

The Impact of social media on the Transmission of Jain Philosophical Teachings

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Introduction

Social media in the current era has been acting as a dominant force in creating awareness and imparting knowledge worldwide on all topics, including religious and philosophical education. With the increase in importance of presence on social media for awareness, reach towards a wider audience, sharing knowledge, news etc. all the organizations have also made it a point to have their presence on various platforms of social media. This study examines the role of digital platforms in disseminating Jain philosophical teachings, with a particular focus on youth engagement. While social media facilitates unparalleled avenues for global engagement, interactive learning, and the advancement of religious education, it simultaneously poses significant challenges like including the potential for misinformation, the oversimplification and partial or incomplete explanation of complex theological concepts, and the dilution of cultural and doctrinal authenticity.

This paper will focus on critically analyzing the type of content on Jainism available on social media platforms like Instagram, YouTube, and X (Twitter). It will focus on studying the quality of content available on these platforms. How efficiently the Jain principles of Ahimsa, Anekantavada, Karuna, Karma, etc. are explained to and taken by the young audiences. Are they relatable for the young audience or the engagement there is on a superficial level over deep philosophical understanding.

The study offers solutions to the challenges identified by strategic recommendations for Jain scholars, digital content creators, and organizations emphasizing the importance of curated educational initiatives, interactive online platforms, and collaborative engagements with digital influencers to facilitate the authentic, relatable and impactful dissemination of Jain teachings for future generations.

History of Traditional Sharing of Jain knowledge systems:

Jain philosophy is a tradition which has a vast literature. The knowledge of 14 purvas is said to be propounded by the Tīrthaṅkara to the Gaṇadhara orally in the form of 12 aṅgas. The transmission of this knowledge continued by oral tradition for 980 years by Guru Śiṣya Paramparā. With the passage of time around 300 BCE as the memory power of the people reduced the first Jain Council was held under the guidance of Āchārya Sthulibhadra in Pāṭalīputra along with 500 sādhus. This council went on for twelve and half years and the orally memorized āgamas were written down for the first time by compiling all the few memorized fragments of śruta gñāna from the vast knowledge of Bhagavāna Mahāvīra.

This was a very bold step and a visionary step by the Āchārya's foreseeing the loss of memory in the future. This was a very important step in conservation of knowledge. With times the same knowledge is transmitted through different mediums in various languages and in various styles be it kāvya, gadya, padha, gāthas, stories, etc. Over the time Āchāryas have added deep perspective to the aṅgas by interpreting them from the lens of current relevance as a demand of time and mindset of the people. Jain scholars like Āchārya Kundakunda (Digambara, 2nd century CE) wrote foundational texts like Samayasāra and Pravachanasāra. Āchārya's Umāswatī (4th century CE) composed the Tattvārthasūtra, a key philosophical text accepted by both Digambaras and Śvetāmbaras. Haribhadra Suri (8th century CE) and Hemachandra Āchārya (12th century CE) wrote extensive commentaries and encyclopedic works. Jain scholars contributed to mathematics, logic, linguistics, and astronomy, influencing broader Indian knowledge systems. After the introduction of printing, Jain texts were widely published in the 19th–20th centuries.

With time the technology has advanced to a great level and with advancement in technology different modes of expressing and sharing knowledge have been established. One of the most relevant, accessible, widely used mediums of knowledge in today's era are Social Media platforms, viz. YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, WhatsApp, etc. When the world is open, accessible, social media content related to Jainism also has a strong and growing presence on social media platforms. Majority of Jain organizations, scholars, Saints, and devotees share various teachings, scriptures, discussions, and community events on these platforms. This paper focuses on analyzing the knowledge which is available on these platforms and its impact on the persons viewing it or learning from it. These contents are specifically made to majorly target spreading of wisdom of Jain philosophy in the youth and non-practitioners for them to get connected.

Presence of Jainism related platforms on social media:

Extensively study of different platforms was conducted and following data for understanding the presence of Jain philosophy related content on these platforms has been summarized below:

Platform: YouTube			
Channel/ Page name	Number of subscribers/ followers	Type of Content	Views
Jain Channel	1.05 M	Discourses by a Jain Saint	14 M +
Jain Media	376 K	Short videos related to Jain news, philosophy, specially related to Jain Deravasi university	7.7 M +
My World Jainism	333 K	Videos related to Jain news, initiation, education, etc.	17.4 M +
My Jain recipes	358 K	Videos of different Jain recipes by an individual	55 M +
Jinvani Channel	335 K	YouTube handle of a TV Channel, Discourses of Digambara Jain Saints	11.3 M +
The Jain Foundation	25.3 K	Podcasts, Videos on topics of Jain knowledge.	2.5 M +
Spread Jainism	82.8 K	Videos related to Jain news, events, bhakti songs, knowledge, etc.	17 M +

➤ YouTube is a very strong platform for spreading content related to Jainism. Above are some of few channels out of the large number of channels which put up content related to Jain knowledge, temples, events like dīkṣā, paryuṣaṇa, tīrtha yātra, upadhāna, etc., stavana, Discourses by Jain sādhu and sādhvījīs, news, podcasts, recipes, etc. These various platforms which are run by saṅghas, spiritual institutions, motivated by sādhu - sādhvījīs, pāṭhaśālā, self- motivated individuals/influencers, scholars. The researcher has critically analyzed the content type, quality, engagement, etc. There is a lot of content available but it

is highly unorganized. Social media has brought awareness amongst the masses of the great Jain wisdom from Jain scriptures. Some of the contents also share part knowledge due to improper interpretation of the philosophy which should be verified. The authenticity thus plays an important role. In the current times children and youth are more connected to audio-visual content than texts. Although translations of many texts are available in English language but the interest of readers has been more towards acquiring knowledge through short blogs and vlogs/videos. YouTube connects them to the religion by the medium of these content. It is very important that the content which is put up on the platform is logical along with being catchy and easily understandable.

Platform: Instagram		
Channel/ Page name	Number of subscribers /followers	Type of Content
Spread Jainism	104 K	Videos related to Jain news, events, bhakti songs, knowledge etc.
Jain Media	229 K	Posts / Short videos related to Jain news, philosophy, specially related to Jain Deravasi university
Jainism_	72.6 K	Videos related to Jain news, events, bhakti songs, knowledge etc.
Incredible Jainism	162 K	Heritage & History
jain_stuti_stavan	42.6 K	Bhakti Songs
Digital Jain Paathshala	132 K	Kids friendly knowledge platform
Look n Learn	5.6 K	Kids friendly knowledge platform
jain_pathshala_n_family_values	68.2 K	Kids friendly knowledge

		platform
Jainfoundation	3.2 K	Discussion on Jain wisdom
jainism_and_science	287	Explaining jainism and science
jain_foodie_mumbaikar	7.18 K	Food Blog page
jainnews_	25.4 K	Jainism related news
Jainnewsviews	19 K	Jainism related news
jainism_facts	71.4 K	Spreading Jainism worldwide

➤ Instagram is a platform of high engagement with the youth. Lot of pages and content are available on Instagram. The content popular with high views are of Bhakti Stavans, Mandir, Tirth Kshetra darshan, Jain news and short content on facts and history. Pages with Jain philosophy knowledge, pāṭhaśālā knowledge has very less followers. People are interested more in social and ritual centric content than knowledge centric content. Instagram the name itself suggests instant results. People do connect with Jain platforms and pages but how much may go in deep memory and implementation is a question, as there is so much data that it can get difficult for one to remember. Insta Reels are one of the most trending contents with high views and engagement. Instagram is a platform where one can understand through short content.

Apart from these the other platforms have their niche in transmission of contents;

➤ Facebook is one platform which brought revolution in social media connectivity. The idea of community, groups, pages having causes connected people worldwide. Articles and books on facebook, Community discussions and Q & A's, Live streaming of events and discourses by Saints and scholars. These really help in awareness of Jain philosophical teachings.

➤ Twitter is a great platform for quick responses/updates, debates on various topics. It opens a platform for short threads on Jain ethics, correct responses to misconceptions in the society and also for interfaith dialogue.

➤ One of the most used and convenient platforms WhatsApp has many groups, communities which share a large number of contents related to Jainism.

There are many platforms apart from these and each of them have their special forte in

putting up content for the visitor with a very nice experience through correct user interface.

Current Social media Trends:

In the current times short form videos are in the top list of the content which gets trending. People are also looking for authenticated content from user generated data. Thus, any content getting the right authentication from verified handles or famous handles means a lot for the content to trend. Even the platform will promote such content. Content which gets endorsements also gets traction. Importance of influencer marketing has also been in the current trends.

Critical analysis on Jainism content available on social media:

Strengthening due to wide Reach of Jainism on social media leading to a positive impact:

- Social media has given wider reach and accessibility of Jain philosophical wisdom. Videos and podcasts of Scriptures, Pravachans make this content reach wider audience with accessibility for a very long time.
- Content also available in various languages like English, Hindi, Gujarati, Kannada, including a large Indian audience. Few contents are also available in other foreign languages for international audiences.
- Increase in youth engagement and modernization due to content in from short reels, short blogs, etc. to explain complex topics like Karma theory, Anekantvada etc. through them.
- Imparting knowledge through infographics, humor to explain in a light hearted way.
- Jainism's philosophy of non-violence (Ahimsa), compassion, being aware (mindfulness), and living in harmony with nature is highly appealing in today's digital age. If well presented on social media, Jainism-related content has several strengths.
- Jain principles resonate with Universal Core Principles. For example, Ahimsa (Non-Violence) – Appeals to vegans, animal rights activists, and peace activists. Aparigraha (Non-Possessiveness) resonates with minimalists, eco-warriors, and anti-consumerists. Anekantavada (Multifaceted Truth) – Promotes tolerance and diversity, of interest to interfaith and philosophical readers.
- Visually Engaging content of Jain temples, architecture, paintings, celebrations of events like Mahavir Jayanti, paryushan attracts religious, cultural and spiritual interest.

- Jain practices like Samayika and Sallekhana add spirituality to the practices Meditation, yoga, and living mindfully.
- Short-form content about Jain mantras and virtuous living is popular.
- Jainism's vegetarian food and eco-friendly lifestyle attract supporters of sustainability. Jain fasting, zero waste living, and kindness are all consistent with international environmental action.
- Virtual live Satsangs/ pravachans foster real time interaction and constant connection.
- Lessons from life stories of Prabhu Mahavir and other Jain teachings lead to gathering inspiration from their life in one's own life to enhance the quality of living.
- Better Community & Diaspora Engagement through various platforms. The worldwide Jain community freely exchanges religious discussions, temple functions, and philanthropic activities (e.g., animal refuges, food drives).
- Life of Monks & Nuns (Sadhvis/Sadhus) – Their ascetic vows (non-attachment, barefoot walking), Jain Diksha events fascinate viewers.
- Jain Fasting Challenges – Extended fasting content, such as 8- day Paryushan fasts, can get popular because of discipline.
- Unlike some religious content that may be divisive, Jainism's emphasis on harmony makes it widely shareable without controversy.
- Brands and influencers promoting peace, ethics, and sustainability often reference Jainism.

Challenges and weaknesses leading to a negative Impact:

- Many posts lead to Superficial representation of Jain philosophy by Over simplification of concepts to attract an audience.
- Many posts, pages link spirituality, religious practices to gain of materialistic pleasures for attention seeking leading to misinterpretations.
- Some individuals try to monetize for their personal interest by misusing these platforms.
- Some non-Jain influencers due to lack of knowledge misuse Jain symbols for aesthetic content.
- Due to lack of Scholarly Sophistication many unverified statements like Misquoting from Agamas and historical facts are circulated, e.g., "Mahavira invented yoga."
- Due to fragmented knowledge and lack of a central fact-checking body contradictory

explanations of Jain doctrines.

- Lack of awareness makes many people confuse Jainism with Hinduism or Buddhism.
- Some content with harsh statements and rigidity in practice of Jainism leads one to see Jain practices as extreme.
- Sometimes sensitive data on platforms if uploaded with half information lead to social unrest.

Discussions: Opportunities for improvement for content creators

In the era of reliance on information on content available on google, YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, online E Reading platforms, podcasts platforms like Spotify etc. The masses find it easy to connect to knowledge and information related to Jain philosophy and Jainism on social media. Social media being easily accessible, for both creators and users the use has increased tremendously. The curation of content uploaded is a focus area where the scholars, Jain organisations, sādhu-sādhvījī can help in authenticating the accuracy of knowledge transmitted especially in terms of āgama knowledge.

Jainism's worldwide teachings, along with engaging and moral content, render it extremely shareable on social media. With the use of contemporary storytelling, brief videos, and engaging dialogue, Jainism can be shared with a worldwide audience engaged in spirituality, sustainability, and conscious living. Framing practices with logical reasoning as mindful choices rather than impositions helps in the seer adopt the practice for personal uplift. Educational content can clarify distinctions in various concepts.

Conclusion

Transmission of Jain Teachings has found a great opportunity to be easily accessible by a wide audience. These teachings can help people within the community and also outside the community to get benefit of the great understandings of the Tirthankaras. Many can benefit on a personal level and also on a societal level as a whole. World problems related to many subjects like environment, peace, mental health etc can be catered by applying these teachings in practice. One of the Important care which needs to be taken is authentication of data to avoid any mis-interpretation of the teachings. Social media being a powerful tool for source of information it is very important for the Jain community to make an effort in organising these causes.

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