

# The Ethics of Restraint: Sthavara Jiva and the Mitigation of Anthropocentric Violence

Ajay Kumar<sup>1</sup>, Dr. SuryaKant Maharana<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1,2</sup>*Department of Philosophy, University of Allahabad, Prayagraj*  
*doi.org/10.64643/IJIRTV12I11-197952-459*

**Abstract - This paper talks about the ethical significance of restraint in the philosophy of Jain using the concept of stharva jiva and its importance to contemporary environmental concerns. The view of Jainism about the mobile beings and elements such as earth, water, fire, air, and plants are unique. This understanding of jainism challenges the attitudes of anthropocentric attitudes that put humans at the center of moral consideration and justify the exploitation of nature much of the time. Ethics of Jainism emphasises upon non-violence (Ahimsa), non-possessiveness (Aparigraha) and careful conduct toward all forms of life which promotes the discipline approach to the behaviour of humans that minimises harm to the environment. On the other hand, broader moral responsibility towards the ecological system is encouraged by the sthavara jiva, it also focuses on the interconnectedness of all forms of existence. By analysing the jain ethics of restraints this study highlights the contribution to reducing anthropocentric violence and developing a more empathetic and sustainable association between humans and the natural world.**

**Keywords - Jainism, Sthavara Jiva, Ethics of Restraint, Anthropocentrism, Environmental Ethics, Ahimsa**

## I.INTRODUCTION

Ecological imbalances and environmental degradation have become major concerns in today's era. Urban expansion, rapid industrialisation, excessive exploitation of natural resources and deforestation have intensified the crisis of environmental sustainability. Most of this damage is associated with anthropocentric worldview, which puts human beings at the core of moral and ethical consideration while handling nature as a primary resource for human utilisations. Such a viewpoint mostly leads to the ignorance of the intrinsic value of non-human life forms and the ecosystem that sustains them. In acknowledgement to these challenges environmentalists and researchers are inclining

towards religious and philosophical tradition that offers parallel ethical frameworks for understanding the relationship between humans and the natural world.

Out of all these religions, Jainism displays a distinctive and profound environmental ethics rooted in the principle of non-violence (Ahimsa) and a genuine respect for all the forms of life. In the Jain philosophy they teach that the universe consists of innumerable living beings (jiva), each containing its own inherent value and spiritual ability. This worldview extends ethical and moral concerns beyond living beings and animals to involve even most subtle and seemingly inanimate forms of existence. According to Jain metaphysics, life is viewed not only by mobile organisms but also immobile entities known as Sthavara Jiva. By acknowledging these forms of life, Jain thought challenges traditional assumptions about the boundaries of life and promotes a vigilant and respectful engagement with the natural environment.

The ethical outcomes of this perspective are substantial. As per Jain philosophy life does not only exist in humans and animals but also in elements of nature like earth, water, fire, air and plants. And the reason behind seeing harming the environment through actions such as pollution, overconsumption, and destruction as a kind of violence against these living forms.

And this narrative becomes the base of Jain philosophy which teaches people to live a careful life, follow discipline throughout life and utilize the resource cautiously and cause the least harm to nature. One of the Jain principles, Aparigraha is related to this which means not being greedy and not possessing more than what is mandatory. By limiting desires and consumptions, humans can minimize the harm to

nature and take the responsibility towards all living beings and the interconnected world around them.

In current environmental literature, the notion of anthropocentric violence defines the harm on ecosystems and non-human life because of humans attitude towards nature and overconsumption of resources from the environment. Ethics of Jain philosophy provides the alternative framework that deviates the attention away from human dominance and toward ecological interdependence. By emphasising Humble disposition, Discipline and respect for all forms of life, Jain philosophy provides important insights for catering modern environmental challenges and promoting a more sustainable way of living.

This paper evaluates the ethical importance of discipline in Jain thought, concentrating particularly on the concept of sthavara jiva and its impact for decreasing anthropocentric violence. By exploring the philosophical basics of Jain environmental ethics and exploring their importance to today's era ecological concerns, the objective of this study is to focus on how ancient ethical traditions can contribute to modern debates about environmental responsibility and sustainability.

## II. JAIN ETHICS AND THE CONCEPT OF STHAVARA JIVA

Jain philosophy provides an ethical perspective which is related to the genuine respect for living and non living entities. This perspective highlights two things living and non- living. Jiva refers to entities who consist of spiritual potentials and consciousness, Ajiva is totally different from jiva because they do not possess life and consciousness. According to Jain philosophy life does not only exist in living entities it is also present in most subtle and seemingly immobile forms of existence. That is why Jain philosophy see life in a very comprehensive way.

As per Jain philosophy jiva are categorized into two parts Trasa Jiva and Stharva Jiva, Trasa Jiva are those organisms that possesses more developed sensory capacities, like animals, humans, birds and insects, on the other hand Stharva Jiva are immobile beings that exist in natural elements which includes earth-bodied

beings, water-bodied beings, fire-bodied beings, air-bodied beings and plant-bodied beings. As per Jain philosophy these beings only have one sense, touch and considered living because they have a soul and a capacity to experience harm. And this becomes the base of Jain's teaching that these natural elements have life and we have a moral duty and responsibility to behave accordingly.

Understanding stharva jiva is very crucial to understand the outlook of Jainism, as this become the base of the ethical perspective in Jainism, if elements like earth, water, and plant considered as living entities the human interactions with them must be very careful and moral, such as excessive mining, polluting water, overconsumption of natural resources, and cutting trees are considered as violence against them. Ethics of Jainism suggests that we must try to minimize harm in all aspects and people must accept this so that the harm towards the environment could be less. This ethical sensitivity is related to the most prominent principle of Ahimsa and Non-Violence which is the core Jain moral philosophy, in Jain philosophy ahimsa does not only means not harming humans and animals it also states that any kind of jiva even stharva jiva should not be harmed. People must be alert and carefully obey the ahimsa in their day to day life. The way we eat food, utilization of natural resources and our behavior and action towards the environment. And that's the reason people who follow the Jain philosophy accept vegetarian diets, utilises the natural resources with careful mind, and also does not destroy plants and other living entities. Another prominent principle of Jain philosophy is Aparigraha and non-possessiveness which means not collecting unnecessary things and being greedy upon them. This principle teaches people to control their desires and not to collect materialistic things. When an individual chooses not to get attached to materialistic things and overconsume resources s/he can control the negative effect on the environment and can save other living and non living entities. And this is how Jain philosophy teaches how to live life with patience and generosity. This lifestyle gives importance to simplicity, balance and respect towards the environment.

With the help Stharva jiva, Ahimsa and Aparigraha principle Jain philosophy presents a moral framework

which challenges the idea of using environment only as the source, according to Jain philosophy we must not see environment only as resources for human beings, rather living and non-living things have their importance, and this perspective helps us to understand that each element of an environment is related to each other. And that is why Jain philosophy teaches us to maintain equivalence with the environment and have patience and behave responsibly.

### III. THE ETHICS OF RESTRAINT AND THE MITIGATION OF ANTHROPOCENTRIC VIOLENCE

Jain philosophy's important contribution to the environment and ethical perspective is its emphasis on discipline in human behaviour. As per Jain philosophy discipline is not merely a personal morality but a broader ethical principle which teaches how humans should behave with other living and non-living entities. This principle comes at the center when we focus on anthropocentric violence, the feeling of being superior arises when humans think that they are far better than other living entities, and that is why they have a right to use natural resources.

Anthropocentric thinking has impacted today's pattern of consumption, industrial development, and environmental exploitation. Whenever the need of humans is put above all the living and non-living entities, then the utilization of natural resources are always overconsumed by humans without any ethical restraint. Because of this perspective deforestation, climate change, and biodiversity is getting harmed, all these are considered as the type of harm, because it destroys the ecosystems and other living beings dependent on them.

The practice of discipline in Jain philosophy is closely related to Ahimsa, according to Jain teachings one should not only try to minimize the harm by actions rather try to focus on their consumptions and lifestyle choices, this thought promotes the idea of utilising natural resources in a balanced way and avoids any overconsumptions which can harm the environment. Practices such as being vegetarian, carefully using water, and simple way of living reflects the ethical commitment to minimise the harm to other forms of life.

Another prominent aspect of restraint can be seen in Aparigraha, Aparigraha means not having possession over materialistic things and also not showing greed towards it, this principle pushes people to have control over their desires of having unnecessary amount of money or things in their life, when an individual decreases the attachment towards materialistic things as result the harmful effect on environment decreases, and the pressure on natural resources decreases. In this sense the ethics of restraint does not only fulfill spiritual motive rather promotes the responsible patterns of consumptions for sustainable environment. Furthermore Jain philosophy emphasises on day to day life with being mindful, even ordinary actions like walking, eating, or using natural resources approached with an awareness of their potential impact on living beings. This cautious way helps people to be responsible and careful towards other living entities and the environment. By modifying this perspective like attitudes, Jain ethics tries to transform the association between nature and humans from dominance to one of coexistence and mutual respect. By emphasising on Ahimsa, Aparigraha and awareness of the interconnectedness of life, Jain ethics of discipline provides a meaningful framework for the moderation of anthropocentric violence. This perspective provides directions to humans in the support of the environment so that people can not do any sort of damage to other entities, non-living and living and can maintain the equivalence between human and environment with respectful relationships.

### IV. CONCLUSION

In today's era, issues related to environment are coming into account that is why philosophy of Jainism provides ethical education that provides the ways of responsible lifestyle and also gives the direction towards the stable and non-harming ways of living so that both humans and environment can be safe and secure and can coexist together with a balanced association.

The increasing environmental crisis has forced scholars and thinkers to think about the interaction between humans and the environment. Most of the environmental issues in today's era are coming from an anthropocentric perspective. The importance of human benefits are above other entities existing in our environment and we as humans are ignoring other

nonliving and living things. In this crucial time. Jainism provides a strong base of ethical education which forces humans to be more kind and responsible when it comes to having a relationship with the environment.

The Jain concept about Sthirva jiva is not limited to mobile organisms. It also includes earth water, air, plants and fire which consists of souls as living organisms. Jain philosophy challenges conventional assumptions about the boundaries of life and moral responsibilities are only restricted to humans and animals; this broader perspective encourages individuals to reconsider the impact of their actions on the environment and also to practice the harm in a minimal way.

The principle of restraint is the core of this ethical perspective in Jainism where Jain philosophies' core values like ahimsa and aparigraha explain this, this principle encourages people to live the life and gives the direction towards where people can adopt this kind of lifestyle where the individuals can show the maturity towards other living and nonliving entities in environment. When an individual limit the consumption and try not to harm the other living entities it promotes sustainable and balanced approach towards human life

Furthermore, the effects of restraint have an important role in addressing anthropocentric violence. When humans acknowledge the interconnectedness of whole life forms, they become more conscious of their actions toward the environment and this consciousness promotes behavior that safeguard ecosystems, conserve natural resources. Biodiversity offers important insights that can contribute to new discussions on environmental ethics and sustainability.

Last but not least, the perspective of and the problem ethics of restraint offer the meaningful challenge to human human single ways to Nature. Promoting simplicity promotes a shift from domination over nature to a relationship based on mutual respect and coexistence. These ethical principles not only hold spiritual importance but also offers practical guidance for addressing contemporary environmental issues and fostering a more sustainable future.

## REFERENCES

- [1] Paul Dundas (2002). *The Jains*. London: Routledge.
- [2] Padmanabh S. Jaini (1998). *The Jaina Path of Purification*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers.
- [3] Natubhai Shah (2004). *Jainism: The World of Conquerors*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.
- [4] Christopher Key Chapple (2006). *Jainism and Ecology: Nonviolence in the Web of Life*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- [5] Jeffery D. Long (2009). *Jainism: An Introduction*. London: I.B. Tauris.
- [6] S. A. Jain (2011). *Jainism: An Introduction*. New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers.
- [7] Christopher Key Chapple (2002). *Nonviolence to Animals, Earth, and Self in Asian Traditions*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- [8] T. K. Tukol (1976). *Compendium of Jainism*. Bangalore: Karnatak University.
- [9] S. K. Tiwari (2009). *Ethical Philosophy of the Jains*. Delhi: Kalpaz Publications.
- [10] Christopher Key Chapple (2017). *Ahimsa: The Power of Nonviolence*. Berkeley: North Atlantic Books.