

Caring for the Earth and Empowering the Poor: A Jain Perspective

Dr Samani Amal Pragya

Associate Professor

Dept. of Jainology and Comparative Religion & Philosophy

Jain Vishwa Bharati Institute

Introduction

In our increasingly globalized world, environmental challenges are reaching unprecedented levels, making the interconnectedness of human and ecological well-being more evident. Climate change, deforestation, and pollution disproportionately impact the poor, exacerbating both poverty and social injustice. From a Jain perspective, caring for the Earth and those most vulnerable is intrinsically connected and deeply rooted in Mahavira's teachings. This foundation calls on Jains to embrace a holistic approach to care that respects the integrity of all creation and honours the dignity of every person.

Components of Environment

The environment comprises various components that interact and depend on one another. Broadly, these components are divided into four main categories:

1. **Atmosphere:** The layer of gases surrounding Earth, providing air for respiration and protection from harmful solar radiation.
2. **Hydrosphere:** All water bodies, including oceans, rivers, lakes, groundwater, and glaciers, support aquatic life and the water cycle.
3. **Lithosphere:** The Earth's crust, including rocks, minerals, and soil, which supports terrestrial life and provides resources.
4. **Biosphere:** The zone of life on Earth, encompassing all living organisms, including plants, animals, and microorganisms, interacting within ecosystems.

These components interact closely, supporting and sustaining life on Earth.

Environmental Degradation

It is the process by which natural environments are damaged or depleted, resulting in a loss of biodiversity, ecosystem function, and natural resources. It occurs due to both human activities and natural factors and can manifest in the following ways:

1. **Deforestation:** Results in biodiversity loss, water cycle disruption, climate change, increased atmospheric carbon dioxide, soil erosion, and desertification.
2. **Air Pollution:** Harmful chemicals, particulates, and biological materials released into the atmosphere cause respiratory and cardiovascular diseases, acid rain, and ozone layer depletion.
3. **Water Pollution:** Contaminants in rivers, lakes, oceans, and groundwater harm aquatic life, lead to health issues, and disrupt the food chain.
4. **Soil Degradation:** Over farming, deforestation, and industrial pollution reduce soil fertility, cause desertification, and increase vulnerability to floods.
5. **Climate Change:** Emissions of greenhouse gases lead to rising temperatures, sea-level rise, and severe weather events, which cause habitat loss and species extinction.
6. **Biodiversity Loss:** Habitat destruction, over-exploitation, pollution, and climate change disrupt ecosystems, reducing potential resources for medicine, food, and ecological stability.
7. **Desertification:** Drought, deforestation, and poor agricultural practices turn fertile land into desert, reducing food security and increasing poverty.
8. **Ozone Layer Depletion:** Thinning of the ozone layer, primarily due to chlorofluorocarbons, increases harmful UV exposure, affecting marine ecosystems and crop productivity.
9. **Waste Disposal and Accumulation:** Improper disposal of plastics, electronics, and industrial waste leads to land and marine pollution, harming ecosystems and entering the food chain.
10. **Over-Exploitation of Natural Resources:** Unsustainable extraction leads to resource depletion, habitat destruction, soil, and water degradation.

M.V Srinivasa Gowda states that development must not be at the cost of the nation's life-supporting ecosystems comprising soil, water, flora, fauna and other natural resources.¹

Causes of Environmental Degradation

Environmental degradation arises from natural processes and human actions that disrupt ecosystems, reduce biodiversity, and exhaust resources. Key causes include deforestation, pollution (air, water, and soil), overpopulation, unsustainable agriculture, industrialization, urbanization, climate change, over-exploitation, waste accumulation, and technological

¹ M.V. Srinivosa Gowda, 'Social Factors of Economic Development'. New Delhi, Employment News, p.1.

advancement. Addressing these issues requires strategies to balance economic development with environmental protection.

Alarming Facts

- Antarctica's icy landscapes are turning green due to extreme heat, with vegetation increasing over tenfold in 40 years. Researchers warn this change, particularly in the Antarctic Peninsula, may harm local wildlife and alter the region's climate dynamics. According to CNN, this change has raised concerns about the continent's future.²
- More than 99% of Earth's water is unusable by humans and many other living things - only about 0.3% of our freshwater is found in the surface water of lakes, rivers, and swamps.³
- Air pollution is a leading cause of death, with 8.1 million people dying from it in 2021. 99% of people breathe toxic air, and air pollution is responsible for one in nine deaths worldwide.⁴
- A third of the food intended for human consumption – around 1.3 billion tons – is wasted or lost. This is enough to feed 3 billion people. Food waste and loss account for approximately one-quarter of greenhouse gas emissions annually.⁵

Practical Applications in Jainism: A Call to Action

The Jain duty to care for both the Earth and the poor can take many forms in today's world. Practical actions may include:

1. **Sustainable Living with *Aparigraha* (Non-Possession):** The primary issue today is that people desire a world without war, violence, and corruption—a world filled with peace, honesty, and friendliness. The root cause, however, lies in the instinct of possessiveness, which drives humans toward violence. Environmental issues like pollution, global

² <https://www.livemint.com/science/news/climate-change-impact-antarctica-is-fast-turning-green-due-to-extreme-heat-waves-here-s-why-it-s-not-a-good-thing-11728043166430.html>

³ <https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/earths-fresh-water/>

⁴ <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/air-pollution-accounted-81-million-deaths-globally-2021-becoming-second-leading-risk>

⁵ <https://www.fao.org/4/mb060e/mb060e00.htm>

warming, and climate change also stem from an imbalanced, materialistic development driven by possessiveness.

Jains are called to adopt lifestyles that reflect environmental respect. According to Jain Lifestyle, possession (*parigraha*) is the main reason for disturbing ecological balance. *Parigraha* has been defined in Dasvekalika Sutra as “Mucha parigraho vutto”⁶ and *Umāsvāti* Umāsvāti defines *parigraha* by the term *Mūrchā*⁷, which means feeling of attachment is *parigraha*. According to Ācārya Nāneśa in Jīndhammo, ‘*Parigraha* is of two types- *Mūrchā* and *Ichchā*.⁸ *Mūrchā* means to have an attachment to the things you possess and *Ichchā* means the want to have more, which is unlimited desire. Both are interrelated. These lead to unrest in the society as well as the whole world. If we take more than we need, we are stealing.

Emphasising the need to have limited possessions as propounded by Tīrthānkara Mahāvīra, J.N. Mehta quotes, ‘ If I take anything that I don’t need for my immediate use and keep it, I thief it from somebody else. It is a fundamental law of nature, without exception, that nature provides enough to meet our daily needs. If everyone took only what they needed and no more, there would be no poverty in this world, and no one would die from starvation. We must understand this truth, adjust our desires, and even practice voluntary restraint, so that others may be cared for, nourished, and clothed.’⁹

Sustainable living is a lifestyle that minimises impact on the environment by using resources responsibly and reducing waste. Sustainable living with non-possession is a Jain lifestyle that aims to minimise environmental impact by reducing material ownership and consumption. Jainism values simplicity, mindfulness, and respect for nature, this approach encourages using only what is necessary and fostering an awareness of life’s interconnectedness. At its core, it emphasises minimalism—owning fewer, high-quality, and multi-functional items, focusing on durability and utility over quantity. This means avoiding unnecessary purchases and embracing a clutter-free life. Mindful consumption plays a significant role, where one consciously supports sustainable and eco-friendly brands, chooses reusable items over single-use products, and favours biodegradable or recyclable materials.

⁶ *Daśavaikālika Sūtra*, 6.21.

⁷ Umāsvāti, *Tattvartha Sutra* 6.17.

⁸ Ācārya Nāneśa, *Jīndhammo*, p.538.

⁹ J.N. Mehta in *Ethics*, 1st Edition., 1939, p. 146.

2. The Heart of Jain Philosophy: Non-Violence

The core value of Jainism revolves around Non-Violence (*Ahimsā*). Jainism restricts violence in all three ways- physically, verbally and mentally or emotionally. Tīrthānkara Mahāvīra was the first to teach that all living beings, even the smallest creatures under our feet, cherish their lives, and as rational beings, we have no right to take them. We should show compassion (*mitti me savva bhuyesu*)¹⁰ toward all living beings.

According to Jain philosophy, souls are infinite in number, and each has its own independent existence. A person who understands both living and non-living things can truly practice ahimsa. Daśavaikālika Sūtra details the six classes of living beings i.e. five immobile beings, i.e. earth, water, fire, air and plant-bodied beings and mobile beings possess equal consciousness.¹¹ Every being (one-sense to five-sense beings) has its independent existence. All living beings seek happiness, and none desire to suffer. Hence, no living beings should be hurt or killed. The one who is hurt, governed, tortured, enslaved, or killed is none other than oneself.¹²

This principle of non-violence and compassion extends to all living beings and to the planet itself as an ecosystem of living beings. Jain religion recognises the connectedness of all living beings. *Parasparopagraho jīvānam* is a Jain aphorism from the Tattvārtha Sūtra¹³, which translates as ‘all life is bound together by mutual support and interdependence’. Non-violence calls for mutual respect and reverence for all living beings. When non-violence is practised to its optimum, humanity can live with compassion in a more balanced harmony with the environment and the other living beings on the planet.

3. Fifteen Prohibited Trades (*Karma-dāna*¹⁴)

The code of conduct for Jain lay-followers strongly opposes occupations that are harmful to natural resources or environmentally unfriendly, as these professions involve significant harm to all forms of life, including subtle entities like earth, water, fire, air, and vegetation. A *śrāmanopāsaka* (lay-follower) should renounce 15 types of professional activities (*karma-dāna*) when accepting the seventh vow to limit the consumption and use of articles (*upabhoga-*

¹⁰ *Āvaśyaka Sūtra*, 4.

¹¹ *Daśavaikālika Sūtra* (Chapter 4, pp. 83-93; Sutra 6/26-45). Pp.218-220.

¹² *Ācārāṅga Bhāṣyam*, English rendering. (*Āyāro* 1/15). P.33.

¹³ *That which is*. English translation of *Tattvārtha Sūtra*, (Sūtra 5/21), p.131.

¹⁴ *Karmadāna* refers to an occupation involving great bondage of *karma*. To undertake business and industry for earning one's livelihood, involving great violence and great possession, which leads to bondage of *karma*. *Jaina Paribhāṣika Śabdakośa -Dictionary of Technical Terms of Jainism*. English Translation. Pp.97-98.

paribhoga parimāṇa vrata).¹⁵ They avoid the meat industry or anything that is directly or indirectly connected to the killing of animals or other beings. These should be clearly understood and avoided; some are objectionable due to their cruelty, while others are discouraged due to social and environmental concerns. Jainism supports occupations that are both nature-friendly and promote an economic system rooted in harmony, equity, and justice, leaving no room for exploitation.

The fifteen prohibited *karmadānas* (occupations) are as under¹⁶:

S.No	<i>Karma-dāna</i> (Professions)	Related Businesses	Effect on Environment
1.	<i>Aṅgāra karma</i> - involve fire and coal in huge quantity.	Businesses like Steel and iron manufacturing, Power generation, Brick kilns, Cement production, Glass manufacturing, Foundries and metal casting, etc. ¹⁷ Each of these industries relies heavily on heat-intensive processes, often fuelled by large quantities of coal or similar resources.	Emit large amounts of greenhouse gases and pollutants, contributing to climate change and air pollution. This leads to global warming, environmental degradation, and adverse health impacts on living beings. ¹⁸
2	<i>Vana karma</i> means clearing of forests, resulting in loss of trees and biodiversity.	It includes logging for timber, paper, and furniture industries, as well as agriculture for crops like soy, palm oil, and cattle ranching, which require large cleared land areas. ¹⁹ Additionally, infrastructure projects like mining, road construction, and urban expansion contribute significantly to deforestation.	Deforestation disrupts ecosystems, leading to biodiversity loss, soil erosion, and habitat destruction, endangering countless species. It also contributes to climate change by reducing carbon absorption and increasing greenhouse gas emissions, which destabilizes global weather patterns.
3	<i>Śakaṭa karma</i> means manufacture and sell of different types of vehicles	It involves designing, assembling, and producing various types of vehicles, such as cars, buses, carriages, trucks, or electric vehicles, for consumer and commercial markets.	It impacts the environment through high energy consumption, greenhouse gas emissions, and significant water and resource usage. ²⁰ They also present safety risks, leading to traffic accidents and fatalities globally.
4	<i>Bhāṭaka karma</i> includes the business of renting out the existing vehicles for other people	It includes businesses like traditional car rental agencies, peer-to-peer car sharing platforms, and ride-sharing services.	It contribute to increased carbon emissions and air pollution due to the higher number of vehicles on the road, often leading to greater traffic congestion.
5	<i>Sphoṭana karma</i> means business that involves digging and mining	It includes extracting minerals such as coal, gold, diamonds, and rare earth metals. Deep digging for	It release harmful chemicals and pollutants into the air and water,

¹⁵ *Uvāsagadasāo*, Ed. Ācārya Mahāprajña, Lāḍnūn, Jain Viśva Bhāratī, 2000, p 53.

¹⁶ *Upāsakadaśā*, English translation (Sūtra 1/51). Pp. 41-44.

¹⁷ *Yoga Śāstra*. Ed. Ācārya Hemacandra. Delhi, Śrī Rṣabhacand Joharī. 1963. P. 54.

¹⁸ *Relative Economics*, Ācārya Mahāprajña, Ed. Ashok Bafna, Lāḍnūn, Jain Viśva Bhāratī, 2020, p.115.

¹⁹ Chapple, Christopher Key. *Jainism and Ecology-Non-violence in the Web of Life*, Cambridge, Harvard Center for the Study of World Religions, 2002. P.107.

²⁰ Rajiv Sinha, *Development Without Destruction: The Challenge to Survival*, Jaipur, Chandra Vijay Dhabriya, 1994, p.97.

		telecommunication wiring, business of making crackers, making matchbox, ore mining, construction of dams etc	impacting ecosystems and human health. ²¹
6	<i>Dantavāñijya</i> means business where the tusk of elephant, pearls, oysters, Kasturi, etc are used for making products	Businesses related to animal body parts include the meat processing industry, the production and trade of by-products such as leather, bones, fur, and organs for use in fashion, food, and pharmaceuticals are significant sectors within this market.	It often fuel illegal wildlife trade, leading to overexploitation and endangerment of species. This trade also contributes to habitat destruction and disrupts ecosystems, ultimately harming biodiversity.
7	<i>Lakṣāvāñijya</i> means manufacturing of lac and overconsumption of material made from shellac.	This industry encompasses the production of lac-based goods such as furniture finishes, food coatings, silk, cosmetics, and traditional crafts. ²² It also includes manufacturing blue, engaging in industries for making soap and other detergents.	The chemical processing involved in creating these products can result in pollution and toxic waste, negatively impacting local communities and ecosystems.
8	<i>Rasavāñijya</i> means the sale of liquids or fluids, which are derived from living beings, such as alcohol or certain food products.	Business of running hotels and restaurants that serve alcohol and meat, making cheese through animal rennet, making chocolates and jellies with gelatin, selling eggs, selling frozen food.	It contribute to public health issues, and can lead to addiction and societal harm.
9	<i>Viṣvāñijya</i> means manufacturing different kinds of poisons or poisonous substances or destructive weapons and dealing in them.	The business of selling poison, weapons, nuclear weapons, knives, sword, pistols, firecrackers, acid. Making drugs from animals as a part of addiction.	Increased Violence and Crime, Health Hazards and Mortality, Environmental Degradation, Social Instability, Ethical and Moral Consequences.
10	<i>Keśāvāñijya</i> means selling the hair of human beings or animals and dealing in cattle.	Business of making garments and luxury handbags with animal hair, making decorative with animal fur, making the cars upholstery with animal hair and skin, selling humans like women and children for performing in villages and circus, abducting those children and making them beg on the traffic signals, selling woman to other countries by lying to them and making false promises, selling children to make them work in the highly hazardous factories.	It leads to Human Rights Violations, Physical and Mental Health Issues, Loss of Education and Opportunities, Perpetuation of Poverty and Inequality, Environmental and Social Harm.
11	<i>Yantrapidāna karma</i> means industries that involve in oil making.	It involves businesses of making oil of sesame, sugar cane, peanut and many more. It also involves taking out water from the wells, selling and trading of mixtures and large heavy machinery's are used for this purpose.	Oil refineries and petro-chemical plants produce a mixture of wastage containing hydrocarbons, phenolic compounds and numerous organic and inorganic sulphur compounds. They impart objectionable tastes in odours to the receiving waters. ²³
12	<i>Nirlāñcan karma</i> means changing the gender of	Making tattoos on animals for performing in circus, using humans for entertainment, injecting animals for	Tattooing and caging animals, injecting them cause physical pain, stress, and often long-term health

²¹ Gambino. W. Anthony, The Council on Foreign Relations, Congo, Securing Peace, Sustaining Progress, United States of America, 2008, p.21.

²² Pravacan Saarodhaar, Nemichandra Suri. Ed. Vinaysagar. Vol. 1, Jaipur, Prakrit Bharati Akademi, 1999, p.198.

²³ N.K Chakrabarti, *Environment Protection and the Law*, op.cit. p.23.

	<i>animals like girls, bull, Buffalo and ox.</i>	excessive breeding, caging the animals to perform in circus, using of animals in the skin care and cosmetic industry, use of animals in the testing in pharma industry	issues, while humans used in exploitative entertainment face physical and psychological harm.
13	<i>Dāva-agnidāpana karma</i> means burning and demolition. Setting fire to things or burning things such as forests, houses, etc. out of enmity or spite.	It involves burning the forests to make big industries, breed more animals. Forest ate burned due to the large industry sparks, large scale Agri business for livestock farming	Forest fires destroy habitats, leading to the extinction of plant and animal species and reducing biodiversity essential for ecosystem stability.
14	<i>Saradraha tāḍaga pariśoṣaṇa</i> means digging and drying of wells, rivers, lakes, etc.	It involves digging of wells and drying of wells for the purpose of making new water bodies. It also includes business of sailing huge ships on seas, fishing on big seas, dumping industrial waste in water.	Excessive digging of wells lowers groundwater levels, leading to scarcity and affecting water availability for drinking, agriculture, and ecosystems.
15	<i>Asatī jana poṣaṇa karma</i> means keeping animals for feeding other animals	It involves domesticating dogs, cats, hens, Peacock for the purpose of selling and making money. Keeping a prostitute and selling them, selling kids for child labour	It leads to animal cruelty and welfare issues, Health Risks and Zoonotic Diseases, Exploitation and lifelong psychological damage, leading to a societal decline in empathy and respect for life.

The 15 *karmadānas*, or fifteen prohibited trades, significantly impact care for the Earth and vulnerable communities by discouraging businesses that harm the environment and exploit others. By prohibiting trades linked to violence, deforestation, toxic production, and exploitation, they help reduce pollution, prevent habitat loss, and avoid unjust practices that disadvantage the poor. This ethical framework urges businesses to operate responsibly, prioritizing ecological balance and social justice over profit. With an emphasis on non-violence and ethical integrity, the *karmadānas* provide a moral foundation that promotes sustainable livelihoods, benefiting both the planet and society's most vulnerable.

4. Aṇuvrata Movement : Human Centric Character Building

The Aṇuvrata Movement was founded in the mid-20th century, during the transformative period following World War II and India's independence. Ācārya Tulsī, the ninth pontiff of the Jain Terāpantha Order, initiated the movement on March 1, 1949, in Sardārśahar, Rajasthan. He was driven by two key motivations: firstly, to guide humanity away from the path of destruction by promoting the non-violent Aṇuvrat Movement. and secondly, to counter the rising selfishness, over-competitiveness, consumerism, and pursuit of profit through unethical means.

The slogan: “*Samyamah khalu jīvanam*” (self-restraint is life) forms the philosophical ideal behind the Aṇuvrat Movement. The movement encourages individuals to lead a virtuous life by committing to the observance of eleven core vows. It is a network of morally conscious people who voluntarily choose a lifestyle rooted in ethical conduct, fostering environmental and ecological balance. Anyone who accepts these fundamental vows can join the movement, regardless of caste, creed, religion, or nationality.

Initially, there were 84 *aṇuvrata* vows, which were too numerous for most people to follow with ease. To make them more practical and accessible, these vows were later refined into 11 core vows with the remaining vows organised contextually. The codes embodied are as follows:²⁴

1. I will not wilfully kill any innocent creature.
 - I will not commit suicide
 - I will not commit foeticide.
2. I will not attack anybody.
 - I will not support aggression.
 - I will endeavour to bring about world peace and disarmament.
3. I will not take part in violent agitations or in any destructive activities.
4. I will believe in human unity
 - I will not discriminate on the basis of caste, colour, race, sect, gender, etc.
 - I will not treat anyone as an untouchable.
5. I will practise religious tolerance.
 - I will not rouse sectarian frenzy or apprising.
6. I will observe rectitude in business and general behaviour.
 - I will not harm others in order to serve any ends.
 - I will not practise the deceit.
7. I will set limits to the practice of continence and acquisition.
8. I will not resort to unethical practices in elections.
9. I will not encourage socially evil customs.
10. I will lead a life free from addictions.
 - I will not use intoxicants like alcohol, drugs, tobacco etc.
 - I will not eat meat, eggs, fish etc.
11. I will always strive to minimise environmental pollution.

²⁴ An Introduction to Terāpanth. Pp. 30-32.

- I will not cut down trees.
- I will not waste water, electricity etc.

The Anuvrat Movement has significantly influenced environmental stewardship and compassion for the vulnerable by promoting ethical principles like non-violence, honesty, and minimalism. Encouraging people to adopt eleven core vows fosters a lifestyle that values sustainable living, which reduces harm to the Earth. The movement's emphasis on self-restraint and non-consumerism directly opposes the overexploitation of natural resources, benefiting ecosystems and reducing inequality. Its inclusive, community-focused approach strengthens support for the poor and vulnerable, promoting a society rooted in empathy, equity, and responsible action. This moral framework contributes to a healthier planet and a more just society.

5. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) & *Visarjan* (relinquish) while *Arjan* (possess)

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) refers to the voluntary contributions made by companies to enhance society and improve the environment. It involves integrating social and ethical considerations into business operations to benefit stakeholders and the broader community. In India, CSR is governed by Section 135 of the Companies Act, 2013, which mandates certain companies to allocate a specific percentage of their profits to CSR activities.²⁵ The CSR provisions apply to companies meeting any of the following criteria in the previous financial year:

- A net worth exceeding Rs 500 crore
- A turnover exceeding Rs 1,000 crore
- A net profit exceeding Rs 5 crore

The Board of Directors of applicable companies is responsible for ensuring that at least 2% of the average net profits, calculated over the preceding three financial years, is spent on CSR activities. If a company has been in operation for less than three years, it must allocate 2% of the average net profits from its operational years according to its CSR policy.²⁶

Jainism too have a CSR policy in the form of *Visarjan*. Tirthankara Mahāvīra has given the concept of *visarjan* (relinquish) while *arjan* (possess). It is a beautiful solution for current age problems. One should not accumulate excessively and possess too much but should develop a

²⁵ <https://ca2013.com/135-corporate-social-responsibility/>

²⁶ <https://cleartax.in/s/corporate-social-responsibility>

habit of giving up (*tyag*). Don't elevate mountains for the self and dig ditches for others. This approach discourages self-centred accumulation at others' expense. Ideally, one should earn, use responsibly, and practice self-restraint, as mere accumulation fuels societal issues. Earn, give, and live harmoniously.

The *Tattvārtha Sūtra* emphasizes that charity involves giving one's possessions for the benefit of others.²⁷ This practice is always encouraged, as it helps individuals exercise control over their greed. Similarly, the revered Jain text *Puruṣārthasiddhi-upāya* also highlights that through the act of giving, one gradually overcomes greed.²⁸

6. Spiritual Technology

Spiritual technology encompasses the disciplined practice of *ahimsā* (non-violence), *saṁyama* (self-control), meditation techniques, *yogic kriyās* (self-rejuvenating exercises), *prāṇāyāmas* (breathing exercises), *anuprekṣā* (contemplative self-suggestion), *yogasānāḥ* (postures), *mantrāḥ* (syllabic recitations), as well as austerities like fasting, moderating consumption, and voluntarily renouncing material comforts and addictive behaviours (intoxicants, gambling, theft, abuse, hunting, etc.). This spiritual technology benefits both spiritual and societal well-being. Practitioners develop non-selfish motives, refraining from exploitation or harm to humans and animals and minimizing harm to subtler forms of life, including plants, earth, and water.

Recent international efforts, particularly through the UN Environmental Program and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), offer a hopeful outlook, with projections that the global ozone layer may be fully restored by 2060. However, if the Jain model of spiritual technology—centred on non-violence, self-discipline, and sustainable living—were rigorously adopted, then the goal of a healthy ozone layer could be achieved well before 2060, along with many other positive environmental outcomes. It can be emphasised that no system will be successful and beneficial for mankind if it is not environmentally friendly.²⁹ For the survival of society, voluntary limitation of desires is the only solution.³⁰

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

²⁷ *Tattvārtha Sūtra*

²⁸ *Puruṣārthasiddhi-upāya*

²⁹ *Apargraha*-The Humane Solution. Chapter 2.

³⁰ *Ibid.* Chapter 3.

In September 2015, world leaders agreed to 17 Global goals (officially known as the Sustainable Development Goals or SDGs). By connecting minds, these goals have the power to create a better world by 2030, by ending poverty, fighting inequality, and addressing the urgency of climate change.

Dr Kamal Kumāra Naulakha has compared the United Nations' 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), aimed at transforming the world by 2030, with principles from the Jain perspective. His analysis highlights how Jain philosophy's emphasis on non-violence, self-restraint, and environmental stewardship aligns closely with the objectives of the SDGs. Through this comparison, Dr. Naulakha shows that Jain values like *ahimsā* (non-violence) and *aparigraha* (non-possessiveness) offer a unique spiritual and ethical framework that can support sustainable development and social well-being, contributing deeply to achieving a more peaceful, equitable, and ecologically balanced world.

It is as follows:

Number	Goal	Agenda	Plan of Action	Jain Perspective for transformation (Illustrative)
Goal 1	No poverty	End poverty in all its forms everywhere.	Donate what you don't use. 836 million people live in extreme poverty.	a) <i>Uvabhoga-paribhogavihiṃ paccakkhāemāṇe</i> ³¹ (Upāsakadaśā, 1/22). Set a limit to consumption of articles of single or repeated use. b) Poverty as well as affluence are both pernicious problems ³² . (Shrāvaka Saṃbodha, verse 43).
Goal 2	Zero hunger	End hunger, achieve food security, improve nutrition and expand sustainable agriculture	Avoid throwing away food will stop over 1/3 of the world's food is wasted.	a) <i>Bhojanāo samanovāsāeṇaṃ pañca aiyara jāñijjāvva</i> . ³³ (Upāsakadaśā, 1/51). Set a limit to consumption of food.
Goal 3	Good health and well-being	Ensuring healthy lives and well-being for all at all ages	Vaccinate your family to protect them and improve public health.	a) <i>Savvato appamattassa natthi bhayaṃ</i> ³⁴ (Ācārāṅga Bhāṣya, 3/75). The wakeful has no fear from any side. b) Immunity can be increased by inner peace and development of fearless environment.
Goal 4	Quality education	Ensure quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.	Help children in your community to read	a) <i>Paḍhamam nāṇam tao dayā</i> ³⁵ (Daśavaikālika Sūtra, 4/10). Acquire knowledge first, practise next.

³¹ *Upāsakadaśā*, 1/22

³² *Shrāvaka Saṃbodha*, verse 43.

³³ *Upāsakadaśā*, 1/51

³⁴ *Ācārāṅga Bhāṣya*, 3/75

³⁵ *Daśavaikālika Sūtra*, 4/10

Goal 5	Gender equality	End discrimination and empower all women and girls.	Call out sexist language and behaviour.	a) <i>ṇa itthī ṇa purise ṇa aṇṇāha</i> ³⁶ (Ācārāṅga Bhāṣya, 5/135). All souls are equal. Soul is beyond all genital modes. It is neither female nor male nor neuter.
Goal 6	Clean water and sanitation	Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.	Avoid wasting water. Water scarcity affects more than 40% of the world's population.	a) Water being a living organism, thoughtful consumption is solicited. b) <i>Tasa-pāṇa-biya-rahiyāe, ucchāraṇī vosire</i> ³⁷ (Uttarādhyayana 24/18). Cute discarding of disposable secretion of body (<i>utsarga samiti</i>)
Goal 7	Affordable and clean energy	Ensure access to affordable, reliable and sustainable and modern energy for all.	Use only energy efficient appliances and light bulbs.	a) Limitation of useful stop restraint on overconsumption. b) <i>a-samvibhāgī na hu tassa mokkho</i> ³⁸ (Daśavaikālika Sūtra, 9/2/22). One who deviates from the rule of equal distribution cannot get emancipation.
Goal 8	Decent work and economic growth	Promote inclusive and economy growth and decent work for all	Buy from green companies that are equal opportunity employers	a) <i>Savvabhūesu saṃjamo</i> ³⁹ (Daśavaikālika Sūtra, 6/8). Being restrained for not harming any life forms (Including earth, water, air, vegetation and all other living beings). b) <i>icchāparimāṇa</i> ⁴⁰ (Upāsakadaśā, 1/39). Set a limit to possession and be minimalist. Holistic economic growth can be achieved through voluntarily limiting one's desires.
Goal 9	Industry, innovation and infrastructure	Build resilient infrastructure and promote sustainable industrialization and innovation	Think of innovative new ways to repurpose old material	a) <i>Kammāo ṇaṃ samanovāsaenaṃ paṇṇarasa kammādānāim jāniyavvājāim na samāyariyavvāim</i> . ⁴¹ (Upāsakadaśā, 1/51). Everyone (Jain lay followers) should not undertake 15 such prescribed occupations that involves sinful activities (industries which harm environment). b) Non-violent set up to prevent injury to the nature.
Goal 10	Reduce inequalities	Reduce inequality within and among countries	Raise your voice against discrimination	a) <i>Savvabhūyappabhūyassa...pāvaṃ kammaṃ ṇa baṃdhai</i> . ⁴² (Daśavaikālika Sūtra, 4/9). One who treats all living beings equally does not commit any sin. All are equal to be treated with honour.
Goal 11	Sustainable cities and communities	Make cities and communities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable	Bike, walk or use public transportations to keep our cities air clean.	<i>Saṇyamaḥ khalu jīvanam</i> . (<i>Code of conduct in aṇuvrata</i>). Growth with self-restraint (environmental considerations) is indeed the right way to lead the life.
Goal 12	Responsible consumption and production	Use resources efficiently and reduce waste.	Recycle paper, plastic, glass and aluminium.	14 <i>niyamās</i> (Resolves) prescribed for avoiding unnecessary consumption. ⁴³ (Dharma Saṃgraha, i.73).

³⁶ Ācārāṅga Bhāṣya, 5/135

³⁷ Uttarādhyayana 24/18

³⁸ Daśavaikālika Sūtra, 9/2/22

³⁹ Daśavaikālika Sūtra, 6/8

⁴⁰ Upāsakadaśā, 1/39

⁴¹ Upāsakadaśā, 1/51

⁴² Daśavaikālika Sūtra, 4/9

⁴³ Dharma Saṃgraha, i.73

Goal 13	Climate action	Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impact	Educate young people on climate change to put them on a sustainable path early on.	<i>Ahimsā samjamo tavo</i> ⁴⁴ Training in non-violence (eco-system), self-restraint and austerities. (Daśavaikālika Sūtra, 1/1).
Goal 14	Life below water	Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources.	Avoid plastic bags to keep the oceans safe and clean.	a) <i>Tam pariṇṇāya mehāvi neva sayam udaya sattvaṃ samārambhejjā</i> ⁴⁵ (Ācārāṅga Bhāṣya, 1/64). One who does not indulge nor instigates others nor approves of violence to water bodied beings is indeed a learned one. b) Conservation of water resources emphasised
Goal 15	Life on land	Protect and restore terrestrial ecosystems and stop bio-diversity loss.	Plant the tree and help protect the environment.	a) <i>appagge accāe vahanti</i> ⁴⁶ (Ācārāṅga Bhāṣya, 1/140). Some people kill mobile beings for obtaining their body parts or for vendetta should abandon such acts of violence. b) Encourage vegetarianism. Not killing animals, birds or creatures, rather protect all life forms.
Goal 16	Peace justice and strong institutions	Promote peaceful and inclusive societies and provide access to justice for all.	Use your right to elect the leaders in your country and local community.	a) <i>vibhajjavāyam ca viyāgarejjā</i> ⁴⁷ (Sūyagaḍo 1/14/22). Make use of non-absolutism (plurality of views) in vocal expressions that is anekāntavāda. b) Self-discipline must be practised by all before preaching. Maintain uniformity in words and deeds.
Goal 17	Partnerships for the goals	Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalise the global partnership for sustainable development.	Get the SDGs in action app SDGs in action.com to learn about the goals and ways to help achieve them.	a) <i>parasparopagraho jīvanam</i> (mutual support). b) Adopt mutually reciprocal approach.

Conclusion

The Jain perspective on caring for the Earth, the poor, and the most vulnerable underscores the intrinsic connection between environmental stewardship and social. Grounded in the teachings of Tīrthankara Mahāvīra, this philosophy advocates for a lifestyle characterised by non-violence, self-restraint, and a commitment to sustainability. By recognizing the interdependence of all life forms, Jains are called to cultivate a compassionate approach that promotes the well-being of both the planet and its most vulnerable inhabitants.

The components of the environment—atmosphere, hydrosphere, lithosphere, and biosphere—reveal the delicate balance required for sustaining life. Environmental degradation threatens

⁴⁴ *Daśavaikālika Sūtra*, 1/1

⁴⁵ *Ācārāṅga Bhāṣya*, 1/64

⁴⁶ *Ācārāṅga Bhāṣya*, 1/140

⁴⁷ *Sūyagaḍo* 1/14/22

this balance, but through practical applications of Jain principles such as *aparigraha*, ethical living, and the Aṇuvrata Movement, individuals can actively contribute to a healthier planet. The emphasis on CSR and the practice of *visarjan* offer ethical alternatives to rampant consumerism, encouraging responsible stewardship of resources.

Furthermore, the alignment of Jain values with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals illustrates the relevance of ancient wisdom in addressing contemporary global challenges. By fostering a culture of giving, self-denial, and responsible consumption, Jains can play a pivotal role in promoting environmental sustainability and social equity.

Ultimately, the call to action for Jains and all individuals is clear: to embrace a holistic and integrated approach that prioritizes the health of our planet and the dignity of every person. By committing to these principles, we can work towards a future that reflects compassion, equity, and harmony—ensuring that both the Earth and its people thrive for generations to come.