India: Conflict and Coexistence.
Jainism's Conflict Resolution Strategies
for Contemporary Mediators

Ankit ANAND, Ishita CHATTERJEE, M. Shamima PARVEEN,

Rajneesh KUMAR, Gurminder KAUR

Ankit ANAND

School of Law, SRM Institute of Science
and Technology, Kattankulathur (KTR), India
E-mail: aa1424@srmist.edu.in

Ishita CHATTERJEE

School of Law, SRM Institute of Science
and Technology, Kattankulathur (KTR), India
E-mail: ishitac1@srmist.edu.in

M. Shamima PARVEEN

Saveetha School of Law, Saveetha Institute
of Medical and Technical Sciences, India
E-mail: shamimaparveen.ssl@saveetha.com

Rajneesh KUMAR

School of Law, Pondicherry University,
Kalapet, India
E-mail: rkgupta2311@gmail.com

Gurminder KAUR

School of Law, Pondicherry University,
Kalapet, India
E-mail: gurminder2410@pondiuni.ac.in

Abstract: This article aims to examine the relatively neglected yet significant role of Jainism, an ancient Indian religion based on the principles of non-violence, in establishing peace through conflict resolution. It explores how fundamental Jain teachings extend far beyond personal spirituality and provide guidance on resolving societal conflicts. The study discusses both historical and doctrinal dimensions, illustrating how Jainism offers clear guidelines for addressing conflicts in a non-violent manner. The article highlights how Jainism promotes a culture of peace through self-restraint, forgiveness, empathetic communication, and non-violence as its cornerstone. In the context of contemporary conflict resolution mechanisms, this study offers an important lesson, particularly for mediators seeking alternative methods that foster long-term peace by integrating traditional practices with philosophical interpretations—approaches increasingly relevant to the sustainable development of harmony. The article also provides pragmatic guidelines, showing how Jain conflict resolution mechanisms can offer profound insights and methods for mediators in today's world.

Keywords: Conflict resolution, Golden Rule, Jainism, non-violence, mediation, mediator.

Introduction

Jainism, one of India's oldest religions, provides a deep understanding of conflict and conflict resolution (Cort, 2001). It is an ancient Indian religion/philosophy dating back over 2,000 years, advocating *ahimsa* (non-violence), *satya* (truth), and asceticism (Jain & Kripal, 2009). At its core, Jainism is a philosophy of non-harm in thought, word, and deed, which profoundly influences its notions of conflict and resolution. While harmony and peace are the ideal practices of Jainism, one must understand that Jain society is not free from conflict either. As in any community, there are disputes and fights in different domains, perhaps making the study of conflict resolution in Jainism both relevant and insightful.

The dispute resolution process is essential in any social entity, as it handles and resolves disputes, leading to equilibrium and the smooth functioning of society. In Jain philosophy, conflict resolution is also a paramount consideration. There is a distinction in the Jain approach to conflict resolution, as it draws on the doctrines of venerated spiritual leaders, emphasizing beliefs such as *ahimsa* (non-violence), *anukampa* (compassion), and *anvad* (understanding) (Tyagi & Singh, 2023). When we look at the historical and philosophical background of Jain dharma, it becomes clear how these concepts can help settle disputes and ensure peaceful coexistence.

This article will explore aspects of Jainism and conflict resolution. It attempts to introduce Jainism's historical and philosophical underpinnings, from which conflict and its resolution may be differently perceived. It will then examine Jain dispute resolution and how Jain principles and practices are used to resolve conflicts. The article will also address theoretical models and findings derived from Jain teachings. Lastly, the paper explores how the critical insights of Jainism can provide helpful directions for contemporary mediators in different cultural settings to deal with and settle conflicts in the modern world. This study intends to contribute to contemporary discourse on conflict resolution and to suggest practical aspects for today's mediators, highlighting Jain conflict resolution models as relevant and important.

Jainism: Tracing the Origins and Evolution of an Ancient Faith

The roots of Jainism can be traced back to a time before recorded history, when Hinduism was already beginning to emerge in the Indus Valley (Panikar, 2010). The Aryan tribes from Central Asia moved through the passes of the Himalayas in the 3rd millennium BCE. They settled in India, where they developed the Sanskrit language and compiled the Vedas (Singh, 2017). These texts became the foundation of early Hinduism. The Aryans (a term referring to a social class rather than a race) influenced the religious culture of ancient India to a significant degree. Their language and religious practices contributed to the spiritual development of the region as they mixed with the indigenous population (Roy, 2013).

The early Vedic tradition was based on the rituals and hymns of the Vedic texts and was designed around the *ṛta* model of causality (cosmic order) and observation, which emphasized the direct participation of worshippers. The texts addressed the laws of nature, the rules of right and wrong, and lessons drawn from both material objects and philosophical beings. This tradition eventually shifted in emphasis, downplaying the role of the gods in favor of the concept of Brahman—an abstract, transcendent power underlying creation (Chaudhuri, 1954). Ritual authority was concentrated exclusively in the hands of priests. The ruling class, which monopolized knowledge of Sanskrit and the Vedic ceremonies, became closely tied to caste (Junghare, 2011). However, the monopoly of Vedic ritualism and the social caste system it reinforced gave rise to heterodox movements. These rejected the authority of the Vedas and the dominance of the Brahminical order, leading to a general philosophical division between the *āstika* schools (those that accepted Vedic authority) and the *nāstika* schools (those that did not) (McDaniel, 2013). The *nāstika* traditions, such as Jainism, Buddhism, and the Cārvāka school, offered alternative spiritual perspectives rooted in rational debate, ethical action, and individual emancipation rather than Vedic ritualism (Bhattacharya, 2022).

Although Jainism is regarded as eternal, it is also one of the oldest historically known religions in India; historical accounts affirm its existence. Some scholars propose that certain symbols and images from the Indus Valley Civilization (c. 3500–3000 BCE) (Carmichael, 2019)—such as yogic postures and seals from Mohenjodaro and Harappa— may be reminiscent of Jain iconography (Chakrabarti, 2001). Jain tradition associates these early images of meditating figures with Rishabhdev, the first Tirthankara, though this interpretation is not universally accepted in academic archaeology (Kumar & Das, 2018). Similarly, symbols such as the swastika appear on Indus seals, but in broader South Asian cultural contexts that cannot be attributed exclusively to Jainism (Jain, 2022). These archaeological elements nonetheless provide interesting clues to the early origins of asceticism and symbolism later developed in Jainism.

Although Jain tradition maintains that its teachings are traceable to ancient India, followers of the path hold that the first Tirthankaras lived millions of years ago—a claim modern scholars dispute. Some interpret the names Rishabh (or Rishabha) and Aristanemi as appearing in the *Rig Veda*, and the names of the Tirthankaras Rishabhdeva and Ajitanatha are found in the *Yajur Veda* (Jain, 2009). The term *Vratya*, which occurs in the *Atharva Veda*, has been interpreted by some scholars as possibly referring to early Jain practitioners (Chakrabarti, 2001). Moreover, references to *Maha Vratya* along with Rishabhdev indicate the religious ascendancy of Rishabhdev during this period. Other traditional and interpretive arguments suggest that Jainism was practiced even before the composition of the Vedas, asserting itself as one of the oldest religions of India (Chakrabarti, 2001). Rishabhdev is also recognized as a significant figure in early Indian spiritual history by the *Bhagavata Purana*, a well-known Hindu text, which further supports the Jain assertion that Jainism is an ancient tradition predating the Vedic age (Jain, 2009).

Jainism existed long before Gautama Buddha. Mahavira, the 24th and last Tirthankara, traditionally regarded as a contemporary of the Buddha, is estimated to have lived from 599–527 BCE and was born into the Jnatra (Naya) clan. The Jain tradition itself accepts the pre-existence of Jainism, and Buddhist texts likewise acknowledge that the religion predates Mahavira. Early Buddhist texts, such as the *Sāmaññaphala Sutta* (*Dīgha Nikāya* 2), also mention the *Niganthas* (Jain monks) as followers of Mahavira who embraced renunciation and asceticism (Carrithers, 1990). These texts further recognize the doctrines of the Tirthankaras that predate Mahavira, affirming Jainism as a pre-existing religion. At that time, the *śramaṇa* movement of Jainism was one of the most significant spiritual forces in northern India. Jainism and Buddhism share many common features—asceticism, renunciation, and moral codes—which reflect their shared roots in the wider religious and philosophical context of ancient India.

From soul to self-restraint:
An analytical survey of Jain metaphysics, epistemology, and ethics

Jain philosophy offers a unique perspective on metaphysics, epistemology, and ethics, resulting in an elaborate and intricate system of thought. It can be defined around six permanent realities, at the core of which are souls (*jīva*), matter (*pudgala*), motion (*dharma*), rest (*adharma*), space (*ākāśa*), and time (*kāla*) (Jain, 2006). Space is perceived as infinite, extending in every direction, although not all of it is inhabitable. It is poetically described as the habitation zone, a limited spatial area often compared to a standing man with outstretched arms. The principle governing motion manifests in this region as *dharma*, sustaining movement, while in contrast, *adharma* enables rest, bringing motion to a halt. The physical world lies within the thin middle strip of this inhabitable area, and beyond it are the higher realms filled with gods or spiritual beings. Jainism is considered dualistic, distinguishing matter and soul as separate substances (Jain, 2006). At the same time, because it rejects the notion of a creator god and views the universe as self-existent, it is also regarded as atheistic.

In contrast to theistic traditions, Jainism maintains that the universe is eternal and does not generate matter or souls. The Jain universe includes gods, but these divine beings are not all-powerful entities outside the cosmos; they too are subject to karma and reincarnation, just like human beings. In Jain belief, karma consists of a subtle form of matter that adheres to souls, binding them to the endless cycle of rebirth. Karma is neither inherently good nor bad; whatever a soul does generates karma, which it must later experience in another life. Liberation (*mokṣa*) is attained when a soul exhausts all karmic bonds—whether good or bad—and the cycle of rebirth finally comes to an end (Wiley, 2011).

According to Jainism, all living beings have souls and can therefore be hurt or helped. The recognition of the number of senses present in life forms creates a moral hierarchy in which living beings are evaluated according to their number of senses. Plants and elemental beings (made of earth, air, fire, or water) are at the bottom of this hierarchy, possessing only the

sense of touch (Chapple, 2017). Worms and simple animals can, at best, feel touch and taste, while insects such as ants are capable of smell (Chapple, 2014). Insects with larger brains, such as flies and bees, add vision to the mix, yielding four senses (Chapple, 2001). Humans, like many other animals, are equipped with five senses. The full range of senses allows humans to perceive the world around them, recognize their spiritual state, and grasp the need to escape the cycle of birth and death (Chapple, 2019).

The acceptance of pluralism is a central theme of Jain epistemology and is integral to the concept of *anekāntavāda*, or the multifaceted nature of reality. This principle holds that reality is too complex to be fully comprehended from a single perspective. Thus, no single statement can convey the entire truth about an object or phenomenon. It is often illustrated by the parable of several blind men, each touching a different part of an elephant and reporting their impressions. None of their descriptions is entirely wrong, but none captures the complete reality. From this principle arises a form of epistemological fallibilism (Barbato, 2017). Jainism therefore acknowledges that all human knowledge is provisional and limited, depending on perspective.

From the Jain point of view, philosophers have systematized this classification of knowledge under the category of *pramāṇas*, or valid sources of knowledge (Rautaray, 2022). These consist of sense perception, testimony (including scriptures), extra-sensory perception, telepathy, and the omniscient state (*kevala*) attained by a perfected soul. Although inference forms a separate category of knowledge in most Indian philosophical systems, early Jains regarded it as an extension of knowledge acquired through the senses or testimony. Later authorities added inference as a distinct *pramāṇa*, along with recollection and the ability to discern logical connections. Yet even with this extended list, Jainism maintains that the knowledge attained through these processes remains incomplete, since only a perfected soul can possess absolute knowledge—and such knowledge ultimately transcends expression through language.

Jain ethics are centered on liberating souls from rebirth by reducing accumulated karma. In Hindu and Buddhist traditions, karma is often understood in moral terms, as a type of cause and effect in which good or bad actions lead to corresponding outcomes. Jainism, however, conceives of karma as a fine material substance that adheres to the soul, thought to be deposited with every action taken, regardless of its moral character (Appleton, 2014). In this view, karma is a physical substance that attaches to both the soul and the body, meaning that all karma—whether good or bad—binds a being to the wheel of rebirth. Hence, Jain ethics emphasize renunciation of worldly things, the conquering of passions such as anger and greed, and the rejection of sensual pleasures. Asceticism is upheld in Jainism as the highest ethical life, as it seeks to extinguish desires and purify the soul of all attachments (Cort, 2017).

Jain monks practice strict morality, consisting of five vows: non-violence (*ahiṃsā*), truthfulness (*satya*), not taking anything that is not given (*asteya*), chastity (*brahmacarya*), and detachment (*aparigraha*) (Majumder, 2023). The chief precept is *ahiṃsā*, or non-violence.

It is regarded as the cardinal principle, since ignorance or passion harms others and obstructs the path to supreme spiritual progress. All Jains are therefore vegetarians, with many going further by seeking to minimize harm to plants and even microscopic organisms. The ultimate expression of non-violence is said to be voluntary fasting unto death, since this is the only way to avoid causing harm to any other living being.

From dispute to dharma:
Conflict resolution in Jainism through the teachings of Mahavira

Conflict resolution in Jainism is based on the teachings and practices of Lord Mahavira, the 24th Tirthankara, who promoted harmony, non-violence, and a realistic understanding of multiple perspectives (Lal & Bhandari, 1984). Jains follow the *caturvidha saṅgha*, or four divisions: *sādhus* (monks), *sādhvīs* (nuns), *śrāvakas* (laymen), and *śrāvikās* (laywomen) (Titze & Bruhn, 1998). Together, these groups form the structure of the Jain community, just as any organization has its internal conflicts. These groups—whether monks, laypersons, or members of both the monastic and lay communities—can come into conflict with one another. Although all practitioners share the same ultimate goal of *mokṣa* or liberation, underlying debates often stem from different understandings of perception, values, and life goals (Desai, 2024). Achieving *mokṣa* was the common aim of all followers in the time of Mahavira. These practitioners shared specific values as taught by Mahavira, but not all were equally skilled in applying them in everyday life. Conflicts frequently arose from differences in perceptions of tasks, values, and goals. For example, there was always a written code of conduct outlining the expected behavior of monks, nuns, and laypeople, which could become controversial. In at least one case, this conflicted with the actions of Evanta Muni. A young monk, Evanta, had been playing in a river with a wooden utensil used by monks, which broke the discipline rules and caused a dispute among the monks. The matter was referred to Lord Mahavira, who resolved the conflict by emphasizing the purity of Evanta's soul and assuring the others that he would attain *mokṣa* in that very birth. In this way, Mahavira's leadership and wisdom helped quell interpersonal tensions (Jain, n.d.).

Goal clarity was another point Mahavira emphasized, as is clear in the case of Megha Muni. Megha Muni faced a serious dilemma, as he struggled to adapt to monastic life and had nearly decided to abandon the order and return to his palace. Lord Mahavira helped him overcome this intrapersonal conflict by reminding him of his past life as an elephant, during which he had shown great compassion. This memory gave meaning to Megha Muni's struggle and reaffirmed his decision to remain a monk, restoring his inner peace (Jain, n.d.). Mahavira employed principles that are still relevant to conflict resolution today. He stressed the golden rule (Rakhshani, 2017), which encourages people to treat others as they wish to be treated. This message is reflected in the **Ācārāṅga** *Sūtra*, which reminds us that all living beings value their lives and wish to be happy (Singh, 2015). Mahavira believed that if this principle were universally embraced, many wars could be prevented.

The idea that all living beings are interconnected is central to the Jain concept of *parasparopagraho jīvānām*—the principle that all life depends on other forms of life. Through this doctrine, Jainism and its monastic tradition elevate the regard for life to an even higher level (Vallely, 2020). According to Mahavira's teachings, social welfare and cooperation are essential to maintaining balance in society. His doctrine of interdependence (*parasparopagraho jīvānām*), without historical precedent, embodies the belief that good conduct and mutual assistance can reduce social tensions, prevent disputes over material possessions, and counteract both attachment to material goods and selfish spiritual ambitions.

Another cornerstone of Mahavira's conflict resolution policy is his acceptance of different viewpoints. *Anekantavada*, or non-absolutism, is a key tenet of Jain philosophy that states that reality is complex, and two persons can have different views (Jewaria & Singh, 2024). Both views can be right or accepted in different contexts. Through accepting the truth of diverse perspectives, Mahavira guided his disciples toward cultivating tolerance and reverence for others' beliefs. Not just tolerance but one of the virtues taught by Mahavira to assist in social order and harmony. As the *Acharang Sutra* records, he tolerated bad conditions (while travelling, especially in hostile areas) (Jain, 2012). His behavior served as a role model for his followers, demonstrating that tolerance is the key to overcoming adversities and resolving disputes amicably. Another quality that Mahavira exhibited in his conflict resolution was broadmindedness. He was flexible when required, such as in the case of Evanta Muni. However, he also maintained reasonably inflexible ground rules—instead of rebuking the novice for his impertinence, Mahavira continued to remind all his followers that Evanta was a pure soul on its way to liberation. This openness and understanding helped alleviate many conflicts in the community, reminding us that open-mindedness will go a long way in preventing unnecessary clashes, especially across generations or with opposing views.

Counselling was of great assistance in resolving conflicts for Mahavira. He often counselled monks and laymen by offering guidance but never forcefully imposed his will. He had his tagline, i.e. "Do what is good for your soul," which denotes a non-pressuring leadership style. Mahavira had developed a capacity for self-examination and personal responsibility through his counselling, which prompted disputes to be solved without confrontation or external compulsion. Jain scriptures record Mahavira adapting models of conflict resolution and categorizing the theories into three main types: classical theory, behavioral theory, and third-party theory, and equating the first approach as the classical theory, which focuses on the minimization of conflicts; a behavioral theory, which perceives conflict as a means of healthy competition; and the third-party theory, where a third party intervenes to resolve the dispute amongst members of the group. The conflict resolution style of Mahavira was most in line with the classical theory, since this theory focused on reducing the conflict and minimizing it. He did not promote competition between his followers and sought no intermediate mediators from outside. Instead, his personal charisma and ethical leadership defused conflicts quickly, sometimes even before escalatory dynamics could set in. His concepts of non-absolutism, emotional contagion, and open-mindedness sustained peace and harmony in the Jain sect, and the disputes yielded brief and non-intrusive fluctuations (Jain, 2023).

The Jain Approach to Conflict:
Theoretical Models and Practical Insights

When one begins to investigate conflict resolution in Jainism, it is possible to identify various models based on their contribution to peace and harmony. Several of these inherited models characterize Jainism as practiced within the Jain community. One model presents Jainism as a minor, heterodox system eclipsed by Buddhism, portraying it as a peripheral tradition. Such views are based on the premise that once someone knows Buddhism, they know enough about Jainism, because Jainism is little more than a lesser form or a "darker reflection" of Buddhism (Bronkhorst, 2010). Another model depicts Jainism as an ascetic tradition with minimal political or popular relevance, branding it as tiresome and unremarkable (Dundas, 2003). In a third model, Jainism is presented as a stable and conservative tradition, always seeking to root out innovations that deviate from its original essence (Cort, 2001). From this perspective, all significant changes are credited to Hinduism. The dynamic Hindu tradition is believed to exert a one-way influence on the Jain community, which is assumed to be static.

However, a closer inspection of Jainism shows a more nuanced view. Jainism is a minority tradition that has maintained its identity and principles over millennia. It is not fundamentalist in the contemporary sense, but rather humble in practice yet firm in its core teachings. At the crux of Jain thought is *anekāntavāda*, the theory of non-absolutism, which contends that reality is multifaceted and no single perspective can ever grasp the bigger picture. It is a fundamental concept in Jain metaphysics, Jain epistemology, and Jain logic, and it governs Jain conflict resolution. *Anekāntavāda* is based on the complexity of reality and the possibility that things can possess multiple, even contradictory, attributes (Long, 2020). It considers the problem as a whole and creates a conflict resolution mechanism that encompasses all points of view and seeks harmony through a holistic method. This model is reflected in Jain texts such as the *Bhagavatīsūtra* and evolved further in the works of later scholars, e.g., Kundakunda and Hemacandra. *Anekāntavāda* acknowledges the emergence of conflicts due to differing perspectives and suggests that resolution lies in recognizing the validity of multiple viewpoints and pursuing a balanced understanding.

In practice, Jainism uses several approaches to resolve conflicts and promote peace. One model involves adapting appropriate language to communicate and harmonize with various people. Jaina scholars and practitioners have historically expanded their linguistic repertoire, using *Ardhamāgadhī*, *Prakrit*, *Sanskrit*, and regional dialects to further their reach (Jain, 2015). The multilingual nature of Jainism is testimony to its adaptability and commitment to peaceful coexistence. Another model emphasizes opting for actions that cause the least harm. While Jainism places high value on non-violence, it acknowledges that it is practically impossible to avoid causing harm altogether. Thus, Jainism promotes reducing harm through calculated steps, including practicing vegetarianism and discouraging other unnecessarily harmful actions. This principle also applies to the business world, urging parties to engage in practices that minimize harm. From the Jain perspective, models

of peaceful interaction with rulers and political authorities have also been developed. Historically, Jain communities have maintained friendly relations with their rulers, even when these rulers professed other faiths. Seamless coexistence with political power has been demonstrated by many Jaina kings and influential persons in history, such as Kharavela, Kumārapāla, and Jinaprabha, either by converting the king to Jainism or by encouraging the king to adopt *ahiṃsā* and support Jain institutions (Umamaheshwari, 2017).

The Jain model of classifying things provides a structural framework for organizing different elements of thought and action into separate categories and is a powerful tool for understanding and resolving conflicts. By classifying stages of spiritual advancement, reformers, and external influences, Jainism offers a systematic method of addressing opposing perspectives and incorporating them into a unified structure. The equality of all souls, a core Jain philosophy, also aids in tackling social injustice. According to Jain philosophy, social hierarchies and caste divisions are the creation of humans, not God. While Jain communities have worked to abolish specific social barriers and promote equality, they have done so through practical reforms, such as gradually providing women with rights and improving their status in society.

Regulation of the mind, speech, and body, known as *Gupti*, is a fundamental aspect of Jainism and the most significant factor in practicing the religion. It reflects Jainism's fundamental concern with preventing conflict at its source through self-restraint and self-governance. Jainism, in general, has adopted a non-aggressive and non-confrontational policy, a stark contrast to many other traditions that respond with aggression, assertiveness, or force. This approach is also evident in Jain art and architecture, where the community respectfully adopted influences from other traditions—not by usurping them, but by coexisting while maintaining their own identity—suggesting a sense of spiritual exclusivity. Such adaptation has frequently been interpreted as evidence of Jainism's humble, non-aggressive stance, particularly its historical inclination toward non-conflict and assimilation rather than cultural expansion and conquest (Joshi, 2009).

Timeless Wisdom for Modern Mediators: Applying Jain Principles to Contemporary Conflicts

These key takeaways are for contemporary mediators drawn from Jainism's principles and conflict resolution models.

Embrace Non-Absolutism (*Anekāntavāda*) to explore multiple perspectives:

Acknowledge and honour the reality that two or more subjective viewpoints can exist simultaneously and be true. Contemporary mediators can operationalize the Jain philosophy of *Anekāntavāda* (i.e., multiplicity is truth) by actively seeking to understand every party's perspective. For cross-border trade disputes, such as the U.S.–China rivalry

over technology and tariffs, mediators can recognize Chinese demands for technological autonomy while upholding the U.S.'s focus on Intellectual Property Rights (IPRs). Likewise, in the U.S.–India trade dispute, with the recent escalation in U.S. tariffs on Indian imports and the evolving discussions between the countries regarding new trade agreements and taxes, there are opportunities for mediators to understand the U.S.'s focus on energy security through strategic interests vis-à-vis India's concerns for energy independence and economic stability. By establishing all the viewpoints, mediators can facilitate mutually beneficial outcomes, such as phased tariff reductions, joint technology ventures, or renewable energy initiatives. This philosophy is grounded in interest-based bargaining models, which promote dialogue that is sustainable and constructive by addressing fundamental needs on all sides.

Incorporate compassion (*karuṇā*) in transformative mediation:

Contemporary mediators can utilize the Jain virtue of compassion (*karuṇā*) to enhance transformative mediation by providing a platform to see beyond limited, rigid perspectives. As the Russia–Ukraine conflict continues to unfold, mediators, basing discussions on compassion, can shift conversations from strictly nationalist storylines toward more universally human concerns, such as arrangements for prisoner exchanges and the protection of essential infrastructure. This humane vision moves the process from antagonistic haggling to redressing wrongs and facilitating respectful acknowledgment, which lies at the heart of transformative mediation.

More subtly, compassion can be applied to office politics and organizational disputes. Another example is disputes between labor and management that have flared around the shift to remote work. Mediators who help prevent adversaries from devolving into unadulterated caricatures of themselves—based on those responsible for them and those for whom they are responsible—create space for empathy. This approach not only enhances relationships but also fosters the development of long-lasting agreements based on mutual consideration.

Foster consensus through *Aparigraha* (Non-attachment)

Mediators can help disputing parties embrace *aparigraha* (non-attachment) by encouraging them to loosen their grip on particular outcomes. *Aparigraha* is a concept that can be applied even in global climate negotiations, such as under the Paris Agreement. Encouraging non-attachment to greed and possessiveness would motivate countries to prioritize saving the environment over individual economic gains. By fostering flexibility and mutually shared problem-solving techniques, consensus-building mediators can achieve durable solutions that gain acceptance from all sides, consistent with a multi-party mediation methodology. For example, countries may become more open to sharing green

technologies or setting carbon reduction limits that are fair and sustainable, rather than self-centred. This interpretation of *aparigraha* is grounded in consensual decision-making models, enabling a shift in focus from possessiveness to collective responsibility for the future of the planet.

Exercise *Gupti* (discretion) in sensitive discussions

Appropriate and sensitive language is critical to contemporary mediation, especially in cases of confidential or politically sensitive disputes. Through *Gupti*, a mediator can minimize the exchange of information and reduce the risk of emotional harm, as well as prevent the erosion of trust between parties. For instance, in an India–Pakistan conflict over Kashmir, employing *Gupti* means maintaining secrecy and speaking with caution. Mediators can facilitate private conversations so that both countries can discuss their fears and aspirations away from the glare of public opinion. This backstage approach is reminiscent of other forms of diplomatic facilitation, where confidence must be built and careful channels of communication opened in order to ease tensions and create conditions for a peace process to begin.

Adopt patience (*Kṣamā*) in phased negotiations

Modern conflicts, geopolitical or organisational in nature, often call for incremental progress. *Kṣamā* can be utilised by the mediator as step-wise agreements, beginning with simple accomplishments and gradually moving towards larger issues. For example, in the protracted Israel-Palestine conflict, mediators can use *Kṣamā* (patience) by initiating build-up agreements to engender trust over time. This could include opening discussions related to joint resources or cultural trade, which would lead way for further peace projects. The incremental strategy of the step-by-step approach corresponds both to the Jain principle of patience and to negotiation models in which movement to comprehensive peace occurs step by step.

Leverage non-coercive influence in high-stakes negotiations

Referring to the Jain principle of non-imposition, modern mediators can favor persuasion over force by promoting rational discussion and moral debate instead of simply threatening or imposing positions on others. This approach is particularly applicable in high-stakes settings, such as investor–state arbitration or international diplomacy, where a self-imposed purpose can foster compliance and reduce the intensity of contestation. The negotiations that led to the Iran Nuclear Deal provide a useful analogy. In such situations, mediators utilizing non-coercive influence can help direct actors to focus on long-term gains or losses related to cooperation and compliance. By engaging in dialogue

rather than escalating sanctions or threats, mediators place the parties in a position to reach sustainable agreements, consistent with Jain teachings on ethical persuasion and aligned with contemporary interest-based mediation models.

Design inclusive, multi-stakeholder processes

Contemporary mediators can apply the Jain principle of welfare toward all while resolving disputes by creating negotiation arrangements that are inclusive and participatory. In complex and contentious disputes, such as regional conflicts or corporate–community disagreements, the fairest outcomes are achieved when all those directly and indirectly affected are given a voice. For example, in negotiations over urban/rural development or resource allocation, mediators can engage community leaders, NGOs, and public officials to co-produce equitable agreements. A case in point is the facilitation of the South Sudan peace accord, where enabling marginalized groups and disparate communities to participate was crucial for achieving inclusive and lasting peace. These inclusive practices align with multi-stakeholder mediation models, in which the legitimacy and sustainability of results depend on acknowledging the interests and aspirations of all relevant actors.

Conclusion

Jainism offers practical and sensible measures for contemporary conflict resolution. The practice of non-violence is at the heart of Jain conflict resolution and encourages individuals to respect and communicate with each other without aggression. By emphasizing non-violence, even when parties are hostile and emotional, mediators make it easier for participants to enter a dialogic mode, reducing hostility and contributing to a more collaborative atmosphere. Moreover, the Jain belief in the multiplicity of viewpoints enables a mediator trained in this philosophy to invite disputing parties to understand each other. Encouraging empathy and common-ground-seeking behavior is necessary for any conflict resolution process that honors all parties.

Personal responsibility is a core Jain principle, and parties must identify their roles in the conflict and commit to improvement. This idea can be harnessed by mediators seeking to encourage accountability and reflection among disputants, leading to more sustainable and effective outcomes. With an emphasis on peace, empathy, and individual responsibility, some fundamental tenets of Jainism enable mediators to handle resolutions relating to contemporary issues with a sense of oneness. This method ensures that differences are resolved, laying the groundwork for the parties' continued mutual respect and collaboration.

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