

# Beyond Justice: Reinterpreting Justice Through Jain Lens

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## Abstract

Services are deeply intertwined with and informed by the underlying virtues that shape our society. Therefore, we can open a wide aperture of possibilities by reassessing the lenses through which we see the world. This project is an example of a decolonial approach to design as it proposes a framework of justice informed by Jain philosophy. Challenging the dominant definition of justice rooted in fairness, it reimagines the service interactions that are part of the modern legal system.

Jain philosophy posits an alternative to the Western notion of justice, shaped by the doctrine of *anekāntavāda* and *syādvāda*. *Anekāntavāda* means plurality or multiplicity of truths, and *Syādvāda* is the concept that all judgments are conditional and hold good only under certain circumstances. Jainism challenges the notion of justice rooted in fairness (Theory of Justice, John Rawls 2001) by describing the world where multiple truths coexist and emphasizing human limitations in discerning these pluralities. Stories from Jain scriptures elaborate on the conditionality of judgment and undermine a legal system that claims to determine fair outcomes. The values of *anekāntavāda* and *syādvāda*, combined with the virtues of *ahimsa* or non-violence, propose a radical re-imagination of the justice system.

To demonstrate the Jain canonical values, the author undertakes a speculative redesign of the complaint report worksheet- a service artifact used by the New York Police Department to register criminal activity. The propositions show up as 1) modifications to the information collected by NYPD to reflect Jain principles and 2) a new worksheet that extends services to non-humans- serving all those recognized in Jainism as living beings. The author uses a recorded telephonic conversation between a police officer and a victim as a format to illustrate the design changes.

Keywords: Pluriversal design, decolonial, more-than-human, justice.

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