This book brings together a series of short essays by Chaturvedi Badrinath on diverse topics related to Indian philosophy and thought. Drawing mainly from the Mahabharata, the Upanishads, and the Yogavasishtha, Badrinath explores the concept of dharma, central to any understanding of the Indian civilization. The book engages the ordinary reader, who is perhaps unacquainted with formal philosophy, but is in search of meaning in the midst of the pressures of modern life. The moral dilemmas faced by human beings today are not new. In a world increasingly filled with fear, violence, and terrorism, ordinary people seek ways in which to order their lives. An understanding of the foundations of human liberty, happiness, self and the other, self-interest, the basis of fear, and a movement towards freedom or moksha are essential to that quest. Badrinath had an entirely original approach to the six darsanas or world views. In the essays, he has rendered the most sophisticated ideas in language that is simple and accessible. His thoughts were crystallized over a life spent in deep reflection and engagement with Eastern and Western philosophies. In his writing, the most ancient philosophy is shown to have immediate relevance to modern times.

Truth in Jainism
Tulsi Badrinath

In this essay, Badrinath points out the two different frameworks of perceiving man and the world: one is that of the modern Western political thought and the philosophy of law; and the other is that
of dharma and its method that characterizes the journey of Indian civilization. What is at the very heart of human diversities, and therefore of human freedom, is the question of truth, which is perceived by different people in different ways. Anekanta-vada, Badrinath says, demonstrates how all human perceptions are only partially true, that is, they are true only conditionally.

To Have or To Be—II
Tulsi Badrinath

in Chaturvedi Badrinath: Unity of Life and Other Essays

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In this essay Badrinath states that a different kind of violence is created by perceiving man and the world in the logical framework of either/or. It is in this framework that all political ideologies of the West were located, like the modern western thought in its entirety up to the advent of the quantum theory, but also after that. In the Mahabharata there is familiarity of the logic of either/or, but it demonstrates that that logic does not belong to the true nature of reality, which enfolds within itself many seemingly contradictory attributes. That position is expanded theoretically further in the Jaina anekanta-vada, the philosophical theory of the many-sidedness of truth in Jainism. Badrinath informs the reader that attitude to wealth is a central issue in the Mahabharata.

The Roots of Violence—I
Tulsi Badrinath

in Chaturvedi Badrinath: Unity of Life and Other Essays

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Jainism traces the roots of violence in absolutism of knowledge. Badrinath is of the opinion that the Jaina syada-vada suggests that to every assertion one has to add a syat, or a ‘maybe’, ‘perhaps’, or ‘in a sense’. This leads us to perceiving the truth of anything, or of any person, as not something ‘one-sided’ but ‘many-sided’ at the same time; that every variety of human violence, with its cruelty and degradation, has flowed from the competing one-sided ideas of what truth is, and hence from one-sided judgements about oneself and about others.
Jainism liberates us from the violence of one-sided truths. Badrinath informs us that both the Mahabharata and Jainism say to us that to be sensitive at all times to the other dimensions of truth is the best form of security.

Jainism and Relativity
Tulsi Badrinath

in Chaturvedi Badrinath: Unity of Life and Other Essays


While being a distinct contribution to the development of Indian logic, the Jaina syada-vada has been, most of all, a realist ethics of not-violence, a-himsa. Badrinath informs the reader that the two are interrelated intimately. Einstein had said that logical thinking which is pure does not yield any knowledge of the empirical world. He further said that the passage from sense impressions to scientific theory is through intuition and sympathetic understanding. In brief, the two revolutions of relativity theory and quantum mechanics and what followed, had rendered naive realism, pure empiricism, pure logical thinking, and materialism, when each claimed to be the only way to knowledge and its certainty, to be incompatible with scientific method. And in all those movements of the New Physics, the Jaina syada-vada and anekanta-vada are clearly manifest.