

# Asian Resonance

## Ecology and Spirituality in Depeciated Jaina Tradition



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### Abstract

Ecology is a study of animals and plants and their applications and general conditions of the environment. The environment describes the sum total of physical and biotic conditions influencing the responses of organism. It is interlinked with all lives. This is called Human Ecology. It is defined by James A. Quinn as a specialized field of sociological analysis which investigates: (1) those impersonal sub social aspects of communal structure-both spatial and functional-which arise and change as the result of interaction between men through the medium of limited supplies of the environment, and (2) the nature and forms of the processes by which this sub social structure arises and changes.

The definition made by Quinn and other scholars does not cover the entire study of society. It is, as a matter of fact, not confined to plants and animals but it also relates to human behaviour towards all creatures in all the ways. It is interlinked with the principle that teaches us the lesson of humanity, spirituality and non-violence. The concept of human ecology can be found in classical religions and their literature.

Jainism is one of the most ancient religions which came into existence as a result of the most non-violent approach and humanitarian viewpoint towards all souls. It is an indigenous religion,; originated and developed on Indian soil with a profound progressive attitude and judicious understanding of special requirements and philosophical indispensable necessities of the time. The Jain thinkers ahs discussed at length long ago as to how one can protect environment and save himself, society, nations and all creatures from natural calamities through non-violence and non-possession and mutual co-operation. The present paper will throw light on the subject matter and explain as to how it had protected the ecology and environment and created awareness regarding interaction within natural systems.

**Keywords:** Atte Loye Parijuttne, Dussambohe Avijanae, Assim Loe Pavvahie, Pudhavi-Kaiyanimsapadam, Tattha Tattha Pudho Pasa.

### Introduction

Under materialistic influence, man was involved in unnatural treatment of nature, overlooked ecological values and invited hundreds of problems. Due to over population, industrial growth, military proliferation and worldly attachment, we never bothered for natural resources. Fredrick Engles is right to say this respect "Let us not however flatter ourselves over much on a account of our human victories over nature for each such victory, nature takes its revenge on us. Each victory, it is true, in the first place bring about the result but in the second and third places it has quite different unforeseen effect which only too often cancel the first." As a result, the disorder of the nature drew the attention of political leaders, religious and spiritual thinkers to ponder over the problem as to how the ecology dominates the society and whether the social events can be controlled through spirituality. In replying to such questions human ecology establishes the relationship between man and nature, man and his environment with which he leads the life. This includes arts of living, treatment to neighbours and animals, social attitudes, and everything that makes the human society pleasant.

The global ecological crisis cannot be solved until the spiritual relationship is established between man and environment on collective basis. Jainism had been a staunch worshipper and protector of nature since its inception. And being a religion of nature, it paves the way to understand its utility and essentiality of plants, worms, animals and all sorts of creatures which have their own importance for maintaining the ecological balance. It had long ago applied the principle of competitive cooperation

# Asian Resonance

that gave Darwin the first clue of the formulation of his theory of evolution. Jainism, therefore, says that the function of souls is to help one another- "Parasparopagraho jivanam" (Tattvarthasutra, 5.21). This principle is also connected with an extension of economics and geography of the whole life. It includes man and other creatures. From the point of view of geography, the plant, animal and human population including their habitants and other sort of man's occupation of the soil are merely part of the landscape. Jainism tried to shape our attitude toward nature and voiced the value of spirituality and non-violence.

Jainism believes that the entire world including plants, trees, birds, animals, water etc., is possessed of life. It is our prime duty to protect them. We are to treat others as we would want to be treated. One is therefore expected to respect the land and its natural beauty. Jainism does it by way of accepting an independent existence of nature and animals.

## Objective

Spirituality is essentially individual and individuality creates collectivity on the basis of discipline and practices. Every basic reality of the universe is integral. Jainism reconciled the parts of reality with the whole by means of its relativistic approach. The Ayaranga, the oldest jaina text says therefore "One who knows one, comes to know all. One who has known all, knows one". Kundakunda, a great thinker of about first century A.D. and other Jain philosophers followed the same view. "Je ege janai te savve janai, je savve janai te ege janai." This conception emphasises that every thing has innumerable characteristic that can be perceived from numberless stances. Spiritual relationship with ecological view can be understood by basic tenets of Jainism that 1. injure no creatures (Savve pana na hantavvai), 2. Don't command any creature. Don't enthrall him, 3. Don't own any creature, and 4. Don't employ one as a servant-Savve pana na pariggahetavva.

The concept of ecology is, as a matter of fact, based on spirituality and equality. It is termed as "Sarvadayavada" by a Jaina thinker Samantabhadra (3rd cent. A.D.). Acharya Jinasena explained the same view of social equality saying that the entire human world is one. That may be, of course, divided into four categories by way of their resources.

Religion is life and life is religion. Life is a symbol of sanctity which can be protected through observing the principle of ecology. The real form of religion assists in removing bitterness from the society. The nature of religion has been discussed in Jaina scriptures in various ways which can be summarized: "Aspire for self, the same which your aspire for others and which you do not aspire for self, do not aspire for others". This is the fundamental principle of Jainism.

Jain icchasi appanatto, jain ca nam icchasi appananto.

Tam iccha parassa vi ya, ettiyam jinasanam-Samanasuttam

There has been a paramount importance of mountains, rivers, trees, and other natural resources in Jaina cosmology. Jaina Tirthankaras and Acharyas had received their spiritual attainment penancing under the trees, above the mountains, and on the banks of rivers. These natural resources have been engraved as sacred ones in Jaina art and architecture.

Negligence is the main cause of violence. Even violence in thought in view of Jainism is a cause of injury. The Dasaveyaliya, Mulayaro etc., say that one who walks, stands, sits, sleeps, eats, and speaks with vigilance and non-violence, no sin accuses to him. Dasaveyaliya further says: "Killing horifies because all beings wish to live and not slain." Therefore non-violence should be observed strictly and it should not be broken at any cost.

Ecology became an instrument to comprehend the nature of person. It is a well-known fact in these days that the pollution assists a person to indulge in crimes and wrongdoings. But why all the persons do not get effected from adverse circumstances? Why the diversity in personality is found amongst the brothers and sisters even though they are brought up in the same atmosphere? Such intricate questions cannot be solved until we accept the concept of the Karma which mobilizes the unforeseen forces of our conduct, notion, behaviour and mind.

Knowledge and spirituality cooperate with each other in developing their branches and make the environment purified by creating better understanding Yogashastra, Karmashastra and psychology. Karma is not a Vasana or Sanskara or the modes of knowledge. But it is related to soul. Attachment (Raga) and resentment (Dvesa) are main rudiments of karma which are responsible for cycling of birth and death of a worldly soul. The interpretation of one's conduct does not merely depend on Nimittakarana (causative reason) or environment. But they can be better understood if we try to perceive their past. I do not want to speak much about the matter at present but this much can be said that the remembrance of past birth, diversity and concept of cause and effect are the fundamental points to prove the existence of karma. Soul is Amurta (formless) while Karma is Murta or Paudgalika (with form). But they have their synthetic relation (Samyoga sambandha). Fear, passion, ego, diseases, etc., are the bio-products of Karma which can be destroyed by following non-violence, right deeds and right penance.

## Structure

Non-violence and religion are integral. They cannot be isolated. Religion and spirituality guide the human society as to how one should lead a purposeful life without teasing others. Non-violence depends on unitive experience. Non would which injury to oneself. If no self is different from me, how would one kill anybody? The Ayaro, Samayasaro and other Jaina works say clearly that which you want to satisfy is you yourself. That which you want to torture is you yourself: "Tumamsi nama sacceva jain 'hantavvam' ti mannsi, tumamsi nama jam

'ajjaveyavvam' ti manasi tumamsi nama sacceva jam 'uddaveyavvam' ti manasi".

This is non-violence which creates identity between the self and self. Therefore, Mahaveera says "Kill no creature". One has to experience himself the consequences of one's own Karmas (Anusamveyanamappaanenam, jam 'ahantavvam' tinabhipatthae). Through this unitive experience he first establishes the existence of soul and then says that one who is afflicted with lust is bereft of knowledge and perception. Truth always baffles him, consequently he remains benighted. He indulges himself in action causing violence to the beings of earth-body, water-body, fire-body, vegetable-body and others. These beings have consciousness (santi pana pudho siya, Ayaranga, 1:16).

The aforesaid passage of first chapter of the Ayaranga clearly describes the cause of violence. According to it, passion is the cause of mental perturbation. A perturbed man falls an easy prey to desire and indulges in violence of beings. Each being of earth-body, fire-body etc. builds a different individual body and assimilates its food individually. Several kinds of weapons are used for violence in ploughing, digging etc., for the sake of survival, praise, honour, reverence, liberation or prevention of miseries. We can very well understand the state of consciousness and capacity to experience pain of the beings of earth-body, vegetable-body etc., with those of the persons, who are insensible since birth, rendered insensible with weapons. He who uses weapons on the beings of earth-body etc., has neither comprehended nor forsworn actions causing violence to the beings. One should not therefore either use any weapon causing violence to the beings of earth-body etc., or cause other to use it, nor approve if others are using it.

The Nirukti or the Ayaro explains the statement. It says that the process of respiration is present in the beings of earth-body too, but it is not perceptible. Like a man in a swoon, the beings of earth-body etc., do not manifest consciousness. This is due to constant coma produced by the deep slumber producing Karma known as "Styanagriddhi". Ploughing, digging, excretions etc., come, under the earth-body and others violence. Earth-body is of 36 types according to the Mulacara (Gatha, 206-9)-soil, sand, gold, silver, stone, diamond, salt, iron etc.

Likewise, water, according to Jainism, contains beings. This is supported by the present science also. The Jainas are supposed to take water filtered through a thick piece of cloth. Then they drop the remaining unfiltered element containing beings in such a way in same water that could protect them fully. The Nirukti enumerates some weapons which kill beings of water-body, viz. drawing water from well etc., straining, washing clothes etc., homologous and heterologous weapons. There are weapons which cause violence to fire-bodies. For instance, soil, sand, water, moist vegetation, mobile beings, homologous and heterologous weapons etc., cause violence to fire-body beings. There are beings residing in earth, grass leaves, wood, cow dung, and garbage. There are also

beings which fly in the air and drop down from there. All these beings shrivel up on coming in contact with fire and die there and then.

As proved by modern science, the Jaina tradition is of view that just as consciousness of a man born without any sense-organs experiences pain when struck or cut with a weapon and so do the beings of vegetable-body. The comparison of plant life can be made with human life. As human life is born, grows, possesses consciousness, takes nourishment, is not eternal, is metabolism, undergoes various transformations, sleeps, longings during pregnancy, diseases, so plant too. Man does so for the sake of survival, for the sake of praise, honour etc., as already said.

Water-body beings are of several types like dew, hail, snow, rime, brine, etc. (Mulacara, 210) which reside under and above the earth, well, river, pit, tank, ocean, lake etc., (Prajnapana, 2.151). Fire-body beings are to be saved by the follower of non-violence. One should not extinguish the fire by throwing sand, water, plant, cow dung etc., Likewise, air-body beings are killed by fans, palms-fans etc. (Ayarasa, Nirukti, 170).

This is the vivid description of plants and other beings which should be saved by a Jain. These are very important rules laid down by Jainism to avoid water, air, sound pollution and ecosystem ecology. To keep silence (Mauna), carefulness in speaking (Bhashasamiti), protect the forest, plants etc., are the religious rules even for a Jaina layman. Bodhi tree, fig tree, pepper, mango tree, plantain tree, betelnut tree, bamboo, margosa tree, palm, Tulsi Kadamba, Teak, Tamarind tree, Acacia tree etc., are very useful for mankind. They should not be, therefore, cut down and thrown away, Jainacharyas have describe different types of plants and made their classification in several ways. Bhagawatisutra, Angavijja, Gomattasara Jiva-Karma Kanda are prominent Jaina works which deal with the life and nature of plants at length. Jainas worship some of them on different occasions as sacred ones. If they are cut down, so many environmental problems will arise. It lays down the vow of refraining from avoidable actions (Anarthadandavrat) only for the purpose of protecting the plants and other beings.

### **Coordinative Ecological View**

Theology of one's religion certainly leaves influence on his treatment to the world. If the Universe under theological idea is created by God, the God then will rule the world through man. Man is accordingly subordinate to God and then he functions, rules over the nature under the God's direction. This creates subordinate ecological attitude toward nature, matter the animals and bears the notion that nature does not possess the soul. Soul is not immortal and the body and soul constitute a single entity.

Jainism is not in favour of this view. In its opinion the soul is eternal and beginning less. It has life, consciousness, knowledge and perception and is potent. It performs actions and is affected by their results, is conditioned by its own body, is incorporeal and is ordinarily found with Karma. In addition, it is

capable of becoming free from the defect of karma and gets the salvation. Thus soul is an independent element which can reach the highest point of purification and even can become Paramatman. It is also of view that there is no God as a creator, protector, and destructor. It is one's deeds which bestow the results on him. According to it, the creation depends on the nature and our efforts. For instance, in the manufacturing of a pot, clay is the substantive cause and the potter, a stick, water etc., are eternal or subordinative causes. Each and every entity runs through these two causes and gets similar modes. All the entities have their own independent existence accordingly and man is then not supposed to be a crown of creation. If someone is overpowered, it will create problems directly or indirectly as happened with nature.

To obtain spiritual happiness and perennial peace, it is necessary to believe first in the existence of spirit or soul which is endowed with qualities like consciousness, the power of cognition, formless, agent, enjoyer of the fruits of Karmas, beginningless, infinite in number etc. It is of two types, one is worldly (sansari) and other is emancipated from Karmas (Mukta). Worldly soul attracts influx of Karmic matter and gets mixed with false notions, negligence and passions. As a result, soul becomes obscured. This soul is called Bahiratman who is ignorant of ecological and environmental harmony. The second stage Antaratman repents for this indulging tendency of sense and determines to see the self within, and the third stage is the paramatman, the Siddhahood, a soul that has freed itself from the bondage of karmas and cycle of birth and death.

From ecological standpoint we should understand the transmigrating souls (Sansaris) which are of two kinds, Trāsas (Mobiles), and Sthavaras (Immobile beings). The Sthavaras are further divided into five kinds, viz. earth, water, fire, air, and plants possessing one sense of touch (Sparshana). The mobile beings are from two-sensed being onwards. The warm, the ant, the bee, and an etc. have each one more sense of taste, smell, sight, and hearing respectively than the preceding ones. These living beings possess some essential characteristics called Pranas, viz. Bala (power), Indriya (sense), Virya (energy), Ayu (longevity), and Uchchavasa (breathing). These mobile and immobile beings should be protected and not killed. They are really very subservient and significant from the standpoint of balancing the ecology. Jaina thinkers too have given so much importance to their existence and advised the people to protect them with full spirit.

### **Social Attitudes and Ecology**

Ecology is also connected with social and individual harmony. It considers the community to be a supra organism, a complex organism or a social organism. As such, it is the highest stage in the organization of living matter: namely, cell, organ, community etc. Jaina tradition instructs the Jaina layman to keep the community very pure and pious. Individuality is a unit of the society. Therefore Jainism stresses on individual purification first and foremost,

which is the base of social purification. For this purpose, Jain layman is supposed not to indulge in seven types of obnoxious habits (Vyasanās) which make the life disastrous. They are: gambling and racing (Dyuta), meat-eating, alcoholic drink (Madyapana), prostitution, hunting, stealing and sexual intercourse with other's wife or husbands. He should be strict vegetarian. He should not indulge in violence-carrying professions, such as Angarkarmavāna-sakata-bhātaka-sphota-danta-lakṣa-rasa-keśa-ṣa-yaṅtra-nīlanchana-devagnī-sarhṣosana asalkīposana karmas. Originally such traders were prohibited under the Anarthadandavratā (Vow of refraining from avoidable actions) categories, but Hemachandra and Ashadhara made them ore cleared. The licit earning sources, as clarified by Jaina authors and thinkers like Hemachandra, Jināsena are asi (war), masi (writing), krisi (agriculture), vanijya (business), vidya (teaching) and shilpa (art). These sources do not involve the persons into anti-social activities. Dr. Basham explains the non-violent attitude of a Jaina towards his earning sources. He says that a Jaina should not be a farmer, for the ploughing the earth involves much injury to animal life..... Even most crafts involve injury to living beings for as we have seen, the metal on the anvil of the blacksmith suffers excruciating tortures. Thus the safest profession for the Jain is trade and from the earliest days the faith of Jainism has recruited most of its members from the trading communities of India.

Jain layman also practice truth (satya), not stealing (acaurya), refraining from all illicit social activities (brahmacharya) and non-possession (aparigraha) to perfection. To avoid the Aticaras (infractions) is the essential part of the vows which keeps the person and social environment pure. Pujyapada enumerates five Aticaras of Ahimsanuvrata (minor vow of non-violence), i.e. binding, beating, mutilating, limbs, overloading and withholding food and drink to the animals etc. The Aticaras of Satyamuvrata (minor vow of truth) are :

1. Mithyopadesa (perverted teaching),
2. Rahovyakhyana (divulging what is done in secret),
3. Kutalekhakriya (forgery) that means preparing false record prompted by other in order to cheat others,
4. Nyasapahara (misappropriation, it means taking for self gold and other things entrusted to one's care by another) and
5. Sakaramantrabheda (proclaiming other's thoughts). This vow can be strengthened by giving up anger, greed, cowardice or fearfulness, jest, and speaking harmless.

The Aticaras of Asteyavratā (not taking the property of others whether pledged or dropped) are

1. Stenaprayoga (prompting another to steal),
2. Stenahrtadana (receiving stolen things)
3. Viruddharajyatikrama (under buying in a disordered state),
4. Hinadhikamanonmana (using false weight and measures), and

5. Praturupa-kavyavahara (deceiving others with artificial or imitation goods, like gold, synthetic diamonds and so on). Brahmacharyavrata is celibacy.

Parigrahaparamanuvrata is a limited acquisition for limited personal use. This was a formula of Tirthankara Mahavira for social reconstruction. It includes the purity in earning sources and an emphasis on austerity in personal life. One is forbidden to indulge the following practices: 1. adulteration, 2. under-weighting, 3. supplying poorer stuff than the sample, 4. overloading the beasts of burden and 5. Harming another in respect of his means of livelihood. One should also not deprive the native inhabitants of their rights and therefore Mahavira prescribed a vow not to visit remote places for the purpose of acquisition. These vows assist us to wipe out the corruption from society and clean oneself from all respects.

### Conclusion

Non-violence is based on the principle of equality and equanimity in the society. It propounded the theory of caste based on the deeds of own and not on birth. Vanity creates disrespect to others. Therefore, Mahavira said that one ought to shun all vanities in knowledge, austerities, caste and livelihood. One who is free from these vanities transcends castes altogether and achieves the supreme state of casteless deliverance. The Acarya further says that caste is like a slough on human body. It blinds the human being. He regains his sight only after discarding the slough. That is why I exhort the saints to shed caste as a snake does its slough. He should never take pride in his caste. He should never be scornful to anybody on that account.....

The concept of Syadvada and Anekantavada (Doctrine of Relativism and Non-absolutist principle) is also a non-violent approach which respects others' views and avoids the clashes between man and man, society and society and nation and nation. Religion, sect, caste, colour, language, province are the sensitive points which spark the clashes amongst the groups. Sectarian dogmatism cannot beget true spirituality and without true spirituality ecological balance and environmental purification cannot be crushed down from the society.

The principle of love and vegetarianism are integral parts of ecology. Vegetables food is the minimum requirement of human life. Meat is not indispensable like vegetables. The will to live at another life's expense invites meat-eating which cannot be accepted and appreciated by true human society. The view that vegetarian food is not so energetic and stimulant as non-vegetarian food is not correct. It is now an established fact that vegetarian food is more potential and powerful and less pernicious. Jain Tirthankara Mahavira's first motto is that if violence under compulsion is unavoidable, at least violence voluntarily performed should be avoided. This dictum renders non-vegetarianism assailable. Therefore Jainism has laid down so many rules and regulations even for a layman with regard to

purity of alms. Even some of the vegetables which are full of germs are not permissible for eating.

Thus, Jain traditions is a tradition which considers the ecology as an indispensable part of spirituality and life as well. To stay with the nature is a realistic approach to religion and the religion is a real life. Therefore all the while one should realise the paramount importance of ecology and nature and the role of spirituality in protecting them for the sake of human welfare. Jainism tries to shape our attitude towards nature with great humanity and non-violence. It prepared the environment ethics with religious and health grounds and inspired and religious traditions prescribed for the protection of nature. There is no instance on history which could quote that jains society misused and overlooked the natural resources. Jain leaders have made all efforts to create awareness in the society for loving all creatures through narratives and art and architecture.

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