

# Jainism and Ājīvikas

The beginnings and subsequent history of Jain asceticism, practices, religiosity, rituals, and philosophy cannot be properly understood without the background of Ājīvikism, a religious and philosophical system followed by the Ājīvikas. Now a forgotten Indian religion, Ājīvikism once ranked as one of the most important religions in India between the 4th and the 1st century BCE, after Buddhism and Brahmanism and before Jainism, albeit rarely recorded in historical sources of that time. All we know of Ājīvikism comes from second-hand sources, that is largely distorted accounts by its critical adversaries, mainly Buddhists and Jains. Early Jains were closely linked to the Ājīvikas to the extent that both may even have formed two parallel currents within one complex ascetic tradition. One of the main historical founders of Jainism, Vardhamāna Mahāvīra (Vardhamāna being the name given to him by his parents at birth; also called Nāṭaputta [Skt. Jñātr̥putra] after his father's clan), was strongly influenced in his practices and views by Gośāla Mañkhaliputra, an important leader of the Ājīvikas.

The 1788 discovery of Aśoka's inscriptions on the Topra sandstone pillar (moved from its original location in Topra village to the Firūz Šāh Koṭlā fortress in Delhi by Firūz Šāh Tuḡluq) and their subsequent publication and decipherment by J. Prinsep<sup>1</sup> and afterward by A. Cunningham<sup>2</sup> brought the long-forgotten religious movement to the attention of researchers as the third most important religion in Aśoka's empire, after Buddhism and Brahmanism, and before Jainism. One of these is the seventh pillar edict,<sup>3</sup> in which Aśoka orders his high government officers to take special care of – in the sequence of importance – the Buddhist *saṅgha*, or congregation, Brahmans, Ājīvikas, and the Nirgranthas (the

Jain mendicants) being the least significant. A reference to this same religious group was simultaneously found in the Buddhist *Mahāvamsa* (Great Chronicle),<sup>4</sup> in which Aśoka is reported to have had a special residence constructed for the Ājīvikas. The puzzle regarding the actual identity of this particular group led to the first academic publications that came to discuss the identity of the Ājīvikas, such as those by H. Kern,<sup>5</sup> E. Leumann,<sup>6</sup> and A.F.R. Hoernle.<sup>7</sup> G. Bühler<sup>8</sup> noticed that this same group is mentioned in the inscriptions of Barābar and Nāgārjuni hills (in present-day Bihar), which he also published.<sup>9</sup> Other preliminary studies by K.B. Pathak,<sup>10</sup> J. Charpentier,<sup>11</sup> and D.R. Bhandarkar<sup>12</sup> soon followed. The first monograph, and first important work, on the Ājīvikas was written by B.M. Barua,<sup>13</sup> who continued to reconstruct the history and doctrine of the group.<sup>14</sup> A most useful and comprehensive encyclopedic exposition of the Ājīvikas was provided by A.F.R. Hoernle,<sup>15</sup> followed by a brief introduction to this religion by A. Sen.<sup>16</sup> A truly groundbreaking work on the Ājīvikas came from A.L. Basham,<sup>17</sup> and it has not lost its relevance to date. He provides a thorough analysis of the history of Ājīvikism and its founders as well as a reconstruction of their doctrine. G. Roth<sup>18</sup> pursues one of such traits mentioned by A.L. Basham, namely the stark similarity between the traditional account of Gośāla's birth in a cowstall and the Christian narrative of the birth of Jesus as recorded in Luke's Gospel II. In a series of papers,<sup>19</sup> J. Bronkhorst systematically takes up the history and doctrine of the Ājīvikas again since the publication of A.L. Basham's pivotal book and offers ingenious solutions to a range of baffling paradoxes, such as the seeming clash between the Ājīvikas' emphasis on determinism

<sup>1</sup> 1837a; 1837b.

<sup>2</sup> 1877, plate XX.

<sup>3</sup> Hultzsch, 1925, 130–137; Sircar, 1965, 62–66.

<sup>4</sup> see Turnour, 1837, 67.

<sup>5</sup> 1882–1884.

<sup>6</sup> 1884.

<sup>7</sup> vol. II, 1886–1890, 108–111, app. II.

<sup>8</sup> 1891.

<sup>9</sup> see also Sircar, 1965, 75–76; Falk, 2006, 266–267, 276.

<sup>10</sup> 1912.

<sup>11</sup> 1913.

<sup>12</sup> 1912.

<sup>13</sup> 1920.

<sup>14</sup> Barua, 1921; 1926–1927.

<sup>15</sup> 1926.

<sup>16</sup> 1931, 4–13.

<sup>17</sup> 1951.

<sup>18</sup> 1993.

<sup>19</sup> 2000; 2003a; 2003b; 2007b; 2013.

and their rigid asceticism. O. Qvarnström<sup>20</sup> draws the researchers' attention to what he thinks is "an emic portrayal of Ājīvika doctrine" as presented in the *Niyatīdvātrīṣīkā* (The 32-Stanza Composition on Determinism). In 2016, P. Balcerowicz published two monographs on Ājīvikism, which provide a new perspective on a number of historical and doctrinal issues, especially the joint historical roots of Ājīvikism and Jainism. One of these<sup>21</sup> is also the most comprehensive attempt at a reconstruction of the Ājīvikas' religious and philosophical doctrine to date. The same author also demonstrates<sup>22</sup> that there is no single passage extant that could satisfactorily be linked to Ājīvikism, all such alleged quotations from Ājīvika sources<sup>23</sup> being composed by their adversaries themselves.

Since there is not even a single direct, genuine quotation from Ājīvika texts extant, we have to rely on secondary sources written by their adversaries, primarily the Buddhists and the Jains. Out of the Buddhist references to Ājīvikism and its founders, the most important and extensive are relevant sections of the *Sāmaññaphalasutta* (Sermon on the Fruits of Asceticism) alongside Buddhaghosa's commentary *Sumaṅgalavilāsīnī* (Resplendent with Utmost Auspiciousness). A whole section of it is translated by A.F.R. Hoernle.<sup>24</sup> There is no single Buddhist text that would provide an overview of the doctrine of the Ājīvikas, which can merely be glanced from stray references in a number of books of the Buddhist (usually Pali) canon, such as the *Brahmajālasutta* (Sermon on the Net/Snare of Brahma), the *Devaputtasamyutta* (Connected Discourse with the Sons of Gods), the *Mahāparinibbānasutta* (Sermon on the Highest Ultimate Cessation), the *Mahāsaccakasutta* (Longer Discourse with Satyaka), selected portions of the *Aṅguttaranikāya* (Gradual Collection). We can identify such occasional allusions to Ājīvikism mostly by certain technical and doctrinal terms, such as antinomianism, determinism, materialism, and omniscience.<sup>25</sup>

Jain sources provide us with two unique texts. The first is the *Teyanisagga* (Skt. *Tejonisarga*; Emission of Fiery Luster), originally an independent work, which was later incorporated into the *Bhagavatī Sūtra* (Pkt. *Bhagavaī*; Venerable Book;

also known as Pkt. *Viyāhapannatti*/*Viāhapannatti*; Skt. *Vyākhyāprajñapti Sūtra*; Lecture of Explanations) as its chapter 15. It is a (biased) account of the period when Gośāla and Vardhamāna lived together and their subsequent encounters. Some excerpts from it are translated by E. Leumann.<sup>26</sup> The second is chapter 11 of the independent, noncanonical collection of the *Rṣibhāsitāni* (Pkt. *Isibhāsiyāim*; Sayings of the Seers), which may contain a genuine excerpt from Gośāla Mañkhaliputra's original teachings. In addition, one comes across a number of stray references to the Ājīvikas in other Jain texts, such as the *Āvaśyakacūrṇī* (Pkt. *Āvassayacuṇṇī*; Short Notes to The Book of the Six Obligatory Rites), the *Āvaśyakaniryukti* (Pkt. *Āvassayanijjutti*; Exposition of the Six Obligatory Rites), the *Ācārāṅga Sūtra* (Pkt. *Āyāraṅga Sutta*; Central Book on Conduct), the canonical *Nandī Sūtra* (Pkt. *Naṃdi Sutta*; Propitiuous Book) and its commentaries by Jinadāsagaṇi and Haribhadrasūri, the *Sthānāṅga Sūtra* (Pkt. *Thānaṅga Sutta*; Central Book of Exposition), the *Uttarādhyayana Sūtra* (Pkt. *Uttarajjhayaṇa Sutta*; Later Chapters), the *Aupapātika Sūtra* (Pkt. *Uvavāiya Sutta*; Book on the Spontaneously Born Beings), and two commentaries by Abhayadevasūri (the *Sthānāṅgaṭīkā* on the *Sthānāṅga Sūtra* and the *Bhagavatīvr̥tti* on the *Bhagavatī Sūtra*).

In contrast to the lengthy narrative of the associations between Gośāla and Vardhamāna in the *Bhagavatī Sūtra*, the Ājīvikas' leader is scarcely mentioned in Digambara sources. According to Devasena (10th cent. CE), he was a monk in the tradition of Pārśva who wanted to become one of Mahāvira's *gaṇadhara*s, or his first and closest disciples who become leaders of fraternities (*gaṇa*), and on being rejected, he established his own school.<sup>27</sup> In fact, P.S. Jaini has remarked that the Digambara belief that Vardhamāna observed a vow of silence during this time may be seen as "a sectarian device aimed at denying certain episodes found in the Śvetāmbara version of the same period."<sup>28</sup>

The earliest nonsectarian, independent references to the existence of the Ājīvikas, but not to their actual practice and doctrine, are the inscriptions of Aśoka and his son Daśaratha (3rd cent. BCE). Occasional inscriptions are found, such as a decree

<sup>20</sup> 2015.

<sup>21</sup> Balcerowicz, 2016b.

<sup>22</sup> Balcerowicz, forthcoming.

<sup>23</sup> as collected e.g. by Basham, 1951.

<sup>24</sup> vol. II, 1886–1890, app. II.

<sup>25</sup> a table of such references is provided in Basham, 1951, 22–23.

<sup>26</sup> 1884.

<sup>27</sup> see Jaini, 1979, 24n57.

<sup>28</sup> Jaini, 1979, 21.

on a copper plate issued by Vainyagupta and dated the year 184 of the Gupta Era (c. 502 CE),<sup>29</sup> which attests to the existence of a community (*saṅgha*) of Ājīvikas, a permanent residential facility for their (naked) ascetics, a shrine and a cult of an Ājīvika deity, Mañibhadra, and their royal patronage by King Nāthacandra in Bengal as late as the early 6th century CE. A number of inscriptions found in some districts of Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, and Karnataka attest to the presence of the Ājīvikas in the region between the 5th and the 14th century.<sup>30</sup> At the same time, Ājīvikism is entirely neglected in Indian doxographical works, which are meant to provide an overview of philosophical schools.

## Ājīvikism: A Historical and Doctrinal Overview

Ājīvikism is an ascetic and religious movement that emerged in the same region of northern South Asia, called Greater Magadha,<sup>31</sup> in which also Jainism and Buddhism took birth. The followers of this movement were known as *ājīvika* (Skt.), *ājīviya* (Pkt.), or *ājīvaka* (Pal.), hence the suggested name for this religion, Ājīvikism. The etymology of *ājīvika* is not clear. A number of explanations have been suggested.<sup>32</sup> Most plausibly the name derives from an initiation formula containing a number of ascetic vows that the novice adopted to practice, *ājīvaṃ* (Pkt.)/*ā jīvāt* (Skt.; “as long as I live”).<sup>33</sup> In historical, mostly Buddhist sources, Ājīvikas are also referred to as *acelaka* (Skt./Pal. naked recluse), *nirgrantha* (Skt. the one who is free from bondage, or the fetterless; Pkt. *niggantha*/*niyaṅṭha*; Pal. *niggantha*), and *nagnaśramaṇa* (Skt. naked ascetic; Pkt. *naggasamaṇa*; Pal. *naggasamaṇa*), the latter two frequently used also to specifically denote Jain monks as well as occasionally *trairāsika* (Pkt. *terāsīya*, those who recognize three figures; see below). Not infrequently, the Buddhists did not make a clear distinction between the Ājīvikas and the Jains and referred to both groups with the same terms, especially *acelaka*, *nirgrantha*, and *nagnaśramaṇa*, due to their similar code of ascetic practice and appearance.

Ājīvikism was an ascetic-religious movement that focused primarily on the soteriological goal of liberation (*mokṣa*, *nirvāṇa*) from mundane bondage and suffering, attainable exclusively through the monastic path and mortifications; through complete renunciation of all possessions, including clothes, material objects, and all kinds of utensils; through renunciation of all feelings, affections, and passions; and through cessation of all activities usually accomplished through the mind, speech, and body. As a result, the individual would no longer generate new results of his or her actions, that is new *karman*. A conspicuous feature of Ājīvika mendicants was their nudity, a consequence of their relinquishment of all material objects and an outer expression of their control over affections and passions.

The Ājīvikas also developed a fatalistic doctrine of strict determinism (*niyatīvāda*), according to which everything that happens in the world and befalls living beings, including humans, is fully determined by their previous actions. Their doctrine of destiny (*niyatīvāda*) was associated with the doctrine of predetermined concurrence of factors (*saṃgatīvāda*; i.e. predetermined coincidences), with the doctrine of intrinsic nature (*svabhāvavāda*; i.e. one’s own nature, which cannot be altered and which impacts one’s actions from within), and with the doctrine of fate (*daivavāda*), or fatalism. It was their best-known tenet, due to which they were usually called determinists (*niyatīvādīn*) and consistently portrayed in all the sources as those who maintain the inefficacy and impotence of human actions and striving. In the *Sāmaññaphalasutta*, Gośāla is famously reported to have explained that

just like a ball of thread, when thrown, exhausts itself, simply by unwinding, exactly in the same manner both the fool and the wise – having transmigrated, having gone through the cycle of rebirths – will put an end to unhappiness.<sup>34</sup>

However, it would be mistaken to see in the Ājīvikas simple fatalists or strict, uncompromising determinists. Rather, in their case, one should speak of a kind of qualified determinism. Accordingly, the results of all past actions have to reach their fruition, in other words, they have to be experienced in

<sup>29</sup> Furui, 2016.

<sup>30</sup> Basham, 1951, 187–196; Furui, 2016, 671–672.

<sup>31</sup> Bronkhorst, 2007a, 3–4.

<sup>32</sup> see a review in Basham, 1951, 96–104.

<sup>33</sup> Kern, vol. II, 1882–1884, 7n2; Basham, 1951, 102–103; Balcerowicz, 2016a, 306–308; 2016b, 21–23.

<sup>34</sup> DN<sub>1</sub> II.20; p.54=DN<sub>2</sub> II.52; p. 47.

full by the agent, and there is no possibility to avoid, evade, reduce, transform, or eliminate them by any means, such as extreme forms of mortifications and asceticism practiced by Jain monks for this purpose. Indeed, what has happened cannot be altered, which means that its results cannot be averted: all that befalls each and every living being is virtually beyond its control, one can neither steer the course of one's existence in this life and in one's next births nor shorten or lengthen its duration. However, the Ājīvikas' qualified determinism does not mean that humans have no influence over their own fate and whatever has to happen will necessarily happen, with no room for free will. On the contrary, one is potentially powerful enough to exercise control over himself/herself and over one's actions as well as over one's passions, desires, and affects. It is therefore true that the consequences of one's former deeds cannot be avoided by any means, but what remains within the limits of one's own freedom is the control of one's affective side and the decision to withdraw from any action in order to prevent the generation of future deeds. For it is activity that inescapably breeds evil. The determinism of the Ājīvikas was therefore not absolute and all embracing, but a qualified, compromised version of it: in all that befalls one, which is determined by one's past actions, or destiny and fate, the person as the agent is fully free to give up his or her agency and assume the state of complete inactivity, which is considered the goal of the Ājīvikas' asceticism and the ultimate path to liberation. One cannot alter the past though: that past has happened, and the results of one's former actions cannot be altered; however one can prevent future deeds through the ascetic practice of complete immobility or inactivity. An expression of such qualified determinism are six unavoidable contingencies, taught by Gośāla Maṅkhaliputra, that befall all living beings, namely gain (Skt. *lābha*), loss (Skt. *alābha*), pleasure (Skt. *sukha*; Pkt. *suha*), pain (Skt. *duḥkha*; Pkt. *dukkha*), life (Skt. *jīvita*, i.e. birth), and death (Skt. *maraṇa*). Ājīvikas' belief in determinism translated into their profession as practitioners of complex divination and fortune telling, which included the skills of augury, dream reading, prognostication from natural phenomena, and interpretation of body marks.

The Ājīvikas' belief system put considerable emphasis on the idea noninjury: any living being (*jīva*) could be hurt by the activities of one's body, speech, or even mind, and the injury and evil done to others would necessarily rebound, returning to the agent. Hence the prime role of the virtue of protective kindness (Skt. *jugupsā*; Pkt. *dugumcchā*; Pal. *jigucchā*; lit. desire to protect), a term connoting utmost care not to harm and loathing of any form of injury ("disgust with respect to harming"), and also meaning "detestation of the world" and "renunciation", which is precondition to the elimination of passion and hatred and to full control. The term was originally shared by both the Ājīvikas and the Jains. Protective kindness (detestation) is combined with asceticism in what is known as "the doctrine of detestation [of the world] (or protective kindness) through asceticism" (*tapojigucchāvādā*), which entails the outward rejection of the body and the denial of its worth, with emphasis on mortifications and asceticism, as reported in the Buddhist *Udumbarikasīhanādasutta* (Discourse on the *Lion Roar* at Udumbarikā Park).<sup>35</sup>

The Buddhist *Devaputtasamṃyutta* describes both Gośāla and Vardhamāna in identical terms, namely as those who are renunciators (Pal. *jegucchi*), or the ones who practice renunciation (protective kindness, Pal. *jigucchā*), who desist from any destruction of living beings, and who are "possessed of full control" (Skt. *susamvr̥ta*; Pal. *susamvuta*), as taught by Pārśva, Vardhamāna's predecessor:

Through austerity and renunciation (protective kindness) [of mundane things, Gośāla Maṅkhaliputra] is possessed of full control. Having rejected disputatious speech with people, he abstains from false speech [and] is [truly] a speaker of truth, for he surely never commits such demerit. Renouncer (the one practicing protective kindness), circumspect monk, fully controlled by the fourfold restraint [i.e. Nigaṅṭha Nāṭaputta, i.e. Vardhamāna Mahāvīra], teaching what he [himself] has seen and heard, for he surely could never be a wrongdoer.<sup>36</sup>

The means to accomplish the virtue of protective kindness, and therefore to ward off evil; put an end to transmigration; and attain the state of

<sup>35</sup> DN, 25; see Balcerowicz, 2016a, 301–302.

<sup>36</sup> SN II.3.10, § 45, vv. 4–5; p. 66; see Balcerowicz, 2016a, 318–319.



perfection (*siddhatva*), omniscience (*sarvajñāna*), perfect knowledge (*kevala*), and eventually liberation (*mokṣa/nirvāṇa*), is austerity (*tapas*) and complete inactivity (*nirvṛtti*) in all aspects. In the *Devaputtasamyutta* this is formulated as follows:

Through austerity (*tapas*) and protective kindness (*jugupsā*), Gośāla is possessed of full control (*susamvṛtta*). Having rejected disputatious speech with people, he abstains from false speech and is truly a speaker of truth, for he surely never commits such demerit.

The same term of “protective kindness” (*jugupsā*) was also originally used in Jainism, to be replaced in both systems with the term *ahimsā* (“noninjury”) under the influence of Brahmanical normative texts (*dharmasūtras* and *dharmasāstras*) centuries later, probably around the 1st century CE.

The ideal of perfection and liberation was probably tantamount to a complete elimination of the influence of past deeds, or *karman*, the ultimate cessation of transmigration and inner perfection of the soul. However, occasionally we come across rather ambiguous and incidental references to an obscure doctrine of “cyclic salvation” (*maṇḍalamokṣa*), which seems to be rather associated with later medieval Ājīvikas of southern India. Some interpret this cryptic and controversial theory in the sense that ultimate liberation does not exist and that, after a period of purity, the perfected soul becomes stained again and returns to the cycle of rebirth.<sup>37</sup> The basis for such an interpretation is provided by two additional theories ascribed to the Ājīvikas jointly, namely (1) that *all* living beings, in consistence with their determinism, are bound to attain liberation at some point and (2) that the world will always remain inhabited by living beings, which entails another belief that at least some liberated souls would have to return to the world, which would save it from becoming void and maintain it as a peopled place. However, it is not at all certain that the Ājīvikas indeed, in the first place, upheld the belief that each and every soul will necessarily attain liberation after wandering across 8,400,000 great eons. The respective original passages of the *Sāmaññaphalasutta*<sup>38</sup> and the *Bhagavati Sūtra*<sup>39</sup> should rather be treated

with much caution and rather be understood as a part of the description of the general Ājīvika cosmology (the cyclic measurement of time and its division into 8,400,000 great eons) and not in the sense that each soul would necessarily attain liberation after such a time lapse. There is likewise little evidence to the Ājīvikas’ maintaining that the world can be either emptied or not by the departed souls that attain liberation. Most importantly, the original, rather cryptic reference on which the above interpretation is based, found in Jain sources<sup>40</sup> is originally not ascribed to the Ājīvikas, and it is only the 9th-century commentator Śīlānka who links such a view with Ājīvikism, and whether he had a firsthand knowledge of the system and his accuracy are most dubious.<sup>41</sup> However, such references may be an echo of what may have indeed been a part of the Ājīvikas’ body of tenets that emerged at some later period of time, namely the belief that their liberated spiritual teachers (Jina, Tīrthankara) do return to the world to rectify the misdeeds of humankind and help them find the path to liberation, akin to the Hindu idea of the *avatāras* of Viṣṇu, who periodically come to the rescue of the world in different incarnations, or to the Mahāyāna Buddhist ideal of the *bodhisattva*. And this is what would actually be suggested by the idea of “cyclic liberation”. Such an interpretation may find support in the 10th-century CE South Indian Jain epic *Nīlakēci*, which contains a number of references to Ājīvikas’ beliefs,<sup>42</sup> as well as in Haribhadra’s epic *Lalitavistara* (Charming Disclosure Commentary; 8th cent.? CE).<sup>43</sup> One more verse, which some (Basham, 1951, 222; Dundas, 2003, 161) take to be a genuine Ājīvika text, although there seems to be no tangible evidence to support such a supposition,<sup>44</sup> alludes to the idea of a return of such *avatāras* or *bodhisattvas* to the world in order to rectify it. The anonymous verse is quoted by the early 13th-century author Malliṣeṇa in his work the *Syādvādamañjarī* (Modal Description Bouquet):

The cognoscenti who are the makers of the passage (ford) to the moral law, having reached the highest destination, return again to existence on account of the abuse (maltreatment) of the pathway (ford).<sup>45</sup>

<sup>37</sup> Basham, 1951, 124, 174, 257–261.

<sup>38</sup> DN II.20–21.

<sup>39</sup> BS. 15.

<sup>40</sup> *SūS.* 1.1.3.11–12; trans. Jacobi, 1895, 245.

<sup>41</sup> Balcerowicz, 2016b, 78–89.

<sup>42</sup> Basham, 1951, 260.

<sup>43</sup> *LV*; p. 220.

<sup>44</sup> Balcerowicz, ch. 7, forthcoming.

<sup>45</sup> *SVM.* 1.57; p. 3; for the discussion, see Balcerowicz, ch. 7, forthcoming; see also Dundas, 2003, 162.

Gośāla taught the so-called eight finalities (*aṭṭha carimāiṃ*; Skt. *arthacarimāni*), which every living being will have to face in the course of its wanderings in the cycle of rebirth at one point:

1. the last drink (Pkt. *carime pāṇe*; Skt. *carimapana*);
2. the last song (Pkt. *carime geye*; Skt. *carimageya*);
3. the last dance (Pkt. *carime naṭṭe*; Skt. *carimanṛtya*),
4. the last obeisance (Pkt. *carime aṇjalikamme*; Skt. *carimāñjalikaraṇa*);
5. the last resounding and destructive huge cloud (Pkt. *carime pokkhalasaṇvaṭṭae mahāmehe*; Skt. *carimapuṣkalasaṇvartakamahāmegha*);
6. the last sprinkling fragrant elephant (Pkt. *carime seyaṇae gaṃdhahatthī*; Skt. *carimasecanakagandhahastin*);
7. the last battle with huge stone projectiles (*carime mahāsīlakaṇṭhāe saṃgāme*; *carimamahāsīlakaṇṭhakasaṃgrāma*); and
8. the last ford maker in the succession of the 24 ford makers of the descending era (*avasarpinī*).

Gośāla is said to have also expounded a most cryptic doctrine of “discontinuance through continuation” (Pkt. *pauṭṭaparihāra*; Skt. *\*pravṛttaparihāra/pravṛtyaparihāra?*), perhaps “discontinuance/stoppage [of a subsequent birth in a new body] through/ due to continuation [in the same reanimated body]”, according to which, literally, “all living beings without exception discontinue the discontinuance [of the current birth for the sake of a subsequent birth in a new body] through continuation [in the same, reanimated body]”, that is they continue to live in the same body after they have seemingly left it (died). This obscure theory was a bone of contention between Gośāla and Vardhamāna, who restricted its application to plants only. Apparently, this theory was discontinued in Jainism and completely forgotten.

Ājīvikas had their own epistemology, an integral part of which was the theory of the multiplicity of reality (*anekāntavāda*) and its corollary, the method of viewpoints (*naṇavāda*). From the anonymous *Niyatīdvātriṃśikā* (though ascribed to Siddhasena), which presents an account of the Ājīvikas’ doctrine<sup>46</sup> composed well before 500 CE, we can see that the name of the theory, now exclusively associated with

Jainism, was current among the Ājīvikas at least a century before it was adopted by Jainism in the 6th century CE, the first Jain philosopher to use it being Pūjyapāda Devanandin (540–600 CE).<sup>47</sup>

The followers of Ājīvikism also had their own canon of scriptures, which originally may have consisted of ten books: eight *Mahānimittas* (Pkt./Skt.; Books of Great Omens), included in the *pūrvvas* (Pkt. *purvas*; ancient texts), and two *mārgas* (Pkt. *maggas*; books on the path), namely the *Gītamārga* (Path of Song) and the *Nātyamārga* (Path of Dance). The eight *Mahānimittas* consisted of the following:

1. *Bhauma* (Pkt. *Bhome*; Book of Earthen Phenomena), alternatively *Divya* (Book of the Divine);
2. *Utpāda* (Pkt. *Uppāte*; Book of Unusual Phenomena or Portents /Origination[?]);
3. *Svapna* (Pkt. *Suviṇe*; Book of Dreams);
4. *Antarikṣa* (Pkt. *Aṃtalikkhe*; Book of Sky Phenomena), in some sources known as *Nabha* (Book of the Sky);
5. *Aṅga* (Pkt. *Aṅge*; Book of Bodily Occurrences), in some sources known as *Tanu* (Book of Body/Skin);
6. *Svara* (Pkt. *Sare*; Book of Acoustic Phenomena);
7. *Lakṣaṇa* (Pkt. *Lakkhaṇe*; Book of Body Marks); and
8. *Vyāñjana* (Pkt. *Vaṃjaṇe*; Book of Symptoms).<sup>48</sup>

However, despite various attempts to identify even some stray passages from this vast oeuvre,<sup>49</sup> not a single piece of Ājīvika literature survives, not even in quotation.<sup>50</sup> A reference to their later (5th-cent. CE?) canonical literature is found in the Śvetāmbara *Nandī Sūtra*: “Twenty-two books (*sūtra*) are accepted to be the books in the arrangement of the Ājīvika books, the sections of which are dependent [for meaning] on each other.”<sup>51</sup> These were composed in some version of Prakrit. We may also suspect that the Ājīvikas probably developed some literature in Sanskrit.

Unlike Jainism, which enjoyed no royal patronage until the 2nd/1st century BCE and King Khāravēla (c. 100 BCE?; sometimes dated between 170 and 40 BCE) of Odisha, its first political supporter (the traditional story of the emperor Candragupta Maurya [r. 313/312–288? BCE, or 321/320–298/297? BCE] being converted to Jainism by and

<sup>46</sup> summaries in Qvarnström, 2015; Balcerowicz, forthcoming.

<sup>47</sup> Soni, 2002, 34.

<sup>48</sup> see Basham, 1951, 56–79; Balcerowicz, 2016a, 30, 55–78.

<sup>49</sup> e.g. Basham, 1951, 213–223.

<sup>50</sup> see Balcerowicz, forthcoming.

<sup>51</sup> *NanS.*<sub>1</sub> 105= *NanS.*<sub>2</sub> 108.

associated with Jain monk Bhadrabāhu being a myth that originated 900 years after the alleged events; Balcerowicz, 2018), we have some tangible evidence that the Ājīvikas enjoyed the support of Mauryan emperors Bindusāra (r. 298/288–272/269? BCE) and Daśaratha (232–224 BCE), and the latter was a follower of Ājīvikism.<sup>52</sup>

The first humanmade caves in India, which served as prototypes for future Buddhist caves,<sup>53</sup> were the seven caves of the Barābār and Nāgārjunī hills donated to the Ājīvikas by Emperor Aśoka and his son Daśaratha.<sup>54</sup> This area served the Ājīvikas as their religious center since the 3rd century BCE until it was destroyed by the Jain patron king Khāvela approximately two or three centuries later. Another religious center, or historically the first one, was at Śrāvastī (Pkt. Sāvattihī/Sāvattihī). The Ājīvikas had their own art, none of which has survived, except a few specimens such as the elaborate frieze of the façade of the Lomas Rishi cave of the Barābār Hill, a large nude stone torso found in Lohanipur, and two terracotta figures dating to the 3rd century BCE, the last three on display at Patna Museum.<sup>55</sup> If the identification of these artifacts as Ājīvika is correct, these would be much older than the earliest examples of Jain material culture and art and older than Buddhist art. That the Ājīvikas developed their art and iconic worship is also confirmed by a copperplate inscription dated circa 502 CE, which mentions a shrine devoted to an Ājīvika deity, Maṇibhadra, and his four-faced image as an object of worship in Jayanāṭana in Bengal.<sup>56</sup>

Ājīvikism disappeared from India after a few centuries of existence, except in South India, where the Ājīvikas had their own canon of scriptures, including two books of *Maṅkalinūḷḷapatukati* (The Nine Rays of Light by Divine Maṅkali [i.e. Gośāla Maṅkhaliputra]) in Tamil, until they dissolved within a local Digambara community in the 14th century.<sup>57</sup>

## The Founders of Ājīvikism

The earliest account on the Ājīvikas, the Buddhist *Sāmaññaphalasutta*, mentions the so-called six

heretical teachers, who were prominent thinkers of the 5th century BCE and Gautama Buddha's most important rivals, and as many as three of them are associated with Ājīvikism, Gośāla Maṅkhaliputra (or Maskarin Gośāla/Gosālīputra; Pkt. Gosāla Maṅkhaliputta; Pal. Makkhali Gosāla), Pūraṇa Kāśyapa (Pal. Pūraṇa Kassapa), and Kakuda Kātyāyana (Pal. Kakuda/Kakudha/Pakudha Kaccāyana/Kātiyāna), besides Nirgrantha Jñātṛputra (Pal. Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta/Nāṭaputta), that is, Vardhamāna Mahāvīra.<sup>58</sup> Interestingly, the earliest Buddhist accounts of Jina Vardhamāna Mahāvīra's thought consist of his predecessor Pārśva's four-fold code of moral conduct ("the restraint of four-fold control," Pal. *cātuyāmasaṃvara*) and Ājīvika Gośāla Maṅkhaliputra's four kinds of protective ritual, which involve the use of and abstention from water in their terminal rite.<sup>59</sup> The Buddhist sources, such as the *Sāmaññaphalasutta* or the *Devaputtasāmyutta*, see therefore Mahāvīra as an exponent of his predecessor, Pārśva, and of his elder contemporary, Gośāla Maṅkhaliputra, and apparently quite frequently confuse the personalities and doctrines of Gośāla Maṅkhaliputra and Vardhamāna Mahāvīra.

Gośāla Maṅkhaliputra seems to be the person who exercised the most profound impact on Ājīvikism and influenced a number of Jain beliefs as well. Very little is known about him, and two main sources of information on his life and teaching are the Buddhist *Sāmaññaphalasutta* alongside a commentary, the *Sumaṅgalavīlāsini* (Splendorous Commentary on the Most Auspicious [Long Discourses of the Buddha]) by Buddhaghosa (5th cent. CE), and chapter 15 of the canonical *Bhagavatī Sūtra*. Unlike all other chapters, this one has its own title, *Teyanisagga*, and first circulated as a separate text, the oldest sections of which may date back to the 4th–3rd centuries BCE. It presents Gośāla in a most unfavorable, distorted light, as an impostor, usurper, and denouncer of Mahāvīra, Gośāla's religious teacher. Chapter 11 of the *Ṛṣibhāṣitāni*,<sup>60</sup> a noncanonical Jain collection of hymns, some of which belong to the oldest portions of Jain literature, reproduces some of Gośāla's (direct?) teachings.

<sup>52</sup> Basham, 1951, 150–160; Balcerowicz, 2016a, 59; 2016b, 16–19.

<sup>53</sup> Brancaccio, 2011, 26.

<sup>54</sup> Basham, 1951, 150–160; Balcerowicz, 2016a, 241–299.

<sup>55</sup> Balcerowicz, 2016a, 285–288.

<sup>56</sup> Furu, 2016.

<sup>57</sup> Basham, 1951, 215–216.

<sup>58</sup> for an analysis of the *Sāmaññaphalasutta*, see Jaini, 1970.

<sup>59</sup> see Jaini, 2003.

<sup>60</sup> trans. Schubring, 1969; Balcerowicz, 2016a, 37–38.

A close reading of sources allows us to partly reconstruct some episodes in the life of Gośāla Mañkhaliputra in correlation with events known from Vardhamāna Mahāvīra's biography.<sup>61</sup> Having left his home and lived alone as an itinerant mendicant for at least 13 months, Vardhamāna met Gośāla, a naked ascetic who ate from the folded palms of his hands, whereupon Vardhamāna also renounced all possessions such as clothes and utensils, including his alms bowl, and began to collect and eat the alms from the folded palms, a practice followed by Digambara monks to date. In other words, Vardhamāna apparently accepted Gośāla as his teacher, contrary to later Jain tradition, which reversed the roles of both ascetics. Thereafter, they peregrinated together across Greater Magadha for six years, at the lapse of which they parted their paths due to a dispute over some doctrinal points. Two years later, after six months of extreme mortifications and fasting, Gośāla Mañkhaliputra accumulated fiery energy (*tejoleśyā*) and attained omniscience (*kevala*), perfection, and Jinahood, after which he is said to have been recognized by his mendicant community as victorious (*jīna*), liberated (*arhant*), possessing of perfect knowledge (*kevalin*), omniscient (*sarvajña*), and perfect (*siddha*), and his words as the teachings of the victor (*jīnaśabda*). Soon thereafter, he delivered his first sermon, an event reminiscent of Gautama Buddha's first sermon known as "the setting in motion the wheel of the Buddhist law" (*dharmacakrapravartana*) or "the setting in motion the wheel of victory" (*\*vijayacakrapavarana*) by Vardhamāna Mahāvīra, as line 14 of Khāvela's inscription in the Hathigumpha ("Elephant Cave") near Bhubaneswar suggests.<sup>62</sup> At some point, either at the occasion of the first sermon or much later, he met his closest disciples, the so-called six itinerant guides (Skt. *disācara*; Pkt. *disācara*), who were responsible for memorizing or codifying the scriptures. Two years later, his former companion Vardhamāna Mahāvīra was reported to have likewise attained omniscience (*kevala*), perfection, and Jinahood.

Gośāla is reported to have regularly spent much time at Śrāvastī, the first religious center of the Ājīvikas, where he and his confraternity received

support from Hālāhālā the potter-woman, an owner of a pottery workshop, where they often stayed. Much later, having learned that Gośāla was active as a spiritual teacher and an omniscient community leader in Śrāvastī, Vardhamāna reached Śrāvastī and began to spread the news of the low birth and misfortunes of Gośāla. Gośāla in turn compared Vardhamāna to an ignoble serpent with poisonous eyesight. In reaction, Vardhamāna forbade his own monks to visit Gośāla: apparently it was the norm for his monks to meet, receive teaching from, and debate with Gośāla at that time. This led to a direct and fierce encounter between the two leaders vying for power and supremacy, in the course of which two of Vardhamāna's disciples were allegedly burned to ashes when Gośāla emitted his fiery energy accumulated during his penances. After a violent exchange, which marked the split within the congregation, and may have been the actual origin of Jainism's later division into the Śvetāmbaras and Digambaras, both Gośāla and Vardhamāna fell seriously sick. The dying Vardhamāna regained health a few days later after eating "the raw flesh of a cock killed by a cat" (*majjārakaḍḍae kukkuḍamamsae*), instead of a broth of "the flesh of the two pigeons" (*duve kavoyasarīram*) prepared for him by his followers.<sup>63</sup>

This particular dietary aspect of Vardhamāna's recovery after the fiery-energy duel, which reflects the realities of the historical period when the principles of vegetarianism were not yet established,<sup>64</sup> have constituted a serious problem for later Jain apologetes, who find the depiction of a Jina eating flesh blasphemous, and who consistently, albeit ahistorically, interpret the actual terms occurring in the text as referring to particular names of vegetables or fruits.<sup>65</sup> Some researchers follow this line of apologetic interpretation and explain that "the fact that this term (i.e. 'the raw flesh of a cock') was not suppressed or eliminated from the literature long ago supports this interpretation; those commentators closest in time to the original text must have assumed that there would be no danger of misunderstanding."<sup>66</sup> However, also such apologetic stance on behalf of Jainism is ahistorical, for Abhayadevasūri (11th cent.), the most important

<sup>61</sup> see Hoernle, 1926, 259–261; Barua, 1920, 2–29; 1921, 297–318; Basham, 1951, 56–79; Balcerowicz, 2016a, 11–43.

<sup>62</sup> Balcerowicz, 2016a, 250–251; 2016b, 31–32.

<sup>63</sup> *BS*. 15.121–123; pp. 729–730.

<sup>64</sup> see e.g. Alsdorf, 1961, 5–14, 49; 2010, 3–15, 51–52; Balbir, 1984; Jha, 2009.

<sup>65</sup> see Kapadia, 1941, 128; Alsdorf, 1961, 13–14; 2010, 12–14; Jaini, 1979, 23–24n59; Jha, 2009, 73.

<sup>66</sup> Jaini, 1979, 24n59.



commentator on the *Bhagavatī Sūtra*, admits that, in the first place according to some interpreters, “the meanings of” all these controversial terms “are precisely such as they are actually heard.”<sup>67</sup> It is only as an alternative, and in consistence with vegetarianism adopted by Jainism at a later point in time, that Abhayadeva explains the four controversial terms – (1) *kavoya* (“pigeon”), (2) *majjāra* (“cat”), (3) *kaḍae* (“[pigeon] done by/killed by [a cat]”), and (4) *kukkūḍamaṃsae* (“raw flesh of a cock”) – respectively as follows: (1) either “an (unidentified) fruit” (*phala*) “the colour of which resembles that of a pigeon”, or “a pumpkin-gourd” (*kuṣmāṇḍa*), which is “inhabited by vegetable souls” and “which resembles a pigeon,” or “a pulp of a pumpkin (citron?)” (*kuṣmāṇḍaphala*) “of grey colour similar to that of a pigeon”, (2) either “a particular morbid humour (wind)” (*vāyuvīśeṣa*) or “a particular (unidentified) herb (*vanaspati*) called little-cat” (*virāṭika*), (3) “[pumpkin] prepared in order to pacify [morbid humour]” or “[pulp of a pumpkin/citron] transformed by, or seasoned with [the little-cat herb]”, and (4) “a saucepan-like (unidentified) particular seed-filled vegetable” (*bijapūrakakaṭāha*).<sup>68</sup> In each and every case, he provides more than one alternative, each of them therefore being rather dubious. Abhayadeva’s explanations are in line with earlier Jain commentators, such as Haribhadra (8th cent. CE) or Śīlaṅka (9th cent. CE), who on other similar occasions did not find the literary meanings of such terms as *māṃsa* (“meat”) or *matsya* (“fish”) in their literary, nonvegetarian meanings problematic.<sup>69</sup> The controversy surrounding Vardhamāna consuming of meat resembles the case of the Pali expression *sūkaramaddava*, or “tender pork stew,” being the Buddha’s last meal in the *Mahāparinibbānasutta*,<sup>70</sup> an understanding that for the 5th-century Buddhist commentator Buddhagosa posed no problem, but which the Buddhist Mahāyāna tradition found problematic; it interpreted the term in the vegetarian spirit, for example, as mushrooms and so on.<sup>71</sup> Naturally, this kind of doctrinal controversy surrounding Vardhamāna would not arise among the Digambaras inasmuch as they straightforwardly reject any supposition that he or other omniscient

ones (*kevalin*) would ever consume morsel food, and instead believe that such spiritually elevated persons are sustained through the absorption of subtle matter.<sup>72</sup>

Six months after the encounter with Vardhamāna. Gośāla died, or attained final liberation (*parinirvāṇa*) as a culmination of penance and terminal fasting associated with water rites. Before passing away, he delivered his final sermon and instructions to his monks. Table 1 demonstrates major interconnected episodes in the lives of both teachers.<sup>73</sup>

The lives and religious careers of Gośāla Maṅkhaliputra and Vardhamāna were neatly interwoven, and it would come as no surprise that their teachings also had much in common. The former laid emphasis on extreme austerities, nudity, possessionlessness, and facing the unavoidable and the predetermined, whereas the latter was raised in the tradition of Pārśva, whose followers were said in the Śvetāmbara sources to be his parents, in a tradition that knew no nudity and most probably no monasticism and ascetic penance at all (something that the sectarian position of the Digambaras would counter). Each of them brought diverse and sometimes irreconcilable elements of religious practice and dogmatics into a rather heterogeneous religious community.

Gośāla Maṅkhaliputra was not the first or only Ājīvika teacher, and he was preceded by a lineage of spiritual instructors: two founders, Nanda Vaccha and Kisa Saṅkicca; a group of six teachers directly preceding Gośāla Maṅkhaliputra, namely Ṛṇaṅjaya (Pal. Eṇejjaga), Mallarāma (Pal. Mallarāma), Maṅḍita (Pal. Maṅḍiya), Roha (Pal. Roha), Bhāradvāja (Pal. Bhāradḍāi), and Arjuna Gautamaputra (Pal. Ajjuna Goyamaputta); and Udāyin Kuṇḍikāyaṇiya (?; Pal. Udāi Kuṇḍiyāyaṇiya) and his elder contemporaries Kakuda Kātyāyana (Pal. Pakudha Kaccāyana) and Pūraṇa Kāśyapa.<sup>74</sup>

The dating of Gośāla Maṅkhaliputra (reported to have died 16½ years before Vardhamāna) and Pūraṇa Kāśyapa (said to have died in the 11th year of Vardhamāna’s asceticism and one year after Gośāla’s perfection, after the Buddha’s so-called “great miracle” (*mahāprātihārya*) of Śrāvastī in which,

<sup>67</sup> *BSVr*: p. 730.

<sup>68</sup> *BSVr*: p. 730; see also Hoernle, vol. II, 1886–1890, app. II, 10–11; Alsdorf, 1961, 12–13; 2010, 12–13; Balbir, 1984, 30–31; Deleu, 2007.

<sup>69</sup> Alsdorf, 1961, 8–12; Jha, 2009, 73–74.

<sup>70</sup> DN<sub>1</sub> 16.

<sup>71</sup> Jha, 2009, 79–80n16.

<sup>72</sup> Dundas, 1985.

<sup>73</sup> see Balcerowicz, 2016a, 36; 2016b, 37.

<sup>74</sup> see Hoernle, 1926, 263; Barua, 1920, 2–7; Basham, 1951, 27–34, 80ff.; Balcerowicz, 2016a, 9–10.

Table 1: An overview of correlated periods and events in Vardhamāna Mahāvīra's and Gośāla Maṅkhaliputra's lives, relative to the age of the former.

Age of Vardhamāna Mahāvīra	Vardhamāna Mahāvīra	Gośāla Maṅkhaliputra
?		birth
0	birth	
30	renunciation of householder life; the beginning of an ascetic career, which lasts for 30 years	
30–42	2 years of life as an ascetic before Jinahood	
31	first year of asceticism completed	asceticism
32	meeting with Gośāla, renunciation of clothing	meeting with Vardhamāna, which begins the period of at least 24 years of ascetic career
32–38	6 years of ascetic life in company of Gośāla	6 years of ascetic life in company of Vardhamāna
38	parting company with Gośāla	parting company with Vardhamāna
38–40		two-year period before Jinahood
38–42	four-year period before Jinahood	
39/40		attainment of omniscience and Jinahood
39/40–55/56		16 years spent as Jina until the violent encounter with Vardhamāna;
		16½ years before death
31	the death of Pūraṇa Kāśyapa	
42	attainment of omniscience and Jinahood	
42–72	30 years spent as Jina until death	
55/56	the violent encounter between Gośāla and Vardhamāna at Śrāvastī	
	semiterminal illness	terminal penance
55/56		six months after the violent encounter: <i>parinirvāṇa</i> (death) at age?
72	16½ years after Gośāla's death: <i>parinirvāṇa</i> (death)	

in front of the so-called six “heretic” ascetic teachers (including Gośāla, Vardhamāna and Pūraṇa Kāśyapa), the Buddha displays his miraculous superhuman powers, a part of which is the duplication of his two phantom bodies known as the “twin miracle” (Pal. *yamakapāṭihīra*/*yamakapāṭihāriya*; Skt. *yamakaprātihārya*) is relative to the historical dating of Vardhamāna Mahāvīra himself, which is in turn correlated with possible dates of the historical Buddha. There are two different chronologies linking the deaths of Gautama Buddha and Vardhamāna Mahāvīra. Most standard Buddhist sources place the death of Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta (i.e. Vardhamāna Mahāvīra) before that of the historical Buddha, whereas Jain sources such as Hemacandra's *Sthavirāvalīcarita* (Lives of the Jain Elders),<sup>75</sup> being a *Parīśiṣṭaparvan* (appendix) to

his *Triṣaṣṭīśalākāpurūṣacaritra* (Lives of the 63 Illustrious People) consistently have the Buddha's death predate Vardhamāna's.<sup>76</sup> In view of the Buddhist dating, it is rather difficult to account for the contemporaneity of Gośāla and the much older Pūraṇa Kāśyapa with the historical Buddha and to correlate a number of events surrounding other non-Buddhist thinkers in a consistent manner. It seems therefore more justified to assume that Buddhist tradition mistook the death of Gośāla for the death of Vardhamāna, confusing the personalities of both thinkers as it did on a number of other occasions, and consequently accept the accuracy of Jain accounts that Vardhamāna's *parinirvāṇa* postdates that of the Gautama Buddha. This would allow us to neatly correlate all the events. Furthermore, assuming that Gautama Buddha died around 400 BCE,

<sup>75</sup> trans. Fynes, 1998.

<sup>76</sup> see Basham, 1951, 66–78.

Table 2: The new dating of early philosophers.<sup>77</sup>

	Buddhism	Jainism	Ājīvikism	fatalism/Ājīvikism
year BCE	Gautama Buddha	Vardhamāna Mahāvīra	Gośāla Mañkhaliputra	Pūraṇa Kāśyapa <i>parinirvāṇa</i>
424				
410	“the last battle with huge stone projectiles” (war campaign of the king of Magadha against the confederation of the clans of the Vṛjji, the Licchavi, and so forth. <sup>78</sup> )			
409			<i>parinirvāṇa</i>	
400	<i>parinirvāṇa</i>			
393		<i>parinirvāṇa</i>		
313/312 or 321/320?	Enthronement of Candragupta Maurya (Maurya dynasty)			
272/269	Enthronement of Aśoka (Maurya dynasty)			
c. 100?	Enthronement of Khāravala			

we may suggest a new correlated, relative chronology for the founders of Buddhism, Jainism, and Ājīvikism (see table 2).

Each of these teachers must have likewise had some contribution of his own to the system of the Ājīvikas. For instance, in the *Sāmaññaphalasutta*<sup>79</sup> Kakuda Kātyāyana, often classified as a representative of the materialists, was the first to formulate a doctrine of atomism in India, which was later in parallel expanded by Jainism and Ājīvikism.<sup>80</sup> Pūraṇa Kāśyapa was a gymnosophist and fatalist, preaching the inefficacy of human actions, and in all probability a mentor and *guru* of Gośāla Mañkhaliputra.

Jainism seems therefore genetically very closely related to Ājīvikism and in fact was a part of one and the same internally highly divergent religious movement. This complex structure of successions and influences, which led to the formation of Ājīvikism and Jainism, is represented in the diagram below. The relations between these two groups were inimical from the onset, which goes back to an early rivalry within the monastic community between Vardhamāna Mahāvīra and Gośāla Mañkhaliputra.

The gymnosophists, or “naked philosophers,” known from Greek sources from the time of Alexander the Great, were most probably various representatives of the combined community of the Ājīvikas

and Jains at the time when the schism was not so deep.

### Ājīvikas’ Influence in Jainism

A number of doctrines were shared by the Ājīvikas and the Jains, and it seems that the Ājīvikas’ ideas, usually accredited to Gośāla Mañkhaliputra and perhaps to other ascetics of the Ājīvika tradition, directly influenced Jain concepts. These are not mere analogies, which could be incidental, but rather genetic similarities, pointing to the same origins.

The Ājīvikas and early Jains had a common set of scriptures, known as canonical *Mahānimittas* (Books of Great Omens). The earliest inscription (inscription 1, dated 600 CE) and some later ones (e.g. inscription 254 [105], dated 1398<sup>81</sup>) found in Shravanabelagola attest to the high esteem that the Ājīvikas’ eight canonical *Mahānimittas* and their divination practices enjoyed among Jain monks, including prominent monks and leaders of the community, such as the famous Bhadrabāhusvāmin (3rd cent. BCE) or a certain Arhadbali (merely mentioned in inscription 254 [105] as an important community[*saṅgha*] leader). In the legend, despite

<sup>77</sup> source: Balcerowicz, 2016b, 42–44, 180–182.

<sup>78</sup> see Hoernle, 1926, 261–263; Basham, 1951, 66–78; Balcerowicz, 2016b, 42, 99–100.

<sup>79</sup> DN<sub>1</sub> II.26, pp. 56–57.

<sup>80</sup> DN<sub>1</sub> II.20–21.

<sup>81</sup> see *Epigraphia Caranatica*.

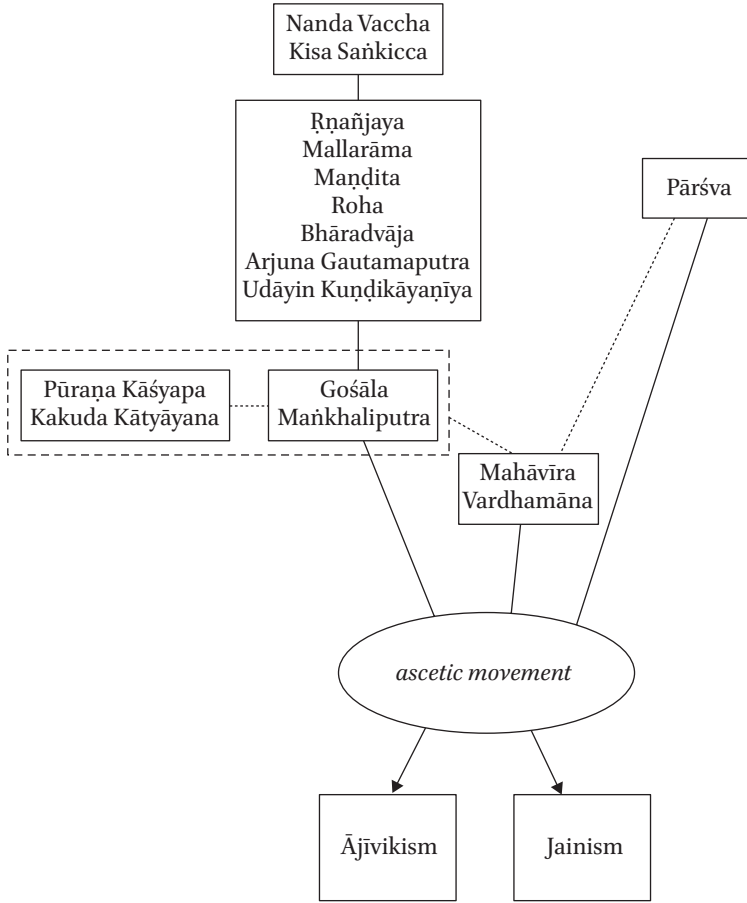


Diagram 1: the origins of Jainism and Ājīvikism.<sup>82</sup>

being a *śrutakevalin*, that is the one who knows all the 12 original canonical books of Jainism, Bhadrabāhu is said to have relied on the *Mahānimitta* to predict an impending famine (claimed by the Digambaras to be the origin of the Digambara–Śvetāmbara split).

The titles or the contents of the Jain *pūrva* (ancient texts; the title lists are mentioned in the *Nandī Sūtra* and the *Samavāyaṅga Sūtra* [Pkt. *Samavāyaṅga Sutta*])<sup>83</sup> – said to be irretrievably lost – in a few cases overlap with the eight *Mahānimittas*, especially the Jain *Utpādapūrva* (Pkt. *Uppādapuvvaṅ*) and Ājīvika *Utpāda*, the Jain *Vijjāṅuppavādaṅ* (Skt. *Vidyāṅupravāda*), and the miraculous skills and divinational powers that are the generic theme underlying the Ājīvika *Mahānimittas*. In the tradition

of the Ājīvikas, reflected in the *Teyanisagga*, the *Mahānimittas* are expressly said to have been included in (or subtracted from) the *pūrva* and preserved in the memories of the “six itinerant guides” (*disācara*). It can hardly be a coincidence that the same name, *pūrva*, refers to the earliest canonical layer of Jain scriptures, said to have been subsequently forgotten.

The body of earliest scriptures, the so-called *pūrva* shared by the Ājīvikas and Jains, which go back to Pārśva, Gośāla, Vardhamāna and other ascetics, gradually bifurcated, as it seems, into two distinct traditions, until these were completely discarded by the Jains, willing to dissociate themselves from the tradition of the Ājīvikas. This would explain the

<sup>82</sup> source: Balcerowicz, 2016a, 315; 2016b, 41.

<sup>83</sup> see also Kapadia, 2000, 78ff.; Schubring, 1962, 73–78; Balcerowicz, 2016a, 77–78.



most curious and otherwise inexplicable scriptural tradition among the Jains that allegedly the holiest of hollies, the liberating, semidivine words of Mahāvīra, the Jina, as these are believed to have been first retained by his closest disciples, the *gaṇadhara*s in the form of the earliest scriptural core (either as the *pūrvas* for all the Jains or as both the *pūrvas* and the *aṅgas* for the Digambaras), were completely forgotten by all the Jains and eventually replaced with ordinary, humanmade, mundane texts. In fact, as it seems, the legend was a conscious attempt on the part of the Jains to cut the scriptural ties with their archrivals, with whom they shared the same roots. Perhaps an offshoot of the same scriptural tradition was the anthology known as the *Rṣibhāṣītāni*, which contains the oldest textual portions that can genuinely be ascribed directly to Pārśva and Gośāla (but not to Vardhamāna!), but which was never integrated into the Jain canon.<sup>84</sup>

A conspicuous similarity to which a number of scholars<sup>85</sup> have already drawn attention is the Ājīvikas' idea of the six classes of people (*abhijāti*), which influenced the Jain theory of the six colorings of the soul (*leśyā*). The six classes (*abhijāti*), which present a hierarchy of souls, are enumerated in Buddhist sources:<sup>86</sup>

1. *kṛṣṇa*: the class of black people (mutton butchers, pork butchers, fowlers, hunters, exterminators, fishmongers, robbers, robbers-murderers, jailers, and others in "violent" trades);
2. *nila*: the class of blue people (Buddhist monks who require robes, alms bowls, beds, and medicines and who destroy living beings, as well as certain other wandering ascetics);

3. *lohita*: the class of red people (Jain monks who wear one robe);
4. *hāridra*: the class of green people (Ājīvika householders wearing white clothes);
5. *śukla*: the class of white people (Ājīvika monks and nuns); and
6. *paramaśukla*: the class of perfectly white people (Nanda Vaccha, Kisa Saṅkicca, and Gośāla Maṅkhaliputra, i.e. the earliest teachers and founders of Ājīvikism).

In addition, the Ājīvikas' classification of people according to colors, which reflect their moral standing, is preserved in the Jain variety of *karman* (or rather karmic matter) determining the person in the aspect of color (*varṇanāmakarman*). It was an attempt to reconcile the Jain doctrine of *karman*, conceived as a particular type of subtle matter, with the colorings of the soul (*leśyā*).

The cosmology of the Ājīvikas displays a number of features in common with the universe system of the Jains, with some notable differences.<sup>88</sup> Like the Jains, the Ājīvikas saw the world as inhabited by a wide range of living beings reborn again and again through an immense number of incarnations. For the Ājīvikas, such "wombs" (Skt. *yoni*; Pkt. *joṇi*), or places of origin, numbered "1,400,000 primary types of births from womb, 6,000 and 600."<sup>89</sup> This classification included various kinds of rebirths in the netherworlds and heavens as well as various kinds of incarnations as animals and plants, Jainism and Ājīvikism (besides the earliest Buddhism) being the only traditions in India that recognized also plants as sentient beings in the *samsāra* cycle of rebirth. Probably an Ājīvika equivalent of the Jain four

Table 3: The colors of Ājīvika classes of people (*abhijāti*), Jain colorings of the soul (*leśyā*), and Jain *karman* determining the person in the aspect of color (*varṇanāmakarman*).<sup>87</sup>

	black ( <i>kṛṣṇa</i> )	blue ( <i>nila</i> )	gray ( <i>kāpota</i> / <i>kapota</i> )	red ( <i>lohita</i> )	yellow/ green ( <i>hāridra</i> )	white ( <i>śukla</i> )	perfectly white ( <i>paramaśukla</i> )
<i>abhijāti</i>	X	X		X	X	X	X
<i>leśyā</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X	
<i>varṇanāmakarman</i>	X	X		X	X	X	

<sup>84</sup> Balcerowicz, 2016a, 68–78.

<sup>85</sup> Jacobi, 1895, xxx; Hoernle, 1926, 262a; Glasenapp, 1942, 15; Basham, 1951, 243–246; Ohira, 1994, 125–127; Flügel, 2012, 141–145.

<sup>86</sup> e.g. AN 57.

<sup>87</sup> see Balcerowicz, 2016a, 44–54.

<sup>88</sup> see Basham, 1951, 240–261; Barua, 1921, 307–311; Hoernle, 1926, 261–263; Balcerowicz, 2016a, 79–84.

<sup>89</sup> DN<sub>1</sub> II.20–21; pp. 53–54.

basic kinds of rebirth (*gati*) was the enumeration of places of birth (*garbha*): “there are seven types of birth as a being with self-awareness (*saṃjñin*), seven types of birth as a being devoid of self-awareness (*asaṃjñin*), seven types of birth from grasslike nodes; there are seven types of divine beings, seven types of humans, seven types of malignant spirits.”<sup>90</sup> Like the Jains and the Buddhists, the Ājīvikas conceived of the universe in terms of a hierarchical structure, comprising a high heaven of Brahmā (Skt. Brahmaloaka; Pkt. Bāmbhaloga), lower heavens down to the nethermost celestial abode (Skt. *kalpa*; Pkt. *kappa*), three layers (upper, middle, and lower) of the mind world (*mānasa*), and the suprahuman world (Pkt. *māṇusuttara*; Pal. *mānusottara*; Skt. *mānuṣottara*). These correspond to the Jain celestial worlds or upper layers of human worlds. Below, there lie earthen regions, including human worlds, and hells, divided into various layers (“3,000 nether worlds, 36 layers (places) covered with dust [?]”).<sup>91</sup> The latter, obscure expression “layers (places) covered with dust” (Pal. *rajoḍhātu*) may refer to hellish regions (layers) that correspond to various kinds of “the fruition of *karman*,” understood as a type of fine matter (“dust”). The classifications of worlds and their inhabitants shared by both systems included a belief in a hierarchy of living beings, at the bottom of which were one-sensed creatures (*ekendriya*), such as sesamum-flower living beings, and at the top of which stood beings endowed with five sense organs and a mind as well as heavenly beings. Like the Jains, the Ājīvikas believed in 24 Tīrthaṅkaras who would reoccur at long intervals to rectify humankind and show the correct path to liberation. For both the Ājīvikas and the Jains the universal time has its ups and downs, that is the world history flows through descending eras (*avasarpinī*) and ascending eras (*utsarpinī*) of immensely long periods of time consisting of either 8,400,000 great eons (known either as Pkt. *mahākappa*, Skt. *mahākalpa* to the early Ājīvikas, or 8,400,000 Pkt. *sāgarovama*, Skt. *sāgaropama*, “ocean-like time measure,” to later Jains) of cyclic progression. A comparison of Ājīvikas’ and Jains’ cosmologies is slightly problematic since we know nothing of the earliest Jain cosmological models, which would date back to the period of Ājīvikas’ attested ideas, against which we could draw an analogy.

The well-known terminal ritual fast in Jainism (Skt. *sallekhanā/saṃlekhanā*; Pkt. *saṃlehanā*), being an expression of the ultimate control and suppression of all the harmful activities (*yoga*) undertaken with the mind, speech, and body, has its most probable precursor in Ājīvika practice, referred to in the Jain *Teyanisagga*, as the ultimate rite of “the four drinkables and the four undrinkables.” It is through the recourse to this peculiar rite that Gośāla Maṅkhaliputra seems to have reached his final liberation (*parinirvāṇa*), or expired, approximately 16 years before Vardhamāna. The Buddhist *Sāmaññaphalasutta*<sup>92</sup> directly refers to this particular water practice associated with Gośāla and says that “the ascetic free from bonds (*nirgrantha*)...is covered by all water...is warded off by all water... is protected by all water...is touched by all water” but erroneously links the rite to Vardhamāna Mahāvīra, or Nirgrantha Jñātrputra, not to Gośāla Maṅkhaliputra.

For the Ājīvikas, the aim of this practice of severe terminal austerities and deprivation of all liquids (and, of course, food) was to completely renounce all activities (*yoga*), that is to prevent the inflow of any new *karman* and eliminate all passion and hatred (*rāga*, *doṣa/dveṣa*?), and through it, to achieve perfection, or liberation. The obvious difference between Ājīvika and Jain tradition was that the former practiced voluntary death primarily as a result of deprivation of liquids, accompanied by the renunciation of solid food, whereas the latter practiced voluntary starvation, that is, death principally as a consequence of the rejection of solid food (and of liquids at a later stage), but most components of both practices seem quite similar. This ritual may have originally been the first of the “eight finalities” (*aṭṭha carimāim*), which one has to encounter before death, as enunciated by Gośāla, namely the “last drink” (*carime pāṇe*).<sup>93</sup>

Very much like the Jains, the Ājīvikas also developed their own complex theory of *karman*, of many divisions (inaccurately reported in Buddhist sources as “500 types of deeds, 5 types of deeds, 3 types of deeds, 1 type of deeds, and half-a-deed”),<sup>94</sup> which played a crucial role in their ascetic system. *Karman* was understood by both the Jains and the Ājīvikas as a subtle imperceptible matter, which like dust enveloped the pure soul. An echo of this image can

<sup>90</sup> DN<sub>1</sub> II.20–21.

<sup>91</sup> DN<sub>1</sub> II.20–21; pp. 53–54.

<sup>92</sup> DN<sub>1</sub> II.29, p. 57.

<sup>93</sup> Balcerowicz, 2016a, 90–108.

<sup>94</sup> see DN<sub>1</sub> 2.20–21.

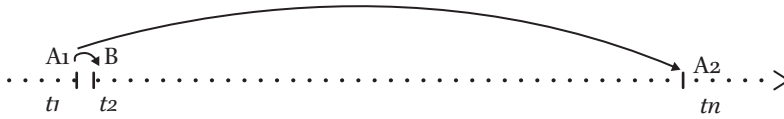


Diagram 2: the results of *karman* (A<sub>1</sub> = cause; B = immediate effect; A<sub>2</sub> = autoreferential consequence; t<sub>1</sub> = time at point 1 [directly preceding time point 2]; t<sub>2</sub> = time at point 2 [directly following time point 1]; t<sub>n</sub> = some distant point in time).

probably be found in the obscure expression “36 layers (places) covered with dust,”<sup>95</sup> mentioned in the Buddhist *Sāmaññaphalasutta* as one of the nether layers of the universe, where one can be reborn in accordance with the accumulated karmic matter. Such kind of fine particles of material *karman* is mentioned also in the *Niyatidvātriṅśikā*,<sup>96</sup> as “layers of particles of pleasure and pain,” produced by one’s actions and contributing to future pleasant or painful experience.

Both Jain and Ājīvika ascetics practiced immobility, which was directly related to their concept of *karman* and their understanding of karmic retribution.<sup>97</sup> Each and every deed (*karman*), whether undertaken with the mind, speech, or body, inadvertently led to two results. The first was its immediate effect, usually directly observable and necessarily adjacent in time to the moment of the act’s execution, whereas the second was an autoreferential consequence of the same act, but distant and removed in time, as demonstrated in diagram 2.

For the Jains, the practice of complete inactivity had a twofold objective: (1) the elimination of previous deeds, that is the cessation of action, and (2) the nonperforming of new actions, that is the prevention of the inflow of new material *karman* (*samvāra*) as well as actively eradicating (*nirjarā*) the already accumulated material karmic particles by means of asceticism. For the Ājīvikas, asceticism, restraint, and motionlessness were the means to a complete withdrawal from all kinds of activities, such as mental, verbal, and corporeal, and to secure the complete stoppage of the influx and rise of new material *karman*. The key to liberation was cessation of action alone: past deeds, or the already accumulated *karman*, cannot be averted by any means; the past and its results cannot be altered, therefore they have to be experienced, which explains the fatalism

and determinism attributed to the Ājīvikas. Both religions represented a mechanical system in which *karman* was understood materialistically as a kind of subtle, directly imperceptible matter.

Certain aspects of Ājīvika determinism can also be traced in Jainism.<sup>98</sup> This includes Jain belief in “emancipatable” (Skt. *bhavya*; Pkt. *bhavia*, *bhavva*) souls, or living beings who are capable of attaining liberation or competent to achieve the salvific goal, and “non-emancipatable” (Skt. *abhavya*; Pkt. *abhavia*, *abhavva*), or those who are incapable of attaining liberation and will never reach it.<sup>99</sup> This terminology replaced an earlier one, namely “those whose perfection is actual/real,” that is possible (Skt. *bhavasiddhika*; Pkt. *bhavasiddhiya*, *bhavasiddhiya*) and “those whose perfection is not actual/not real,” that is impossible (Skt. *abhavasiddhika*; Pkt. *abhavasiddhiya*, *abhavasiddhiya*). In Jainism, such “emancipatability” (*bhavyatva*) or “non-emancipatability” (*abhavyatva*) is an innate feature of every soul and, by definition, can never be altered. The idea, entailing a concept of eternal damnation and thereby sensed as uncomfortable by a number of traditional Jain thinkers, that certain souls are inherently incapable of liberation presents a few problems within the Jain soteriological-ontological system and can only be understood as a vestige of Jainism’s early links with the Ājīvikas’ determinism.

Another clear vestige of Ājīvika determinism present in Jainism, in both Digambara and Śvetāmbara early sources, is a category of *karman* known as “firmly fixed” or “tight bound” (Skt. *nikācitakarman*; Pkt. *nikāiya/nikācida kamma*), that is unalterable. Unlike most other kinds of karmic matter in Jainism, this particular kind of *karman* cannot be operated on; it can neither be subdued or delayed, nor destroyed: its consequences have to be experienced fully in due course, without any possibility of altering their execution. This is precisely

<sup>95</sup> DN<sub>1</sub> II.20–21.

<sup>96</sup> 29c; see Qvarnström, 2015, 57n32.

<sup>97</sup> see Bronkhorst, 2003a, 162–164; Balcerowicz, 2016a, 141–152.

<sup>98</sup> Balcerowicz, 2016a, 152–173.

<sup>99</sup> see Jaini, 1977.

the way Gośāla and the Ājīvikas understood how *karman* could operate.

The concept of an irreducible life span, or life quantum (*āyus*) to be experienced within a given birth, referred to by Umāsvāmin in his *Tattvārtha Sūtra* (Treatise on Reality),<sup>100</sup> should also be reckoned among such deterministic traits. The lifetime of four categories of living beings is so predetermined that there are no means of reducing or extending it (although according to classical *karman* theory, under certain circumstances, it can be reduced).

The question of determinism was hotly debated in early Jainism and eventually led to an early schism (*nihnava*) that coincided with Gośāla's death and took place in Śrāvastī, a center of early Ājīvikism. It was stirred by Jamāli, both nephew and son-in-law of Vardhamāna, who also became his disciple. The focus of the debate was whether an action, which potentially could lead to generation of inauspicious *karman*, once commenced, could be regarded as an action the karmic results of which can already be counted as inauspicious. Interestingly, the one who propounded such an obscure deterministic doctrine according to which "things half-done are already done" was Vardhamāna himself, and it was Jamāli who opposed it. This doctrine, which baffled both ancient and modern interpreters of Jain tradition, seems to represent Vardhamāna's earliest teachings and was later obliterated from Jain accounts.<sup>101</sup>

The beginnings of the theory of the multiplexity of reality (*anekāntavāda*) are usually – and inaccurately – traced back to Vardhamāna Mahāvīra himself; however his actual contribution to Jain epistemology is rather doubtful. Out of the three elements that are traditionally regarded as the main features of the Jain doctrine of the multiplexity of reality in general, and the sevenfold modal description (*syādvāda*, *saptabhāṅgī*) in particular, namely the sentential functor *syāt* (which turns an assertoric sentence into a modal one), the idea of perspectives of description (angles from which an object can be presented and analyzed), and three permuted figures that serve as the fundament of the sevenfold modal description (*syād asti*, *syān nāsti*, and *syād avaktavyam*), the first occurs a few centuries after the beginnings of Jainism, whereas the second and third ones can be traced back to Pārśva and Gośāla,

respectively. This structural feature of the sevenfold modal description (*syādvāda*) that goes back to Gośāla consists in three figures through which a property *P* can be predicated on an object *x* in a threefold manner, without entailing any contradiction: "*P*," "non-*P*," and "*P* and non-*P*": for instance "*x* is a soul" (*jīva*), "*x* is a non-soul" (*ajīva*), and "*x* is both a soul and a non-soul" (*jīvājīva*), or "*x* is a world" (*loka*), "*x* is a non-world" (*aloka*), and "*x* is both a world and a non-world" (*lokāloka*), all the examples going back to Gośāla. Accordingly, we have the first three figures of the sevenfold modal description (*syādvāda*): (1) "*x* is, in a certain sense, *P*" (*syād asti*), (2) "*x* is, in a certain sense, non-*P*" (*syān nāsti*), and (3) "*x* is, in a certain sense, *P* and non-*P*" (*syād asti syān nāsti*). An extension of the third figure is "*x* is, in a certain sense, inexpressible" (*syād avaktavyam*), that is "*x* is both *P* and non-*P*," but "*P* and non-*P*" cannot be expressed in language simultaneously. This extension of – or an introduction of the figure "inexpressible" (*avaktavya*), historically the fourth, into – the structure of the sevenfold modal description (*syādvāda*) was genuinely a Jain contribution. We can observe that this kind of analysis of an object via a tripartite pattern was a favorite mode of expression of Gośāla. For this reason, his followers, the Ājīvikas, were often called the Trairāśikas (Pkt. Terāsiya), that is "Those Who Recognize Three Figures (*Trirāśī*)." This method of analysis via a tripartite pattern gradually found its way into the Jain canon.<sup>102</sup>

The Jains were not the only ones in India who recognized a theory of viewpoints (*nayavāda*). As reported in Jain sources,<sup>103</sup> also the Ājīvikas distinguished seven basic viewpoints (*naya*), and such a conspicuous overlap in the classifications, as presented in diagram 3, cannot be coincidental and most probably goes back to the common roots.<sup>104</sup> The seven varieties of viewpoints distinguished by the Ājīvikas were as follows: (1) comprehensive (*naigama*), with two kinds, (2) collected (*saṃgrahita*) and (3) uncollected (*asaṃgrahita*), further respectively divided into (4) collective (*saṃgraha*) and (5) empirical (*vyavahāra*), and then (6) direct (*rjusūtra*), and (7) verbal (*śabda*).

The Jains shared with the Ājīvikas not only some elements of the sevenfold modal description (*syādvāda*) and a general structure of the theory of

<sup>100</sup> TS. Ś.2.52/D.2.53.

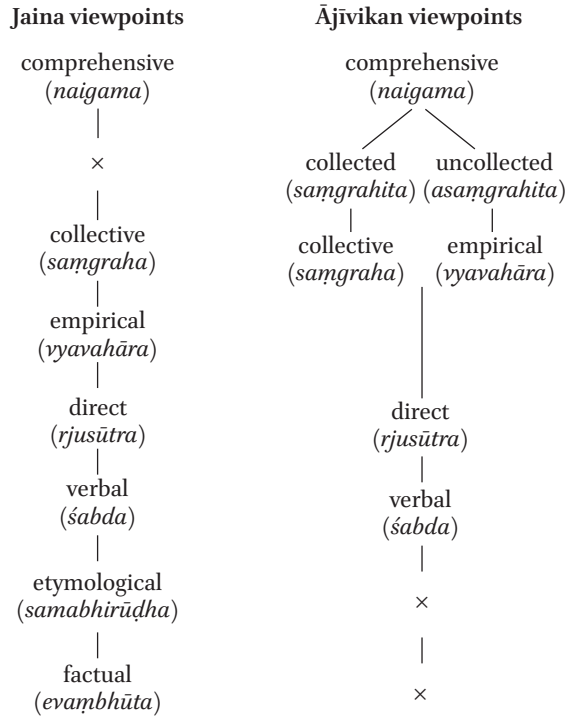
<sup>101</sup> see Bronkhorst, 2003b; Dundas, 2006; Balcerowicz, 2016a, 165–173.

<sup>102</sup> Balcerowicz, 2016a, 174–185.

<sup>103</sup> NanS.1 105=NanS.2 107.

<sup>104</sup> Balcerowicz, 2016a, 73–74, 203–204.



Diagram 3: a comparison of Ājīvika and Jain viewpoints (*naya*).

the viewpoints (*naya*) but also the term *anekānta* (“multiplexity of reality”) itself. The Ājīvikas’ coinage of the term *anekānta* is already attested in the 5th-century CE *Niyatidvātrīṣikā*,<sup>105</sup> which provides an account of the Ājīvikas’ system, a century before its first usage by a Jain author, Pūjyapāda Devanandin (540–600 CE).<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> see Qvarnström, 2015; Balcerowicz, 2016a, 221–223; forthcoming.

<sup>106</sup> see Soni, 2002, 34.

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