

JAIN SCIENCE IS ABSOLUTE ECO-FRIENDLY

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1. CONCEPT OF ENVIRONMENT IN JAIN SCIENCE

Jain Agams depict nature in a very unique way as it says that five main elements of nature; Prithvi (land, soil, stones, etc), Jal (Water resources including cloud), Agni (Fire), Vayu (Air) and Aakash (Sky) are living creatures and must be treated as living beings. These five types of elements go on to form five classes of beings such as vegetation, trees and plants, fungi and animals. This unique concept of Jainism restricts its followers to harm any creature and eventually leads to limited consumption as well as help in protecting environment.

Lord Mahavira preached about the environment in the first book of 'Acharanga Sutra', which is accepted, as His direct words, "The elements of nature were described as living beings and under the fundamental principle of ahimsa these were to be protected in all ways - no waste, no overuse, no abuse, no polluting. If we follow these principles, then we would stop destroying our environment as well as preserve the resources that are available for all to share. If there are more resources available for all, then the poor will also get a fair share thereof".

It is most essential to promise the nature conservation and environment protection for sustainable and equitable development of our society and our nation. Not only the survival of our culture and our nation but the survival of our planet is under greater threat than ever before. Mankind is destroying the environment at such a rate that nature can no longer fight back alone and replenish it. Before it is too late, we must awake to the biggest challenge, the survival of the earth itself.

This basic concept of Jainism is unique. No other religion in the world has depicted nature in this manner. Lord Mahavira told this two thousand six hundreds years back. No scientist before Jagadish Chandra Bose could conceive and prove life in green trees and plants, most essential part of environment. This very concept of Jainism restricts its followers (Jain) to harm any creature. This concept also limits their consumption and help protecting environment. This is the most important aspect for sustainable environment and environmental conservation. Environmental sustainability is dependent upon loving the nature and natural elements. Depletion and contamination of natural resources are the main cause of present day problems in environment and sustainable development.

2. JAIN RELIGION'S TEACHINGS ABOUT ECOLOGY

Jainism is one of the most environmentally conscious religions in the world. The religion is based on the principle of non-violence towards all living beings. Lord Mahavira, who lived in forests and jungles most of the times during his asceticism, attained Kevalgyan (omniscience) on the bank of river Rijuvalika below a shal tree. It is noteworthy that Mahavira is the 24th and last Tirthankar of Jain and all others also lived their ascetic life in similar manner. They preached sitting in Samavasharana after enlightenment. The Samavasharana itself is a complete ecosystem. Lord Mahavira has clearly warned in Acharanga Sutra, first Jain Anga Sutra, that contamination of any natural resources is not desirable in any case. He has gone in to details of contamination. Jainism considers these as weapons to creatures (natural resources).

This central teaching of Jainism was made famous in recent times by Mahatma Gandhi, who was greatly influenced by Jain ideas. He made ahimsa the guiding principle of his struggle for social freedom and equality. Ahimsa means more than not hurting others, it means not intending to cause harm, physical, mental or spiritual, to any part of nature, for, in the words of Mahavira: ‘You are that which you wish to harm.’

According to the Tattvartha Sutra there are 8,400,000 species of living things – each of which is part of the cycle of birth, life, death, and rebirth, and is therefore precious. This is the positive aspect of non-violence: to practice an attitude of compassion towards all life. Jains pray that forgiveness and friendliness may reign throughout the world and that all living beings may cherish each other. This ancient Jain principle teaches that all of nature is bound together, and says that if one does not care for nature one does not care for oneself. An important Jain principle is not to waste the gifts of nature, and even to reduce one’s needs as far as possible. As Gandhi said, ‘There is enough in this world for human needs, but no for human wants.’

Lord Mahavir declared 2500 years before that biologically there is no difference between man and tree. Both have life, both take birth, both take food to live, both die without food. The world scientists have established that water filter system of Jains contributed to a great extent for their good health. This system is a symbol of health and modern civilization. We must make constant effective efforts to blend spiritual principles of Jainism with those of modern science. We must place before the world in a scientific manner the Jain principles of vegetarianism and right form of livelihood with limited needs. We must place before the world forcefully the message of Bhagwan Mahavir: harmonious interdependence of all the creatures in the world. Jain traditions are based on the theories of modern science. Such traditions are fully dedicated to clean environment, enviro-development and enviro- protection. We must display before the world how we gain inspiration, insight and wisdom from Jain religious and social books to sustain our ecological and environment concerns. We must talk loudly about Jain traditions of environmental protection.

Lord Mahāvīr’s entire life was full of compassion and was an example of how to live in perfect harmony with nature and provide utmost respect for the environment. Lord Mahāvīr made the following profound statements of all times:

- “All life is bound together by mutual support and interdependence”. This is an ancient Jain scriptural aphorism of Tattvārtha sutra.
- “One who neglects or disregards the existence of earth, air, fire, water and vegetation, disregards his own existence” (Āchārāṅga sutra).
- “We harm and kill other lives because of our greed and possessiveness” (Shrāvākāchār).

Since all lives are interconnected, one should realize that, “**if** we harm one we harm all living beings” and “greed, possession and possessiveness are the primary causes of all violence as well as imbalance in the environment”. These ancient statements form the basis of the modern science of ecology and are refreshingly contemporary in their promises.

The main theme of Lord Mahāvīr’s teaching:

- Ahimsa (Non-violence) is respect for the life of all living beings.
- Aparigraha (Non-possession / Non-possessiveness) stems from respect for the other lives as well as the environment.
- Anekāntavāda (Non–one-sidedness/ Open Mindedness) is respect for the views of the other because truth has many sides.

Jainism is not only a religion but way of life. It is art of living. A human being lives with his or her society and environment. Jain Agamas (Canons/ holy books) are very conscious about preserving environment. Their thoughts surpassed that of modern environmentalists. Jain sacred texts have large volumes that point to environment. Jain canons depicts a lot about climate change issues that is to be taken place in future and suggested to act

reasonably for sustainable development. These are like modern days' global warming articles. The Bhagwati Sutra, a famous Jain canon discusses on environment issues and global environment.

Lord Mahavira restricted 15 such professions technically known as 15 Karmādānai.e. Angāl karma, Vaṇa karma, Śākata karma etc. because such professions initiate tremendous violence. Jainism asserts, 'Non-violence as a highest virtue'. Lord Mahāvīra discussed very minutely the vow of Non-violence. The basic reason behind the restriction of fifteen professions was that Jainism assert the eternal truth that all the six classes of living beings i.e. five immobile beings i.e. earth, water, air, fire and plant bodied beings and mobile beings possess equal consciousness. Each and every living beings whether they are one sensed, two, three, four or five sensed, they play an important role in the ecological sustainable development of the world as a whole.

3. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION BY JAIN WAY OF LIFE

One of the ways Jain monks or the followers of Jainism, observe non violence is by restraining themselves from eating the roots like potato, radish, carrots, ginger etc, because they consider these roots themselves as infinite living beings. Secondaly the reason behind this is they think that during harvest of these vegetables, earth is dug out and the soil organisms are killed more during rainy season. Jains called this period as “Chaumasa” or “Chaturmas”. In this period, even the monks do not wander from one place to another in order to avoid any unintentional killing of any form of life. For example, on a rainy day, they would observe fasts as they cannot walk on the wet streets to get “Gochari” (get food for themselves).

Although the final goal of Jainism transcends earthly concerns, Jainism is, in essence, a religion of ecology, of a sustainable lifestyle, and of reverence for life. Their religion's entire emphasis is on life consonant with ecology. Jain people can use their experience of applying non-violent principles in meeting the present ecological needs. Their religion presents a worldview that stresses the interrelatedness of all forms of life (Jiva). Its attendant ethics, which is based on obligations, might easily be extended to embrace an earth ethics. The Jiva is to be respected. As a highly evolved form of life, human beings have a great moral responsibility in their mutual dealings and relationships with the rest of the universe. It is this ethical responsibility that made the Jain tradition a cradle for the creed of environmental protection and harmony.

Every member of Jain society compulsorily offers good-wishes daily in the morning for the welfare of plants, animals and all human beings. He prays God that it may rain timely and sufficiently. There should not be drought or excess rains. There should not be spread of any epidemic disease. All the constitutional and statutory authorities must perform their duties and exercise their powers with honesty and compassion. Every responsible Jain family observes the following prohibitions strictly and regularly :

- (1) Nobody should clean dirty clothes in the rivers to save micro- organisms of the river from annihilation.
- (2) Nobody should use unfiltered/impure water.
- (3) After drawing water from any source, everybody should endeavour to leave residual unfiltered water at the original source of water so that micro-organisms may live smoothly in their own habitat and maintain ecological balance.
- (4) Nobody should waste even a drop of water.
- (5) Nobody should pluck the leaf and flower of plants and trees.
- (6) Nobody should waste any unit of heat and light energy.

Jain monks and nuns are global cooling plants. They are apostles of peace, status of nature and embodiments of clean environment. They also preach to live in clean environment,

to drink filtered, pure and healthy water, to breathe unpolluted and clean air and to eat natural, fresh basic and vital food. They advocate use of local cheap fruits and vegetables. They advise not to use such fruits and vegetables which are harvested before they ripen and which are chemically ripened and preserved after transportation from long distances. Snacks, processed foods and ready to eat or convenient foods like biscuits, or tinned and preserved foods, pavbhaji and pizza should be avoided. Everybody must prefer natural and fresh food containing high nutrition and avoid such food which has only taste or presentation value. They advise to take a balanced, nutritious, fresh and clean vegetarian food and to inculcate and imbibe healthy food habits. If we follow such advice strictly, we can reduce drug and doctor dependence to bare minimum. Modern research fortifying his preachings, established that ministrations of doctors account for less than ten percent of an individual's well being. More than 90 percent is determined by factors like eating habits, smoking, no exercise, stress etc. over which doctors hardly have any control.

Jainism states that; earth, water, fire, air, and vegetation which constitute the five basic elements of our environment, possess life. They possess one sense which is the sense of touch. Animals and human beings possess all five senses and a mind. The five senses are: touch, taste, smell, sight, and hearing. Human beings are also blessed with advanced developed thinking as compared to animals. Therefore, humanity is responsible for achieving oneness and harmony among all living beings including the environment, through compassionate living, and disciplined behaviour.

It is not possible to sustain human life with absolute non-violence and absolute non-possession. To live a life one needs to eat organic food which is a life by itself according to Jainism. Also one needs minimum clothes and shelter. Hence the destruction of one or the other form of life and limited possession are essential for human survival. The goal of Jainism is to minimize the negative impact of our existence to other living beings and environment. Jainism states that for our survival if we hurt or destroy:

- A living being with five senses (animals, birds, and fish etc.), it creates maximum pain and their destruction involves greater violence. At the same time, killing five-sensed beings has greater negative impact on the environment.
- A living being with one sense (plants and vegetables), it feels minimum pain and its destruction involves minimum violence and it produces a minimum negative impact to the environment.

Hence, Jainism advocates vegetarianism and is against raising animals for food for ethical, spiritual, as well as environmental reasons. Jain Shravak or Shrivika, who truly follow this vow, are restricted to act against environment in several ways. They limit their ambitions voluntarily and do not enter into a business or profession that damages environment severely. Soaking water resources, cutting and firing a green forest, mining etc are not allowed for observers of this vow. Trading of ivory, hazardous chemicals, drugs etc are also restricted for them.

Jain Sadhu / Sadhvi (Male and female ascetics) live with almost no consumables. They do not use vehicles rather travel bare foot. They do not use electricity and any modern amenities. They do not even cook or tell any one to cook for them. They do not pluck flowers and any other green vegetables for any purpose. They do not possess any earthly things, no money, no bank account, no credit cards. All Jains including Sadhu / Sadhvi and Sharavaka / Shrivika observe Paryushan as their main Parva (Festival). They do not even eat green vegetables in those days. Traditionally they do not eat in the night (after sunset). More and more people adopting Jain life style will help reducing green house gases and carbon emissions which cause global warming.

Jain scriptures motivate people for minimum consumption. They emphasize on Tyaga (sacrifice). Jain Sharavaka / Shrivikas (laymen and women) are preached to

minimize their Bhoga (consumables). The seventh vow for Jain households is Bhogopbhog Pariman Vrata(vow). This vow restricts them from unlimited consuming of natural resources. Moreover, this vow is a Shiksha Vrata (educational vow). It preaches its observers to learn and educate themselves towards limiting their consumables.

4. JAIN SCIENCE IS ABSOLUTE ECO-FRIENDLY

Jainism is a religion of compassion – it aims at the welfare of all living beings. An important principle of Jainism is expressed in Sutrakrta-anga (1.11.33) as follows: "A man should wander about treating all creatures as he himself would be treated." Inflicting an injury to other beings is inflicting injury to oneself. Ahimsa is the concept of non-violence, the injunction of not harming living beings. It is one of the foremost doctrines of Jainism. It has emerged from the doctrine of the equality of all souls. It grew from the belief in reincarnation: a person might come back in the form of an animal or insect, no living creature ought ever to be harmed. As in Buddhism, and Hindusm, Jain ethics assert that any violence has harmful effects on those who commit it, with consequent ill effects in terms of karma.

"Ahimsa-paramo-dharmah," non-injury to living beings, is one of the basic virtues. To kill a living being is the greatest of sins. Flowing from the Jain principle of non-violence is the tenet of reverence for all life-not just human life but extending to animal life and, in theory, even to the vegetable kingdom. Jains' practice of non-violence fosters an attitude of respect for all life forms. All living beings are regarded as equal. Jainism insists that there must be no destruction, at least no destruction that has not first been responsibly considered. There should be compassion for all living beings at every step of daily life. For the Jains, ahimsa has come to embody one's willingness to separate oneself not merely from acts of injury or killing, but also from the entire mechanism of aggression, possession, and consumption that is so common in the world.

To prevent even accidental damage to creatures, Jains may wear nose masks to prevent inhalation of insects. They may sweep the ground clear ahead of them. Some do not wash for fear of killing body lice or other parasites. Although Jain laypeople might participate in tree planting projects, their nuns and monks likely would not. This is because of the harm that may be caused to the earth, earth worms, and other forms of life during the digging process. Jain lay persons are enjoined to engage in occupations that are not associated with violence and/or destruction of life, and follow a vegetarian diet. Animal sacrifice is forbidden. There is the story of Yashodara who went to hell because of his innately violent disposition. He offered to a goddess a cockerel, and it did not count that the bird was merely made of dough.

Jainism lays down social and religious for misuse, excess use and destruction of basic constituents of environment; earth, water, air, fire, vegetation and ordains for their most minimum use, because every such element has life which must be respected. Every eco-Jain after close of the day, the most pious reverence to the nature. Thus Jainism promotes intellectual, spiritual and moral support for the environmental protection. Jain Monks are living statues of environment and ecology. They embody and personify principles of eco-Jainism. They maintain balance of natural elements for the welfare of whole universe, what to say of only humanity. They keep only 'kamandal' water-pot made of wood and 'Pichchi' made of peacock feathers with them.

All Jains believe in vegetarianism and most Jains are vegetarians. Hence it is of no value to the Jain community at large to discuss the cruelty to animals and death inflicted by the meat industry. However a majority of Jains consume dairy products and because animals are not directly killed during the milking operation, these Jains justify that their consumption of dairy products is not in violation of the fundamental principle of Ahimsa. This may be true in olden times because at that time the cows were treated as a part of the family and only

excess milk was consumed by the people after feeding their calves. Also the agricultural industry was not producing enough crop to feed the entire population. Hence it was necessary to consume dairy products for our survival. However, the output of modern agricultural production is such that it can feed the entire world several times over. Also the dairy industry is commercialized. Dairy cows are treated as milk producing machines. The dairy industry wants the maximum production of milk with minimum expense. It inflicts terrible cruelty on cows. As there is a huge demand for dairy products, the modern dairy industries have to raise animals on a mass scale. Raising large numbers of animals for food creates a significant ethical problem and environmental imbalance because it involves a significantly greater use of natural resources than for the equivalent amount of plant food. The cruelty to animals and the impact on the environment by this industry is unimaginable. All animal use involves treating animals as our property, our slaves.

World leaders have already met in climate change Conference, Copenhagen, (COP15) and discussed issues related to environment and global warming between December 7 and 18, 2009. It is particularly important in this context to know about thoughts of Jainism. Religious practices of Jain community can guide and show path to environment protectionists of the world. Jain sacred texts can be proved as torch light to make Copenhagen Hopenhagen. Consumerism promotes craving. It motivates people to consume more and more whether required or not. They have even made it parameter of development. This western doctrine is the root cause of all environmental hazards in modern days. In fact, we are now at the threshold of total collapse due to consumer culture. Jain texts emphasize on utility (Upayoga) in place of consume (Upabhoga) rather they tend to worship the nature (Upasana). Consumerism leads to depletion of natural resources that in turn contaminate air, water, soil and other valuable natural resources.

Modern scientific researches have shown that most of the fifteen professions involve environmental pollution and generate several diseases amongst human beings. It may be noted here, the main cause of the huge violence is human unending desires. So Lord Mahavira clearly preached that human desires must be restrained in the daily use of consumable and non-consumable goods. Accumulation of possessions for personal ends should be minimized. It is of capital importance to know that profession or business is not condemned by Jain seers, what is condemned by them is extreme violence, exploitation, adulteration and mal-practices in business transactions. Tirthaṅkara Mahāvīra was well aware of the fact that a householder cannot lead his worldly life without earning his livelihood and there is no profession which doesn't involve violence in one form or the other. So they were very practical in prohibiting only a few professions and not all. He cautioned the householders to refrain from fifteen such professions as may cause violence as well as environmental pollution. Now let us see, the effect of fifteen restricted professions on ecological balance, and on human health.

Jain Ācāryās possessed farsight and prescribed business ethics for the householders, which cannot only solve the problems of ecology and economics but also simultaneously can give solution to the ever-increasing problems of L.P.G. i.e. Liberalization, Privatization and Globalization. *Ācārāṅga Sūtra*, the first Jain canonical text in which Lord Mahāvīra emphasized, "Je logaṁ abbhahikkhai, se attanaṁ abbahikkai" i.e.: "the denial of the existence of the six classes of beings will be tantamount to the denial of the existence of the self." One cannot safeguard ones own existence by obliterating the existence of others. The Jain view asserts the principle of interdependence. So the fifteen professions restricted by Lord Mahāvīra has a social relevance in the context of Global environment preservation, ecological balance but also for the better human health and thereby social health as a whole.

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