

MANAGEMENT LESSONS FROM JAINISM



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Jainism, one of the oldest religions in the world, according to me, is not just a religion but a way of life. There are many instances in the lives of the 24th Tirthankar Lord Mahavir Swami or many other divine souls before or after him in the Jain scriptures that enlighten not only our spiritual or *Dharmik* journey but our worldly or *Sansarik* journey as well. Our *Sansarik* or worldly journey includes family as well as business ties. With the little knowledge that I have gained listening to discourses by various Sadhus and reading various books, I have found that one can apply principles of Jainism in all spheres of life. Mentioned below are some of the principles of Jainism and their application that I find relevant in our personal as well as professional lives.

Ahimsa (Non-violence):

Ahimsa is one of the core principles of Jainism, advocating non-violence in *Man-Vachan-Kaya* i.e., thought, word, and action. This principle suggests resolving conflicts through dialogue and negotiation rather than resorting to aggression or coercion. Leaders can create a harmonious and non-threatening work environment by promoting mutual respect and understanding among team members. Conflict resolution is the biggest challenge in a domestic environment as well. By practicing *Ahimsa*, we tend to view every situation and person with an open mindset and empathise with the other person's situation, thereby resolving a conflict faster and more effectively.

Anekantavada (Multiplicity of Viewpoints):

Anekantavada teaches that truth or reality is complex and multifaceted, and it can be perceived differently from different perspectives. This principle encourages us to consider diverse viewpoints and opinions when making decisions. Embracing diversity of thought fosters creativity and innovation within teams and helps in devising comprehensive strategies that account for various possibilities.

Aparigraha (Non-possessiveness):

Aparigraha emphasizes non-attachment and simplicity. In a management context, this principle encourages us to adopt a minimalist approach to resources and assets. It suggests avoiding unnecessary accumulation and wastage of resources, thereby promoting sustainability and efficiency in business operations. It also keeps a person's ego in check. More often than not, ego is found to be the root cause of many disputes.

Satya (Truthfulness):

Satya underscores the importance of honesty and integrity in all dealings. Managers who adhere to this principle build trust and credibility among their team members and stakeholders. Transparent communication and ethical behaviour contribute to a positive work culture and long-term success for the organization. *Niti* or Ethics is also the base of all moral values that our elders have practiced. That is their real legacy to us which we would also like to teach and leave for the coming generations.

Tapas (Self-discipline):

Tapas or *Tapasya* refers to self-discipline and self-control. In a professional setting, practicing *tapas* involves setting high standards for oneself and adhering to them rigorously. Leaders who demonstrate discipline inspire their teams to follow suit, fostering a culture of accountability and commitment to excellence. Self-discipline is also the top most important practice if one wants to excel in any organised Sports

Sanyam (Self-restraint):

Sanyam emphasizes restraint and moderation in desires and actions. We can apply this principle by promoting a balanced approach to goal-setting and decision-making. By avoiding extremes and maintaining equilibrium, leaders can ensure sustainable growth and avoid burnout among their team members.

Seva (Service):

Seva emphasizes selfless service and compassion towards others. By practicing *Seva*, we prioritize the well-being and development of our team members. By nurturing a supportive and empowering work environment, we can foster employee engagement and loyalty, ultimately enhancing organizational performance. In our community, *Seva* is practiced at a huge scale in many fields, be it educational, medical or financial. There are many organisations like CVOCA founded by visionaries of our community, that are giving relentless and selfless *Seva* not only for the people at large but also for animals, without expecting anything in return. We all try to be a part of or support such organisations in our own small way by giving our money or time or both for furthering their causes. It imbibes in us a sense of gratitude.

By incorporating these principles in our lives, we can cultivate a workplace culture that is not only efficient and productive but also ethical, compassionate, and sustainable. Also, leading by example is the best style of leadership. This is also true in a parenting scenario. Children always learn more by observing their parents rather than listening to them. Mahatma Gandhi has rightly said *“Be the change you want to see in others”*.

