Narrative Review

The Correlation of Soul and Knowledge: A Philosophical Analysis from the Jain Perspective

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Abstract

Background: Jain philosophy treats consciousness as an ontological feature of the living self (*Jiva* [~soul]/*atma* [~soul]) and locates knowledge (*jnana* [~knowledge]) as an intrinsic, self-luminous quality that becomes manifest as karmic obscuration is attenuated. **Objective:** To synthesise classical Jain scriptural and philosophical positions on the soul-knowledge relation and to present a coherent narrative account of how epistemic purification functions within Jain soteriology. **Methodology:** A narrative review was undertaken using (i) primary Jain sources in Prakrit and Sanskrit (canonical works and authoritative commentaries) and (ii) secondary scholarly literature on Jain metaphysics and epistemology. Concepts were extracted, compared across sources, and organized into themes spanning ontology, epistemology, and liberation theory. **Results:** Across sources, knowledge is presented not as an externally acquired property but as the soul's essential mode of *Upayoga* (~cognitive engagement) (cognitive engagement), expressed primarily as knowledge (*jnana* (~knowledge)) and perception (*Darshana* [~perception]). Jain epistemology classifies knowledge into five stages (mati, sruta, avadhi, manahparyaya, and kevala), which can be read as a graded unfolding of the soul's innate luminosity. The apparent tension between identity and difference of soul and knowledge is resolved through *Syadvada* (~conditional predication) and *Anekantavada* (~nonabsolutism), allowing conditional identity without reducing the soul to a single attribute. **Conclusion:** The reviewed literature supports a robust Jain account, in which refinement of knowledge mirrors purification of the soul, and the path to liberation is explicated as the progressive manifestation of inherent cognition through the removal of karmic veils.

Keywords: *Anekantavada (~nonabsolutism), Atma (~soul), consciousness, Jiva (~soul), Knowledge, Soul, Syadavada (~conditional predication), Three Jewels, Upayoga (~cognitive engagement)*

Introduction

Jain philosophy presents a profound vision of the relationship between soul (*atma* [~soul]) and knowledge (*jnana* [~knowledge]), seeing both as inseparable aspects of consciousness. Every living being possesses an eternal soul whose true nature is pure knowledge and perception. When bound by karmic influences, this soul is termed *Jiva* (~soul); when liberated, it is *atman* (~soul). Knowledge, therefore, is both the essence and the means of liberation, guiding the soul toward freedom from the cycle of birth and death. The study is guided by a central research question: how does Jain philosophy explain knowledge as an inherent attribute of the soul, and in what manner does its purification contribute to spiritual liberation? This article adopts a qualitative research methodology to examine how the correlation defines the nature of consciousness and spiritual liberation, anchored in an integrated approach that combines rigorous study of classical Jain scriptures and modern scholarly interpretations to bridge classical insight with contemporary understanding.

The core of the research is a detailed textual analysis of seminal Jain works composed in Prakrit and Sanskrit, including Acharya Kundakunda's Samayasara, pravachanasara, panchastikaya, ashtapahud, and niyamasara;[1-5] Acharya Gunadhara's kasayapahuḍa,[6] Acharya Vattakera's moolachara,[7] Acharya Shivarya's bhagavati aradhana;[8] and Acharya Umaswami's tattvarthasutra,[9] a foundational Sanskrit treatise composed in aphoristic form. These texts are examined to extract systematic doctrinal insights into the intrinsic

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relationship between soul (*jivatma* [~individual soul]) and knowledge (*jnana* [~knowledge]), the mechanisms of karmic obscuration and the philosophical process of epistemological purification. In addition to classical sources, the article engages with interpretations offered by modern scholars of Jain studies, thereby identifying conceptual continuities, theoretical refinements, and hermeneutical developments within the tradition. Through this blended methodology – combining scriptural exegesis, philosophical analysis, and engagement with modern scholarship – the article aims to present a coherent and contextually relevant understanding of the Jain Correlation between the soul and knowledge. Additional doctrinal sources consulted for doctrinal context and commentary included Jain Siddhant Deepika,[10] Jainendra Siddhanta Kosha (Vols 1-4),[11] Paramatma Prakasha,[12] Pravachanasara with Tattvapradipika commentary,[13] Ṣhatkandagama with Dhavala commentary,[14] an alternate translation of Samayasara,[15] Samayasara Kalash,[16] and Adhyatma Saar.[17]

Methodology

Design

This article is presented as a narrative review with a doctrinal-textual component. The review aims to synthesise concepts rather than to compute pooled estimates or meta-analytic outcomes.

Review question

How does Jain philosophy explain knowledge (*jnana* [~knowledge]) as an inherent attribute of the soul (*Jiva* [~soul]/*atma* [~soul]), and how does epistemic purification contribute to liberation (*moksha* [~liberation])?

Sources and corpus

Primary sources comprised key Jain philosophical treatises and canonical materials in Prakrit/Shauraseni and Sanskrit (e.g., works attributed to Kundakunda, Umaswami, and classical commentators). Secondary sources included peer-reviewed articles, scholarly monographs, encyclopaedic works, and accessible institutional web resources on Jain studies.

Search strategy for secondary literature

Keywords and Boolean combinations were used around the following clusters: "Jain" AND (*Jiva* [~soul] OR atman [~soul] OR soul) AND (*jnana* [~knowledge] OR knowledge OR consciousness) AND (*Upayoga* [~cognitive engagement] OR *Darshana* [~perception] OR kevalajnana [~omniscience] OR *Anekantavada* [~nonabsolutism] OR *Syadvada* [~conditional predication]). Forward and backward citation chasing were used to identify additional relevant scholarship.

Eligibility criteria

Included sources were (i) directly concerned with the soul-knowledge relation in Jain metaphysics/epistemology or (ii) provided necessary doctrinal context (e.g., *dravya* [~substance] taxonomy, karma theory, *Ratnatraya* [~three jewels]). Excluded materials were purely devotional writings without doctrinal argumentation, nonattributable online content, and sources not sufficiently linked to the review question.

Data extraction and synthesis

From each source, definitional statements, classifications, and arguments related to *Jiva* (~soul), *Chetana* (~consciousness)/*Upayoga* (~cognitive engagement), *jnana* (~knowledge)/*Darshana* (~perception), karmic obscuration, and the stages of knowledge were extracted. Extracted material was coded into themes and synthesized narratively across three analytic domains: (a) ontology (what the soul is), (b) epistemology (how knowledge functions), and (c) soteriology (how knowledge and conduct effect liberation).

Citation handling

For classical Jain texts, internal locators (e.g., sutra number, chapter/verse, or kalasha) are given in the text, followed by the corresponding Vancouver reference number in square brackets.

Table 1 presents the primary Jain texts emphasized in this review – Samayasara,[1] Pravacanasara,[2] Tattvarthasutra,[9] Sarvarthasiddhi,[18] Dravyasaṃgraha,[19] Acaranga Sutra,[20] and Moolachara[7] – along with their attributed authorship, approximate period, language/genre, and analytic use within the narrative synthesis.

Results and Thematic Synthesis

The thematic synthesis is presented in three clusters: (i) ontological foundations of *Jiva* (~soul), (ii) epistemology of *jnana* (~knowledge) as *Upayoga* (~cognitive engagement), and (iii) the pluralistic logic that clarifies identity and difference between soul and knowledge and connects them to liberation.

Ontological ground of *Jiva* (~soul) in Jain philosophy

Jiva (~soul) as a real and eternal substance

Jain metaphysics is grounded in a realist and pluralistic ontology, positing the existence of multiple, independent substances (*dravya* (~substance)). In Jain philosophy, the analysis of substance is highly subtle and profound. Broadly speaking, the entire universe is composed of two fundamental categories of substances: (1) *Jiva* (~soul) (the sentient or living entity) and (2) Ajiva (the nonsentient or nonliving). The category of Ajiva is further divided into five kinds-*Pudgala* (~matter) (Matter), *Dharma* (~principle of motion) (subsidiary principle of motion), *Adharma* (~principle of rest) (subsidiary principle of rest), *Akasha* (~space) (Space), and *Kala* (~time) (Time). All six substances co-exist and mutually accommodate one another while preserving their distinct identities, even

Table 1: Primary Jain texts emphasised in the review and their analytic use

Primary text	Attributed author	Approximately period	Language/genre	Use in this review
Samayasara	Ac. Kundakunda	c. 1st Century CE	Shaurseni Prakrit, Spiritual cum Philosophical treatise	The intrinsic nature of the soul, Ratnatraya, self-realisation, inward turn to the pure
Pravachanasara	Ac. Kundakunda	c. 1st Century CE	Shaurseni Prakrit, Doctrinal cum Philosophical treatise	Knower-knowledge unity; examples for soul-knowledge correlation; syadvada framing
Tattavarthsutra	Ac. Umaswami	c. 1st Century CE	Jain Philosophical Sanskrit Sutra text	Systematic categories of substance, knowledge and liberation; definitional backbone
Sarvarthasiddhi	Ac. Pujyapada	c. 5th Century CE	The earliest extant commentary on the Tattvārthasūtra	Doctrinal clarification of knowledge as agent, instrument and act
Dravyasangraha	Ac. Nemichandra	c. 11th Century CE	Shaurseni Prakrit; classical Jain text related to metaphysical doctrines	Ontological portrait of jiva and its intrinsic qualities
Acharanga Sutra	First Anga Agama	Early Canon	Ardhamagadhi Prakrit; 1st Anga Canonical Text	Canonical identity statements linking self and knowing
Moolachara	Ac. Vattakera	c. 2nd-3rd Century CE	Shaurseni Prakrit; classical text on code of conduct of Ascetics	Statements on right knowledge illuminating substance and conduct

though they are interrelated. The term *astikaya* (~extended substance), applied to the first five realities, denotes spatial extension, meaning a real entity possessing plurality of parts (pradesh). *Kala* (~time) (time), however, is not an *astikaya* (~extended substance), as it lacks spatial extension and constituent parts. Each of these substances exists eternally as an independent reality.[21]

Together, the one living and five nonliving substances constitute what Jain thinkers describe as ṣaḍ-dravyātmako lokaḥ-that is, "the universe is composed of six substances." Among the six substances, the *Jiva* (~soul) is the primary element because the rest are in the category of nonconscious (Ajiva). Therefore, the *Jiva* (~soul) is the primary element in both *samsara* (~cycle of birth and death) (the cycle of birth and death) and *moksha* (~liberation) (liberation).

Conceptual clarification of *Jiva* (~soul), *Atman* (~soul), and consciousness

In Jain philosophy, the soul is referred to by several names, among which *Jiva* (~soul) holds particular significance. Although the term *Jiva* (~soul) generally denotes a being subject to the cycle of birth and death, while the word *Atman* (~soul) is used to signify the liberated soul, both essentially refer to the same fundamental reality. The distinction lies not in their nature but in their existential condition.[22] The soul, by virtue of its inherent qualities of knowledge (*jnan* [~knowledge]) and perception (*darshan* [~perception]), is the *atman* (~soul); yet when it assumes embodied existence within the worldly realm, it is called *Jiva* (~soul).[23] Even though the "*Jiva* (~soul)" is an "*atma* (~soul)" due to its Cognitive and conative nature, still, in the worldly condition, by possessing vitality, it is called "*Jiva* (~soul)."

The term *Jiva* (~soul) denotes all forms of living existence. Its defining attribute is consciousness, which constitutes its essential nature. Thus, it may be stated that the soul is inherently conscious, and consciousness is the very essence of the soul. The crucial distinction between *Jiva* (~soul) (soul) and Ajiva (nonsoul) lies in the presence of *Chetana* (~consciousness) or *Upyoga* (~cognitive engagement), that is, sentient activity or consciousness. Rather, its existence is not deduced from any objective indication, but is directly experienced in svasamvedana, the immediacy of self-consciousness itself. Pleasure and pain, joy and sorrow, are not floating events; they imply the presence of a conscious background in and upon which they themselves appear and occur. Svasamvedana indicates the self-awareness of the self in every conscious act. Wherever there is cognition, there is concomitant affection; wherever there is conation, there is the radiant presence of consciousness itself, witnessing to the existence of the soul as the abiding subject of every conscious process.[24]

This consciousness manifests through two fundamental aspects – knowledge (*jnan* [~knowledge]) and perception.[25] These two are the important *Upayoga* (~cognitive engagement) (manifestation) of consciousness. This manifestation represents the active expression

of consciousness, primarily through intelligence and intuition, and further manifests as knowledge, perception, emotions, will, behavior, and the experience of pleasure and pain.[26] This discussion established that consciousness in Jain Philosophy becomes operative through *Upayoga* (~cognitive engagement), whose primary expression are knowledge and perception, a relationship examined in little detail in section 3.4 of this article.

Multifaceted characteristics of soul

In Jainism, the soul (*jivatma* [~individual soul]) is considered to be essentially pure and immutable. It is free from all material qualities and is not affected by changes in the physical and mental world throughout the existence of a being. It is an endless source of infinite qualities such as life, consciousness, knowledge, perception, bliss, and omniscience. All these qualities are embedded within it and are unaltered; they are at their fullest in liberation or omniscience, and in the cycle of birth and death, they are in a latent form.[27] Various sources such a Jain Literature discuss the nature and qualities of the soul in terms of awareness, bliss, and energy within it. The soul's inherent purity and transcendence are critical aspects of its relationship with knowledge.

The power of the soul, its infinite attributes, and the eternal nature of the soul, etc., are described in Jain Philosophy in various scriptures. In Dravyasaṁgraha, Muni Nemichandra Siddhantideva (11th Century AD) describes the glory of the soul, mentioning the eight characteristics of Soul (*jīvatma* [~individual soul]) –

> "jīvo uvaogamao amutti kattā sadehaparimāṇo bhottā saṁsārattho siddho so vissasoḍḍhagaī."

That is, the *Jiva* (~soul) is essentially defined by consciousness (*cetanā* [~consciousness]), which is intrinsically linked with manifestation (*Upayoga* [~cognitive engagement]), encompassing both perception (*Darshana* [~perception]) and knowledge (*jnan* [~knowledge]). It is nonmaterial and formless (amūrta) in nature, yet possesses the capacity to act and engage in performing action (kartā), co-exists in that form, whatever type of body a *Jiva* (~soul) acquires (swadeha parimāṇa), is an enjoyer of the fruits of actions (bhoktā), is situated in the world of the cycle of birth (*saṁsāra* [~cycle of birth and death]), is liberated (*siddha* [~liberated being]), and has the nature of upward intrinsic movement (ūrdhvagamana).

The above shaurseni prakrit verse presents a comprehensive ontological portrait of *Jiva* (~soul) as understood in Jain philosophy, with consciousness (*Chetana* [~consciousness]), with *Upayoga* (~cognitive engagement) – expressed as perception and knowledge – at its core. It situates knowledge not as an acquired function, but as an intrinsic mode of being. Other attributes, such as agency, enjoyer ship, embodiment, transmigration, and liberation, operate through this conscious foundation. This strengthens the argument by anchoring the soul-knowledge that emerges as a defining and continuous characteristic of the soul, persisting across states of bondage and liberation, thereby reinforcing their inherent correlation.

Thus, in Jain philosophy, the soul is a conscious, formless, and active entity that experiences the outcomes of its deeds, moves through the cycle of rebirth, and ultimately aspires toward liberation, reflecting its innate drive for spiritual ascent.

Structural distinctions of the soul in Jain thought

The biggest feature of Jain philosophy is that, here, it is believed that "appa so paramappa," that is, all souls are the Supreme Soul. Everyone is divine by nature. If you know yourself, recognise yourself, and become engrossed in yourself, then you can become divine even in the apparent form. We are worldly beings and we have the potential to be divine, but the development of spirituality is not the same in all souls, so from this point of view, three distinctions have been made between souls in Jain philosophy-bahiratma (one engrossed in sensual pleasures), antaratma (one having self-discipline, righteousness, detachment, etc.), and paramatma, (i.e., supreme soul or pure self) – the Extrovert Soul, the Introvert Soul, and the Supreme Soul respectively. This indeed was one of the great spiritual insights given by Acharya Kundakunda (1st cent AD, venerated Jain preceptor) to the world.[28] He has said in Rayaṇasara that "The yogi detached from sense-pleasures gets rid of karmas and the yogi attached to sense-pleasures gets bound with karmas, therefore, understand the distinction between "the extroverted-soul (bahiratma), the introverted-soul (antaratma), and the pure-soul (paramatma)." What more is there to say?"[29]

In Mokkhapahuda (Atthapahuda), Acharya Kundakunda briefly explains that –

> "Living beings have three kinds of souls – the extroverted soul (bahiratma), the introverted soul (antaratma), and the pure soul (paramatma). The senses are the external soul, the resolution of the soul is the inner soul, and the soul free from the taint of karma is called the Supreme Soul. Parmatma is the noun for God. Taking refuge in the introverted soul and getting rid of the extroverted soul, one should meditate on the pure soul. The Omniscient Lord has expounded that one should get rid of, in all activities of the mind, the speech, and the body, the extroverted soul, take refuge in the introverted soul, and meditate on the pure soul.

In the Samadhishataka, these three states of the soul are defined as follows: "Bahiratma, Antaratma and Paramatma are the three states of the soul. Karana Paramatma is the root cause of these forms or states and is the highest goal where the *Jiva* (~soul) has to reach and rest. From the empirical standpoint (vyavahara-*naya* [~standpoint]), the worshipful reality abides within the body conceived as a

temple, while from the absolute (paramartha) standpoint it remains entirely distinct from the body. This beginningless and endless principle, whose essential nature is omniscient consciousness (*Kevala-jnana* [~omniscience]-svabhava), is designated as the Casual Supreme Self (Karana Paramatma). Through its contemplation, the karmically conditioned individual soul attains identity with the Supreme Self, analogous to fire produced from bamboo through self-friction. With the rise of omniscience, all karmas are destroyed through cessation of *yoga* (~spiritual discipline) (*yoga* [~spiritual discipline]-nirodh), and upon liberation at the summit of the cosmos (loka-shikhar) in *Siddhalaya* (~abode of liberated beings) (abode of the liberated soul), the Casual Paramatma becomes fully and manifest explicitly manifest in that very liberated state.

The point is that the external soul is the soul that is in ignorance and delusion, identifying itself with the body, emotions, desires, and material attributes. When this same soul awakens, recognizing its true, eternal nature and no longer associating itself with desires, it becomes the inner soul, the one that attains right faith and true knowledge. When this same soul realizes its pure essence, where all imperfections and suffering cease, and complete peace and self-realization are attained, it is called the Supreme Soul. The soul's journey moves from ignorance to awakening, and finally to absolute purity and peace.[30]

According to Jain Philosophy, the exploration of any truth is approached through various *nayas* (~standpoints) or perspectives. In this context, the quest for understanding the true Self is undertaken by the antaratma, the inwardly focused soul that contemplates its own intrinsic nature. The third stage, referred to as Paramatma-swarūpa, signifies the realization of the Perfect self– a state attained through inner discipline, meditation, and spiritual effort (*tapas* [~austerity] or *yoga* [~spiritual discipline]). This transcendental condition lies beyond all relative distinctions and represents the supreme realization of existence, the ultimate goal towards which every soul aspires.

Ontology and praxis: The soul in relation to *Ratnatraya* (~three jewels)

As mentioned earlier, in Jain Philosophy, the soul is regarded as a conscious, eternal, and independent entity possessing the inherent capacities of knowledge and perception. The spiritual progress of the soul depends on the realization of its nature through the practice of the Three Jewels (*Ratnatraya* [~three jewels])-*Samyagdarshan* (~right faith) (right faith), *Samyagjnan* (~right knowledge) (right knowledge), and *Samyagcharitra* (~right conduct) (right conduct). These three are inseparable and together constitute the path to liberation (*Mokṣa* [~liberation]). Right Faith provides the conviction in truth and the purity of perception; Right knowledge offers a clear and accurate understanding of reality; and right Conduct transforms this realization into ethical and spiritual discipline.

Acharya Kundakunda emphasizes in his text Samayasara (1.16) that the path to self-realisation lies in the realisation and practice of these three jewels (*Ratnatraya* [~three jewels]). For the ascetics, who renounce worldly attachments and possessions, these three serve as the foundation of spiritual progress. True realisation of the self requires not only an understanding of its pure nature as viewed by the transcendental point of view (*Nishcayanaya* [~transcendental standpoint]) but also disciplined application of ethical conduct as explained through the empirical point of view (Vyavahara *naya* [~standpoint]). Thus, the genuine ascetic recognises that these three jewels are not external aids but intrinsic to the self itself – a unity of knowledge, faith, and conduct that embodies the essence of spiritual perfection. When harmonised, these three jewels lead the soul from ignorance and bondage towards purity and self-realisation.[1]

Knowledge (*Jnana* [~knowledge]) as an intrinsic function of the soul

Knowledge as an essential attribute of Jiva (~soul)

The soul possesses infinite qualities, including infinite perception, infinite knowledge, and infinite bliss. Among these, knowledge stands out as the attribute of "sva-para" that illuminates both the self and the external world. Because in Jain philosophy, knowledge is considered to be inherently "sva-para prakashaka," i.e., it not only illuminates itself but also illuminates the subject of knowledge. Similar to a lamp that brightens its surroundings while illuminating itself, knowledge allows the soul to perceive itself and other entities.[31] It is a unique characteristic of the soul, enabling recognition of both the self and external objects. Without knowledge, there would be no means to comprehend reality. That is why, by saying "ṇāṇaṃ payāsayaṃ" (Knowledge enlightens), knowledge has been compared to light.

The philosophical and soteriological significance of knowledge (Jnana [~knowledge])

Consciousness manifests in three primary forms: Knowing, seeing, and experiencing. Knowledge connects with all these aspects and is a unique attribute of the soul. It enables an individual to perceive both the "sva" (self) and "para" (everything from the external world except the soul). As Jain Acharya Kundakunda mentions in the Pravachanasara text, "Jo jāṇadi so ṇāṇaṁ"-one who knows is characterized by knowledge. He further asserts, "ṇāṇaṁ ṇarasya sāraṁ," presenting right knowledge as the essence for humans, as it distinguishes between what is "heya" (worth renouncing) and what is "upadeya" (worth accepting). According to Acharya Vaṭṭakera in the Moolachara, "ṇāṇaṁ payāsao"-right knowledge illuminates the true nature of substances, revealing the causes of both worldly existence and liberation. Acharya Virasena similarly describes it as "Bhūtārthaprakāśanam jnanaṁ," the unique ability to reveal reality.

In this way, Knowledge, as a source of light, surpasses all other forms of illumination, for it cannot be obstructed by external elements such as air or water. It illuminates the entirety of existence, i.e., there is no other light like the knowledge that is present in all things. The Moolachara identifies right knowledge as the illuminator of the intrinsic nature of substances. The prefix "samyak" (right) is used to negate false knowledge arising from saṃshaya (doubt), viparyaya (perversity), and anadhyavasaya (indefiniteness). Samayag-*jnan* (~knowledge) leads to philosophical knowledge, control of the mind, and self-purification. It also leads to detachment from worldly desires and an inclination toward spiritual welfare, promoting harmonious relationships. Without the guiding light of knowledge, aspirations for liberation through conduct and austerities remain unfulfilled. Right knowledge satiates the soul with its life-giving properties, much like nectar.

Types and manifestations of knowledge in Jain epistemology

Jnan (~knowledge) (Knowledge), in the Jain context, is not limited to intellectual understanding but encompasses a profound realisation of the soul's true nature. It is seen as the key to liberation (*Mokṣa* [~liberation]) from the cycle of birth and death (*samsara* [~cycle of birth and death]). Jain scriptures discuss five types of *Jnan* (~knowledge), including Matijnan (intellectual knowledge), Shrutjnan (scriptural knowledge), Avadhijnan (clairvoyance or extra-sensory knowledge), Manahparyayajnan (mind-reading capability), and Kevaljnan (omniscience). They can be classified into two categories. The first two types are indirect, and the remaining are direct. Matijnan and Shrutjnan are gained by resorting to intelligence, rationale, books, teaching, etc., which are external factors. They relate to sensory perception and are therefore termed indirect. The remaining three arise by virtue of being unsensuous due to internal purity and are therefore termed as direct.[32]

As we stated already, the first two means of knowledge are indirect (*Paroksha* [~indirect]), as they depend on external or intermediate sources like the senses and mind, while the remaining three are direct (*Pratyaksha* [~direct]), arising immediately through direct contact and thus more reliable for liberation. Sensory knowledge is sometimes classified as direct, but it remains unreliable due to susceptibility to desire and delusion. Perceptual knowledge arises through visual, nonvisual, extrasensory, and nondual unified perception. Of these, the first three are error-prone and invalid, whereas the latter two are valid, error-free, and originate from higher, perfected states of wisdom; invalid knowledge leads to doubt, confusion, faulty logic, and wrong cognition.[33]

As far as the soul is concerned, each of these five kinds of knowledge can be seen as the knower, the knowledge and the means of knowing. The external objects that are known are not included in this knowledge.[34] Each form of knowledge plays a unique role in uncovering the soul's divine qualities and guiding the individual toward spiritual enlightenment.

As far as knowledge is concerned, in Sarvarthasiddhi, Acharya Devnandi Pujyapāda (5th Century AD), while explaining the etymological meaning of knowledge, has said- "jānāti jñāyate'nena jñaptimātraṁ vā jnanaṁ"-That is, one who knows is knowledge (Kartri sādhana), that by which one knows is knowledge (Karaṇ Sādhana), or just knowing is knowledge (Bhāva sādhana). This etymological explanation presents knowledge as simultaneously agent, instrument, and act, thereby eliminating any externalization of cognition. This interpretation adds clarity by showing that knowledge exhaustively expresses the soul's cognitive being and supports the soul-knowledge correlation by affirming that knowing, knower and knowledge are inseparable expressions of the same conscious reality.

Cognitive dynamics of Jnan (~knowledge) and Darshan (~perception)

As briefly mentioned earlier in section 2.1, Considering knowledge (*jnan* [~knowledge]) and perception (*Darshana* [~perception]), as root characteristics of the *Jiva* (~soul), it has been named "*Upayoga* (~cognitive engagement)" - *Upayogo* (~cognitive engagement) lakṣaṇam/uvaogalakkhaṇo jīve. It states that *Upayoga* (~cognitive engagement) (Consciousness) is an intrinsic characteristic of a living being. It is not found in any substance other than the living being. This Consciousness manifests in two main facets – Darshanopayoga (indulgence in perception) and Jnanopayoga (indulgence in knowledge).

To further clarify this in a little more depth. Knowledge (*jnan* [~knowledge]) provides a particular cognition of an object, whereas perception (*Darshana* [~perception]) offers a general awareness of it.[35] When consciousness functions in a determinate or structured form, it is termed *jnan* (~knowledge); when it operates in an indeterminate or formless mode, it is called *Darshana* (~perception).[36] *Darshana* (~perception) is the initial, undifferentiated awareness of an object, while *jnan* (~knowledge) is the detailed, determinate cognition that follows. This constitutes the essential distinction between the two. Fundamentally, however, both are manifestations of consciousness. Together, they form the totality of the soul's cognitive capacity, its *Upayoga* (~cognitive engagement) (manifestation of consciousness). In its pure, unhindered state, this capacity is infinite. The soul is inherently omniscient, capable of knowing all substances and all their modes-past, present, and future-simultaneously and directly. This state is known as *Kevala Jnan* (~omniscience) (perfect or absolute knowledge). The empirical experience of limited and fallible knowledge is therefore not the soul's true nature but a temporary, conditioned state.

According to Dr Mahendra Kumar Ji Nyayacharya – "Among the infinite qualities of the soul, knowledge is such an extraordinary quality, which is a form of Chaitanyatmak *Upayoga* (~cognitive engagement) (Cognitive activity of knowledge and perception) and through this, the soul is reflected. When the Chaitanyatmak *Upayoga* (~cognitive engagement) (Cognitive activity), at the time of knowing the things beyond the self, becomes knowledgeable, then its mode of knowledge develops, and when it remains only in the form of consciousness instead of being suitable for external things, then this "*Upayoga* (~cognitive engagement)" in the formless state is called *darshan* (~perception). In this way, the attribute of consciousness itself remains formless in a particular state and is called *darshan* (~perception), and when it becomes materialized it is called *jnan*" (~knowledge)".[37]

Bhed-Vijnana (~discriminative knowledge) and epistemic orientation: Discriminative Knowledge as the basis of right knowledge (Samyak Jñāna) and false knowledge (Mithyā Jñāna).

Bheda-Vijnana (~discriminative knowledge) refers to the discriminative knowledge that clearly distinguishes the animate from the inanimate. It affirms the fundamental distinction between body and soul, recognizing the body as inanimate (jada) and the *atman* (~soul) as conscious.[38] According to Acharya Kundakunda's philosophy, the soul, beset by illusion, fails to recognise its separate nature from external entities. This lack of discernment results in false knowledge. When clarity comes through the influence of right faith, the soul begins to differentiate itself from external entities, recognizing its inner nature. This process is called discerning knowledge, which aligns with the concept of right knowledge. Right knowledge is essential for attaining liberation, as it facilitates the realisation of the true nature of the self and its detachment from worldly influences.

Acharya Amritchandradeva has said in Samayasara Kalasha, while describing the greatness of the knowledge of distinction – "That is, whoever has attained perfection till today, they all have attained perfection through the knowledge of distinction and whoever is bound by karmas, that is, who is suffering infinite pain in this world since time immemorial, they all are suffering due to the lack of this knowledge of distinction." This statement presents *bhed* (~difference)-vigyana as the decisive factor governing the soul's movement between bondage and liberation. It establishes knowledge as an intrinsic capacity of the soul, whose proper manifestation leads to liberation and whose absence results in karmic bondage and suffering. By linking spiritual attainment directly to discriminative knowledge, the passage reinforces the inseparable correlation between the soul's true nature and the state of its knowledge. It ties the soul's true nature directly to possessing this intrinsic knowledge, without which the soul remains obscured by karma.

Knowledge, in essence, is neither inherently right nor false but acquires these attributes based on its association with right faith or falsehood. Right knowledge, as the means to spiritual attainment, is the ultimate aspiration of the soul. Intrinsic right knowledge-or self-realized cognition-is the definitive cause of liberation, while extrinsic knowledge serves as an auxiliary.

The distinction between right and false knowledge is further elucidated in the Dravyasaṅgraha. False knowledge is characterized by doubt, misconception, and distraction. In contrast, the right knowledge involves a clear understanding of the nature of substances, which is free from these defects. It is described as certain and conclusive, revealing the true essence of reality.

Pluralistic framework of the soul-knowledge relationship

The problem of identity and difference between soul and knowledge: A Syadvada (~conditional predication) perspective

Knowledge can be likened to the soul because it is an intrinsic quality of the soul, and other qualities of the soul exist alongside it with equal importance. Therefore, an analytical distinction is necessary for philosophical clarity. In this way, *Syadvada* (~conditional predication) (the doctrine of condition predication) prevents absolute claims and allows identity and difference to coexist without contradiction. It fulfills this function by qualifying every assertion with the word syat, indicating that a statement holds true from a particular standpoint and allowing for alternative predications. Emerging as the logical expression of *Anekantavada* (~nonabsolutism), *Syadvada* (~conditional predication) serves as a methodological framework through which the Jain tradition communicates the multi-faceted nature of reality without falling into absolutism.[39]

In the twenty-seventh verse of Acharya Kundakunda's Pravacanasāra text, interpreted from the perspective of *Syādvāda* (~conditional predication) (the theory of conditional predication), it is clarified that the soul and knowledge, in some respects, are identical, while in others, they are different.

> "ṇāṇaṁ appatti madaṁ vaṭṭadi ṇāṇaṁ viṇā ṇa appāṇaṁ
> tahmā ṇāṇaṁ appā appā ṇāṇaṁ va aṇṇaṁ vā"

Kundakunda explains that knowledge is the soul-this is the teaching of the Jinas. Knowledge exists solely within the soul and never in any other substance; thus, knowledge is synonymous with the soul. However, the soul is not simply reducible to knowledge alone. Rather, it is knowledge due to possessing the attribute of knowing, and it is also distinct due to possessing other attributes such as bliss, faith, perception, and conduct.

The verse signifies that the soul is a body of infinite qualities. Knowledge is a major quality among those

infinite qualities, which is not found anywhere else except the soul. By discussing the indistinguishability implication between *guna* (~attribute)-guni (virtue and virtuoso), knowledge has been called the soul. But just as the soul is the basis of "jnanguna" (Knowledge Attribute), it is also the basis of other attributes, like Anant-*darshana* (~perception) (perfect perception), Anant-virya (perfect power), and Anant-sukha (perfect bliss), therefore, the soul is the form of knowledge from the prospect of the basis of the knowledge attribute, and it is not the form of knowledge from the perspective of the basis of other qualities. Here, there is vyapti (prevalence) of knowledge with the soul, but there is partial prevalence of the soul with knowledge. In this way, soul and knowledge are simultaneously identical and different, depending on the standpoint adopted, harmonizing the doctrine of "relative pluralism" (*Syadvada* [~conditional predication]) that is central to Jain logic and metaphysics. Hence, soul and knowledge are both different and nondifferent, contingent upon the philosophical viewpoint.

Unity of the soul and plurality of its qualities: An Anekantavada (~nonabsolutism) view

Anekantavada (~nonabsolutism) provides a comprehensive resolution by affirming the unity of the soul while simultaneously recognizing the plurality of its qualities. This nonone-sided framework harmonizes ontological unity with epistemic diversity, offering a balanced understanding of the soul-knowledge relationship.

Acharya Amritchandra has said in the tatparyavritti commentary of this verse– "there is *Anekantavada* (~nonabsolutism), the doctrine of nonabsolutism, which emphasizes the necessity of viewing reality from multiple perspectives. If we consider knowledge to be the soul in an absolute sense, then attributes of knowledge become the substance of the soul. However, the existence of a substance is determined by its attributes, and if an attribute becomes the substance itself, then in the absence of that attribute, the substance of the soul cannot exist. If the soul is absolute knowledge, it would possess only the attribute of knowledge, excluding other qualities such as bliss and energy. Thus, without its attributes, the soul cannot exist, and without the substance of the soul, knowledge cannot exist either."[2] Acharya Amritchandra cautions that treating knowledge as the soul in an absolute sense negates the soul's other essential attributes. This reinforces the argument that soul and knowledge are inseparable but not identical, a relationship coherently maintained through *Anekantavada* (~nonabsolutism). Therefore, from one perspective, knowledge is indeed the soul, as it cannot be found elsewhere. The soul is knowledge with respect to its attribute of knowledge, bliss with respect to its attribute of bliss, energy with respect to its attribute of energy, and so on.

The correlation between soul and knowledge

Philosophical basis of the soul-knowledge relationship

As we have been continuously discussing the relationship between the soul and knowledge through this article, understanding their various perspectives. This reveals that in Jain Philosophy, the soul (*atma* [~soul]/*Jiva* [~soul]) and knowledge (*jnan* [~knowledge]) are not two separate things; they are two aspects of the same reality. The Soul is a substance (*dravya* [~substance]). Its essential quality is consciousness, which is expressed as knowledge. There is an interdependent relationship between knowledge and the soul, which is why knowledge has been accepted as a natural quality of the soul. A natural quality is one that does not abandon its dependent material. Thus, knowledge is the *guna* (~attribute) (attribute) that inheres in the soul, just as heat inheres in fire.[40] Because the attributes cannot exist apart from their substratum, knowledge cannot exist without soul, and soul without its knowledge-quality would be unintelligible. Therefore, in Jain philosophy, the soul cannot be imagined without knowledge, and knowledge cannot be imagined without the soul. Therefore, there is no difference between knowledge and soul. In this way, knowledge is the soul because it does not exist in any substance other than the soul.[41] This statement underscores the inseparability of soul and knowledge. By emphasizing their mutual dependence, it reinforces knowledge as the soul's inherent expression and thereby strengthening their essential unity.

Scriptural perspectives of the inherence of knowledge in the soul

Jain scriptures consistently affirm that knowledge is not an externally acquired quality but an inherent attribute of the soul. Across canonical and philosophical texts, *jnana* (~knowledge) is presented as coexistent with *Jiva* (~soul), its manifestation varying according to the presence or attenuation of karmic obstructions. Before citing specific scriptural verses/passages, it is essential to note that these sources articulate the inherence of knowledge not as a contingent relation, but as a fundamental ontological principle underlying Jain epistemology and soteriology.

In the text Pravachanasara of Acharya Kundakunda (1st Century CE), which offers a subtle and profound exposition of Jain epistemology, the nondifference between the soul and knowledge is articulated with remarkable clarity in the following Prakrit verse:

> "Jo jāṇadi so ṇāṇaṁ ṇa havadi ṇāṇeṇa jāṇago ādā
> Ṇāṇaṁ pariṇamadi sayaṁ aṭṭhā ṇāṇaṭṭhiyā savve."

That is, "He who knows is knowledge, it is not so that the soul becomes knower by virtue of knowledge (as an external thing); the soul itself develops knowledge (without any extraneous thing) and all the objects exist (are reflected) in the knowledge."[42] That is to say, which is jñāyaka (knower) is *jnan* (~knowledge). To assume them to

be separate results in unnecessary complications and does not serve any purpose. If assumed to be separate, then both will become inanimate. How will knowledge arise when both are inanimate? To think of knowledge without the soul and the soul without knowledge is inconceivable.[43]

These explanations articulate the radical nonduality between soul and knowledge by identifying the knower with knowledge itself. Knowledge is not an external instrument that renders the soul a knower; rather, it is the soul's own self-manifestation, within which objects are reflected. This contributes to the argument by rejecting any instrumental or separative model of cognition. It strengthens the soul-knowledge correlation by demonstrating that separating the two leads to philosophical incoherence, whereas their unity preserves the very possibility of knowing.

Acharya Kundakunda has said-ādā ṇaṇapamāṇaṁ-*atma* (~soul), *jnan* (~knowledge) pramāṇa hai, i.e., Soul is coextensive with knowledge. Who does not consider the coextensiveness of the soul with knowledge, in the opinion of those, the soul should be more or less than knowledge. A soul devoid of knowledge will be unconscious. Here, two reasons are given for the omniscient Jinendradeva being all-pervasive-jnanmayatvat and vshayatvat, that is, due to all the objects of the world being the subject of knowledge and being in the knowledge of Lord Jinendra, are all-pervasive.

In this statement Acharya Kundakunda asserts that the soul is coextensive with knowledge, so that a soul without knowledge would be unconscious. Knowledge thus becomes the very measure of the soul's existence. It reinforces soul-knowledge correlation by explaining omniscience and all-pervasiveness through the unlimited scope of knowledge rather that physical expansion.

Illustrative exemplification from Jain textual tradition

The Jain textual tradition elucidates the relationship between soul and knowledge not only through abstract doctrine but also through carefully chosen illustrations. Such exemplifications clarify how knowledge, though inherently present in the soul. They function as interpretative tools that make the philosophical correlation between *Jiva* (~soul) and *jnana* (~knowledge) intelligible without reducing it to mere metaphor. The following textual instances are examined to highlight this intrinsic yet conditioned manifestation of knowledge.

In Jain philosophy, knowledge (*jnana* (~knowledge)) is an inherent quality of the soul (*Jiva* [~soul]/*atma* [~soul]) and is not regarded as an external attribute. Canonical expressions underline this intrinsic relation; for example, the Acaranga Sutra articulates the identity between the Self and the knower as follows:

"je āyā se viṇṇāyā, je viṇṇāyā se āyā."[20]

That is, "the Self is the knower, and the knower is the self, thus the real nature of the self is regarded as the pure knower." It means to say that the soul is the knower and the knower is the soul. Because he knows, therefore he is a soul. Here, complete identity has been established between the soul, and knowledge and knowledge has been considered as the soul's own quality. It is worth remembering that here other qualities of the soul have not been prohibited.

This sutra affirms the complete identity between the soul and the act of knowing, presenting knowledge as the soul's intrinsic nature rather than a contingent function. It adds interpretive clarity by establishing identity, not mere association, between soul and knowledge, while also preserving the plurality of the soul's other qualities. This highlights the correlation by showing that knowledge defines the soul without exhausting its ontological richness.

Āc. Kundakunda has explained treating kārya (effect) in kāraṇ (cause) through this Exemplification–

"rayaṇamiha iṁdaṇīlaṁ duddhajjhasiyaṁ jahā sabhāsāe abhibhūya taṁpi duddhaṁ vaṭṭadi taha ṇāṇamatthesu."

That is, "Just as a sapphire placed in milk imparts its blue hue to the entire liquid due to its unique properties, similarly, Omniscience (kevalajnan) – the sense-independent, infinite knowledge-due to its special potency, inheres in the objects-of-knowledge (jneya). From a transcendental perspective (*nishchayanaya* [~transcendental standpoint]), knowledge inheres solely within the soul, butfrom an empirical standpoint (*vyavaharanaya* [~empirical standpoint]), it inheres to the objects of knowledge (jneya). A mirror, by its nature, reflects objects, and empirically, the objects have the power of reflection. In the same way, sense-independent, infinite knowledge has the power to know all objects of knowledge (jneya)."[2] With this example, it is explained that Knowledge has the inclination to know substances.

This analogy explains how knowledge, while ontologically residing in the soul, appears to pervade objects through its knowing function. By distinguishing nishchaya and vyavahar standpoints, it clarifies that knowledge remains intrinsic to the soul even when it seems onject-directed. It supports the thematic interpretation by reconciling internal inherence with external cognition, showing that the soul-knowledge unity is preserved across perspective while explaining knowledge's natural inclination to ward objects.

Acharya Jayasena (12th Century AD) in his commentary on Pravacanasāra's Tātparyavritti gave a logical example in the context of nondiffrence of the soul and knowledge that "Just as the fire is the doer (kartā) of the process of burning and the heat (in the fire) is the cause (kāraṇa) of burning. The fire and the heat are empirically different but, in reality, both are the same; the fire is the heat. In the same way, the soul is the doer (kartā) of the process of knowing

and the knowledge is the instrument (sādhanā) of knowing. Empirically, there is the suggestion of a difference between the soul and knowledge but, actually, there is no difference. Just as there is no distinction between fire and heat, similarly there is no distinction between soul and knowledge."[2]

This example clarifies that the apparent distinction between soul and knowledge is only empirical, not real. Just as heat is not separate from fire but its very nature, knowledge is the soul's own operative essence in the act of knowing. It contributes to the argument by resolving the agent-instrument dilemma without dualism and strengthens the soul-knowledge correlation by showing their inseparable identity beneath analytical distinction.

Discussion

Across the reviewed sources, Jainism offers a tightly integrated account of ontology and epistemology: The soul is characterised by *Chetana* (~consciousness) (consciousness), and its operational expression (*Upayoga* [~cognitive engagement]) appears chiefly as knowing (*jnana* [~knowledge]) and seeing (*Darshana* [~perception]). This positions cognition as a mode of being rather than a contingent acquisition.

The fivefold hierarchy of knowledge is repeatedly framed as a graded disclosure of inherent cognition. In narrative-review terms, these stages can be read as an explanatory bridge between ordinary epistemic life (sense-dependent and scriptural modes) and liberated omniscience (*Kevala-jnana* [~omniscience]), with karma theory supplying the mechanism that accounts for apparent limitation.

A distinctive contribution of the Jain corpus is the methodological role of *Syadvada* (~conditional predication) and *Anekantavada* (~nonabsolutism) in avoiding reductive identity claims. Rather than asserting that "soul equals knowledge" in an absolute sense, the tradition preserves conditional identity (knowledge is inseparable from the soul) while recognizing the plurality of the soul's attributes (e.g., bliss and energy). This multi-perspectival strategy prevents the soul from collapsing into a single predicate and provides a philosophical grammar for speaking about consciousness without absolutism.

Comparatively, the reviewed discussion also clarifies how Jainism differentiates itself from positions that either externalize knowledge (as an adventitious property) or treat knowledge as a product of nonconscious nature. The Jain account retains both personal continuity (a real, enduring *Jiva* [~soul]) and epistemic luminosity (knowledge as intrinsic), while locating bondage and freedom in the moral-epistemic transformation of that same self.

Limitations

As a narrative review with a doctrinal-textual focus, the synthesis is sensitive to choices of translation, commentary tradition, and the relative weight given to canonical versus philosophical sources. Many classical works have multiple recensions and interpretive lineages; therefore, the thematic conclusions should be read as a coherent synthesis of the selected corpus rather than as an exhaustive survey of all Jain sectarian positions.

Future directions: Further work may benefit from (i) explicit comparison between Digambara and Shvetambara exegetical treatments of *Upayoga* (~cognitive engagement) and omniscience, (ii) mapping Jain categories of knowledge to contemporary philosophy of mind debates on self-awareness (svasamvedana), and (iii) developing transparent, reproducible search strategies if the review is expanded into a systematic format.

Conclusion

This study has examined the correlation between soul (*Jiva* [~soul]) and knowledge (*jnana* [~knowledge]) within the framework of Jain Philosophy. Grounded in the ontological affirmation of the soul as a real, eternal, and conscious substance, the analysis demonstrates that consciousness (*Chetana* [~consciousness]) and its operative expression as *upyoga* (~cognitive engagement) constitute the essential nature of *Jiva* (~soul). Knowledge, therefore, is not an externally acquired capacity but an intrinsic and defining attribute of the soul.

Findings from the epistemological inquiry disclose that *jnana* (~knowledge), as it operates through diverse modes and perspectives, is never to be separated from the soul in any state of existence. Whether it is conditionally bound in worldly (samsaric) existence through karma or realized to its fullest extent in liberation, *jnana* (~knowledge) is the inalienable potential of the soul in all cases. The scriptures, as well as guiding examples disallow any applicative or duality-based distinction between knower and known but assert that knowing is a function which is self-manifest in nature and pertains to the soul.

The Jain Soteriology has gone to the extent of describing how this "liberation" is accomplished by the purification of the soul by right knowledge. This entails the removal of the obstructions to this knowledge by the "karmic impediments," in order to expose the qualities of the soul.

The analytical distinction between soul and knowledge, which presents an initial tension, is methodologically clarified using principles of *Syadvada* (~conditional predication) and *Anekantavada* (~nonabsolutism). These approaches allow Jain philosophy to retain ontological oneness despite epistemological diversity. Knowledge is neither made identical with soul nor is it asserted as an entity distinct from the soul. There is an ontological identity between soul and knowledge with regard to essence, but an analytical distinction with regard to functional specification.

In conclusion, Jain philosophy thus offers a very integrated view of ontology, epistemology, and soteriology through

its notion of knowledge as the manifest form of the soul. The soul and knowledge are each other's counterpart and co-substantial, in the sense that the existence of one also necessarily presupposes the existence of the other. This very nuanced understanding of the relationship of knowledge and existence can add significantly to current understanding of issues of consciousness and knowledge.

Availability of data and materials

All materials analyzed are publicly available sources cited in the reference list.

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