However, the empirical reality is that pressures from strong religious, social, and political groups bring about discrimination, tension and conflict in society.

Besides, complete separation of religion from socio-political matters cannot be brought about in many of the countries of the world. Hence, the present secular reality has failed to achieve the standards of the constitution.

The co-existential non-absolutistic paradigm aims at positive secular framework. In this framework, different ideologies and religions would be encouraged and given due space to play their own unique and distinct parts in social reform and healing of a pluralistic society. Acharya Siddhasena captures this thought as follows, "When discrete jewels unite with each other and occupy the place that is assigned to them individually in the string, they all together attain the designation of a necklace of jewels, disowning their individual names. Similarly, if all the different philosophies arrange themselves in a proper way and complement to each other, then each of them is worthy of being "the right view" technically known as "*Samyak Darśana*".³⁷ Here the claim goes beyond saying that every

philosophical idea has a place in the holistic truth. The profoundness of the analogy goes to say that every philosophical idea be it of the same tradition or different cannot have the same or similar position but its due position in the necklace. Like the locket will be one and central but it is beautified with the other pearls and stones organized in a creative sequence. Similarly, every aspect of truth is core in context to its own place.

7. Conflicting Truth-Claims and Inter-Cultural Dialogue

The co-existential non-absolutistic paradigm does not fight shy of the differences in the views and ways of life, which may become reasons for conflict among people of different faiths. It however proposes a holistic approach to the conflicting differences and the need to develop guidelines for critical and constructive inter-cultural relationships. Non-absolutists identify different kinds of conflicting truth-claims and suggest reasonable responses to the same. To begin with, there are conflicting historical truth claims like the case of the mosque Babri-Masjid and the birth place of Lord Ram controversy at Ayodhya in India. Such conflicts can be resolved by an unbiased assessment of the historical evidence. However, in certain cases it is difficult to get such evidence, particularly since history is often written by the victors. In some other cases, certain historical assertions are very fundamental to a community's beliefs and so adherents of the concerned traditions would be unwilling to revise them even in the light of contrary evidence. A mature religious approach is crucially necessary to manage the conflicts that arise when one of the two controversial views is proved wrong. The mature approach is also required to re-examine afresh the significance of the core of one's faith and to examine whether the essence of one's faith is shaken by such historical controversies. Such maturity can be cultivated within a co-existential relationship.

Secondly, there are conflicting trans-historical truth claims, such as the controversy about the origin of the universe or of the fate of human beings after death.³⁸ Such conflicts cannot be easily resolved and have to be courteously tolerated. Trans-historical beliefs could best be treated as traditional belief. Their truthfulness lies in their capacity to evoke an intended disposition in the lives of the adherents of a particular tradition. However, such beliefs should not be interpreted as universally applicable objective and literal scientific truths. Besides, it would be realized that many of these trans-historical truth-claims do not make any soteriological or liberated difference.

Lastly, one encounters differences in conceptions and experiences of the Real and responses to the same. These differences are rooted in the diverse contexts through which people encounter and relate themselves to the Real. Such differences could be considered as complementary rather than contradictory truth-claims. The famous parable of the blind men and the elephant clearly illustrates this point. Such differences do not require the adoption of exclusivistic or inclusivistic postures. In spite of asserting that religions could have complementary significance, the co-existential pluralistic paradigm acknowledges that there are values, riches, and truths among religious traditions that would mutually enrich and edify people of different faiths. For example, the triune concept of God of Hinduism can be understood better in the light of Jain concept of three-fold characteristics of the real.³⁹ People of different faiths could even contribute to understand one another in wider horizon.

By proposing a mature approach to deal with conflicting differences that includes openness, tolerance, reasonable and relevant hermeneutics, and a perception of complementariness, the co-existential non-absolutistic paradigm is not offering a simplistic solution to the

problem. It recognizes that critical principles would have to be developed in a multi-ideological situation without which non-absolutism might drown itself into a sea of relativity. However, such criteria would have to be developed by people of different faiths in relation to one another and not in unilateral isolation.

Besides, non-absolutists would hold that the issue is not about the religion of truth, but about the truth of religion. In fact, within every religious tradition there is a struggle going on between truth and the distortions of truth, between petrified traditions, outmoded dogmas, meaningless rituals, cumbersome ecclesiastical machinery, and the movement for dynamic traditions, relevant beliefs, meaningful ritual and liberated, holistic ecclesiastical structures, between life and the forces of death. One should not convert such a struggle into a battle between his religion and other religions. Yet, people of different religious traditions can hopefully agree on certain critical principles for determining the trustworthiness and relevance of one another's tradition. Certain criteria would have to be given special emphasis. For example, in the context of the problems of eco-human existence and the inadequacies of socio-economic and political systems and structures, religions would have to provide a vision of liberation and holistic development as well as dynamic resources to accomplish the same. If any religious tradition ignores or fails to address this issue its trustworthiness and relevance would be suspect. Another important criterion would be the test of the relational spirit among religious traditions. Since co-existential non-absolutism holds that all philosophies of religions have contextual and therefore limited experiences and understanding of the Real, people of no tradition can afford to live in isolation. Any religious tradition which adopts an exclusive posture asserting that it possesses the whole

Truth and the answers to all the problems that vex humankind, cannot be trusted.

Conclusion

In the present article, we have discussed Anekānta as a new paradigm of philosophy of co-existence and non-absolutism, its dimensions, and the vital role it can play in intercultural dialogue and the harmonious development across all societies. We have also examined its role in resolving the problem of the ultimate reality in relation to ideological differences. There are other issues as well like the means of ultimate revelation, enlightenment, and more, to which the non-absolutistic paradigm can be applied.

The paradigm provides a non-contradictory outlook to look at the plurality of and the difference in the approach of different schools of thought. According to it, the plurality and difference are not signs of any antagonism and conflict. Rather, they indicate the diversity of the manifestations of the ultimate reality from different perspectives ensuring the possibility of harmonious intercultural dialogue in all fields whatever. The novelty of the paradigm thus consists, as already explained above, in transforming the prevalent mood of conflict and antagonism by leaving ample scope for the aggrandizement of uniqueness and specificity of each culture.

Thus, there are views and voices being articulated in the world calling for a paradigm shift in every field of life to have peace and harmony in the age of globalization and cultural conflicts. Without losing particular identity how one man, society and culture can come close to other man, society and culture and, proceed towards the greater truth and inclusive growth of the globe. Let Co-existential non-absolutistic vision be an enterprise to realize the dream.

References

01. *Sūyagado*. (Part I, II). ed. Acharya Mahaprajna. Ladnun: Jain Vishva Bharati. 1984 and 1986.
02. *Viśeṣāvaśyakabhāṣya* of Jinabhadra Gaṇi Kṣamāśramaṇa. Mumbai: Divya Darshan Trust. V.S. 2039. Verse 2277. p. 464 –
natthi naehiṃ vihuniṃ sūttam attho ya jīṇamae kiñci.
03. *Sanmati-Tarka* of Ācārya Siddhasena. ed. by Sukhalal Sanghavi and Becharadas Doshi. With a critical introduction and an original commentary. Ahmedabad: L.D. Institute of Indology. 1st edn. (1939), Revised edn. 2000. Verse 1.14–
*na ya taio atthi ṇao ṇa ya sammattam ṇa tesu paḍipunṇam/
jeṇa duve egantā vibhajjamāṇā aṇeganto//*
04. (a) Cf. Paul F. Knitter, *No Other Name? A Critical Survey of Christian Attitudes Toward the World Religion* (Quezon City : Claretain Publications, 1985), pp. 75-96, Paul Knitter describes the conservative Evangelical Model with its emphasis on “one true religion”.
(b) Cf. *Ibid*, pp. 97-144, Paul Knitter discusses the “Mainline Protestant Model : Salvation only in Christ” and “The Catholic Model : Many Ways, One Norm.”
(c) Cf. *Ibid*, pp. 23-36, Paul Knitter presents the views of Ernest Troeltsch and other theologians.
05. *Thāṇam*. ed. by Acharya Mahaprajna. Ladnun: Jain Vishva Bharati. 1984. Sūtra 2.1– *jadatthi ṇam loge taṃ savvaṃ dupaoāram.....*
06. *Sanmati-Tarka* 1.9 – *davvaṭṭhio tti tamhā natthi ṇao ṇiyama suddhajāio/
ṇa ya pajjavatṭhio ṇāma koi bhayanāya u viseso//*
07. Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, Second edition, enlarged, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1970, p. 175.
08. *Thāṇam*, Sūtra 2.1
09. *Sanmati-Tarka* 1.12 – *davvaṃ pajjavavivyaṃ davvaviuttā ya pajjavā
ṇatthi....*
10. *Ibid* 1.9
11. *Ibid* 1.13 – *e e puṇa saṅgahao paḍikkama lakkhaṇam pi.....*
12. *Ibid* 1.14 – *ṇa ya taio atthi ṇao ṇa ya sammattam ṇa tesu paḍipunṇam/
jeṇa duva egantā vibhajjamāṇā aṇeganto//*
13. *Ibid* 3.47 – *jāvaiyā vayanapahā tavaiya ceva honti ṇayavaya/
jāvaiyā ṇayavāya tāvaiyā ceva parasamayā//.*
14. *Ibid* 3.60 – *davvaṃ khittam kālam bhāvaṃ pajjayā-desā-sañjoge/
bhedaṃ ca.....*
15. *Ibid* 1.21 – *aṇṇoṇṇaṇissīā uṇa havanti sammattasabbhāvā.*

16. (i) *Ācārāṅgabhāṣyam*. ed. Acharya Mahaprajna. Ladnun: Jain Vishva Bharati. 1994. Sūtra 1.66; (ii) *Tattvārtha Sūtra* 5.21
17. *Thāṇam*, sūtra 1.22-25
18. *Sanmati-Tarka* 3.47
19. *Thāṇam*, 1.9
20. *Uttarajjhayanāṇi*. ed. Acharya Mahaprajna. Ladnun: Jain Vishva Bharati. 1992-93. Chapter 10
21. *Sūyagado*. ed. Acharya Mahaprajna. Ladnun: Jain Vishva Bharati. 1984. Sūtra 1.1.7- 82
22. Ibid, Sūtra 1.1.7- 82
23. *Viśeṣāvaśyakabhāṣya*, the commentary of verse 450–
ukkosayasutaṇāṇi vi jāṇamāṇo vi teabhilappe vi /
na tarati savve vottum na pahuppti jeṇa kālo se //
...iha tānutkr̥ṣṭasruto jānānoabhilāpyānapi sarvāna (na) bhāṣate anantatuṅga.
24. *Sūyagado*, sūtra 1.1.7- 82
25. *Sanmati-Tarka* 3.47
26. Ibid 1.9, 21
27. Ibid 5.31 – *arpitānarpitasiddheh*, 1.9, 17-21 – *parsparopagraho jivānām*.
28. Ibid 3.51
29. Ibid 1.28
30. *Uttarajjayanāṇi* 25. 31 –
kammunā bambhaṇo hoi kammunā hoi khattio /
vaiisso kammunā hoi suddo havai kammunā //
31. *Śāntasudhārāsa* of Upādhāyāya Vinayavijaya. ed. and tr. Muni Rajendrakumar. Churu: Adarsha Sahitya Sangha. 1985. Verse 13.5-
Jivāstato bandhava eva sarve.....
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33. *Sūyagado*, chapter 1.
34. Acharya Mahaprajna. *Anekānt: Views and Issues*. Ladnun: Jain Vishva Bharati Institute. 2005. p. 3.
35. *Sanmati-Tarka*, kāṇḍa 1 and 3.
36. Ibid 1.28.
37. (a) *Sanmati-Tarka* 1.24-25 –
 (b) Acharya Tulsi. *Bhikṣunyāyakaṇṭhikā*. ed. Muni Nathmal. Churu: Adarsh Sahitya Sangha. 3rd edn. 1996. sūtra 5.21.
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39. *Tattvārtha Sūtra* 5.29 – *ūtpāda-vyaya-dhrauvyayuktam sat*.