

SPECIAL FEATURES

Anekāntavāda

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In a world full of complexity and diverse perspectives, finding the whole truth can often seem elusive. A spool of thread, simple yet profound may be the most emblematic invention ever created. A spool is an intricate path of possibility and perspective, and when unwound, with each twist, knot, and gentle pull, it unravels different paths, realities, and truths. So, how can each path lead to understanding the truth of reality? The explanation comes through anekāntavāda. This is one of Jainism's core principles, which shows the multifarious nature of reality. It is derived from the Sanskrit words "aneka" meaning many, and "anta", which means ends or perspectives. It suggests that everything has more than one side to it. To understand something, one must learn all aspects by using the principle of anekāntavāda, and only then is the whole truth revealed.

Let's understand anekāntavāda with the classic story of the blind men who encountered an elephant. The story begins with six blind men who all come upon an elephant, but one person touches its trunk, the other person its tail, ear, leg, etc. They all argued over what they had touched and came to different conclusions, but as they started describing what they had encountered together, they were able to conclude that they had found an elephant. Simply knowing the trunk or tail would only have given them the partial truth, which would have led them to the wrong definition/perception of an elephant. Only when each individual strand is inspected and put together does the whole picture come together and help reveal the truth as a whole and not partially. Simply knowing one aspect only reveals partial truths. This is the crux of anekāntavāda and it teaches that no single viewpoint can denote the whole truth because of reality's multifaceted nature. Jain philosophy accommodates a pluralistic understanding of the world.

Using the concept of anekāntavāda in one's daily life helps to give insight and helps Jains support a balanced and thoughtful way of living. This concept is very applicable to today's society as we live in such diverse times, thus an open and tolerant mind is incredibly important. In the context of today's society, anekāntavāda encourages us to question the curated images and narratives we encounter. People often present idealized versions of themselves, shaped by filters, editing, and selective sharing. While this can create a false sense of perfection, anekāntavāda reminds us that every individual's viewpoint is unique. By applying this philosophy, we can resist the temptation to judge others or ourselves too harshly based on partial representations. We learn to accept that there is no set path to success, happiness, or fulfillment. Instead of

comparing ourselves to the filtered portrayals we see online, we can embrace our own truth and honor the diversity of paths others take. So, to truly know the true nature of a spool of thread, one must examine all threads that create the tapestry to reveal the true picture, as anekāntavāda teaches.

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