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CHAPTER IV

AHIMŚĀ - A SACRED RESPONSE TO ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS

Introduction

All things have life and all life is sacred, is the environmental conviction of Jainism. Any harm done to them is more harm done to one self than to the other life. So, “No being is to be harmed, whether knowingly or unknowingly, for all beings desire to live and no being wishes to die. A true Jaina therefore, should consciously refrain from harming any being, however small.”

“Ahinsā is beneficent to all creatures, like a mother in the desert of samsāra (mundane life): Ahinsā works like a stream of nectar to the forest fire: Ahinsā is a course of rain-clouds, for the beings tormented by the disease, (Ahinsā) is the best healing herb; and Ahinsā is called the perpetual return of existence.”

“Beginning with Adinatha (Ṛṣabadeva) and ending with Mahāvira (Vardhamāna) who lived from 599 to 527 BC, each enlightened master (Jina) rediscovered the immortal laws of life placing Ahimsā (non-violence) and Karuṇa (loving compassion) first and foremost among them. Mahāvīra matured his consciousness during twelve and a half years by purifying the senses with fasting, purifying speech with silence and mind with meditation. The insights he shared during the next thirty years were gathered into Āgamas (scriptures), where the heart of Jainism has been preserved. In one of the passages, he spoke of Ahimsā as, Unless we live with non-violence and reverence for all living beings in our hearts, all our acts of goodness, all our vows, virtues and knowledge, all our practices to give up greed are fruitless.”
If Jaina ethics is the soul of Jainism, *Ahimsānuvratā* is the heart of Jaina ethics. In the code of conduct propounded by Lord Mahāvīra, non-violence occupies a prominent position. *Ahimsā* is the same as non-violence but is greater in its comprehension than as we understand it generally. The non-violence concept of Mahāvīra is complete unity of mankind and unity with nature. No discrimination created by man can be accommodated under non-violence. It implies love and compassion for all beings — both *Jīva* and *Ajīva*.

All living beings are mutually obliged to each other. Jainism recognises the *Panchabhūtas*, i.e., fire, air, earth, water and light, which forms life on earth. Destruction of this life in any form is manifested as violence in Jainism. Since the industrial revolution in the race for development of mankind, man has been paying scant attention to nature and preservation of environment, which has caused tremendous environmental degradation, but according to Mahatma Gandhi, “one of the foremost concerns of the mankind should be to leave a balanced environment for the future generation. Not to think of the future generations is a form of violence.”

But the reality today is in stark contrast to this. Lust for wealth, power and luxuries has made man blind to humanitarian values like kindness, love, concern for the weaker beings. *Himsā* is the order of the day.

Ecology studies the conditions of existence of living beings and the mutual relations between organisms and their habitat. Any community of living creatures not only uses natural resources in the course of its vital activity and adapts itself to the conditions of the environment, but also transforms the latter. Historically, the food gathering was human beings’ first mode of obtaining material goods. Today we are consuming natural resources more intensively, destroying our habitat with the aid of increasingly powerful technical means.
Humankind has long been acquainted with crises caused by nature's elemental forces — earthquakes, floods, drought, famine and epidemics — but they had a local character and were limited in time and space. They were only generated by outside causes. Human beings were only their victims and not their cause. But the present crises are the result of human activity. "They are the result of uncontrolled interaction with our habitat, under conditions, which have been made possible by the so-called developed world."

Once we have resolved that we are the source of crises occurring today, the next step is to put an effective stop to it through control and regulation of human activities. We are trying to do this through various rules and regulations. We have Forest Act, 1927, for preservation and regulation of activities in areas declared as forests by the act. But this does not stop any forest brigand and his kinds from cutting down sandalwood trees for profits. Minimum Wages Act, 1948 that prescribes minimum wages. But this does not stop people from finding new ways to overwork and overexploit employees. Legal Services Authority Act has formed legal services authorities and legal aid boards to help socially disadvantaged people to seek legal aid and make use of the legal systems to ensure justices done. Does this ensure justice to the socially disadvantaged? All evidence points to the contrary. We have Prevention of black marketing and maintenance of supplies of essential commodities act, 1980, Prevention of food adulteration, 1954, Prevention of cruelty on animals act, 1950, laws against pollution of air, water, and other natural resources, acts prohibiting child labour and thousands of other legislations. But these have not been able to control the cruelties and deceptions going on in the world. Most of the times, they remain on paper alone and are not implemented. Even if they are they are sadly inadequate to combat the monstrous forces of cardinal sins that have enslaved the modern man — greed, lust, envy, hatred, violence, anger, etc.
Gandhian like CV Seshadri argued in the 1970s and 1980s that environmental problems are not amenable to mere managerial, legislative and scientific/technical solutions. Like several thinkers, CVS traced the roots of the environmental crisis to the primacy of the Biblical notion of man's domination over nature. He realised it made no sense to talk of ecology unless this fundamental idea of western science and belief was challenged.

A powerful and sustaining solution to environmental crisis on not just physical level, but also social, biological, psychological, political, economic, spiritual levels, can be found under Jaina concepts of *Ahimsā*, *Aparigraha* and *Anekānta*. By pursuing these three A's, we can resolve most of the problems facing modern man, which were created by him in the first place. This is an important point each one of us should remember before complaining about the terrible state the world is in today. We, human beings are responsible for it. We had a choice between *Hīṃsā* and *Ahimsā*, and we, as rational beings, are capable of objectively analysing the consequences of both. We opted to follow the path of *Hīṃsā* instead of *Ahimsā* and the results are evident.

Dog-eat-dog competition is the prevailing scenario today. Man will use any means to stay one step forward than his neighbour. The modern day man has given a new meaning to Darwin's "survival of the fittest". The scene is the same in all the countries and also at the international level. But it is unfortunate to experience in India, the spiritual land of saints, renowned for its compassion and moral values. A land that has produced advocates of peace and non-violence like Buddha, Mahāvīra, Mahatma Gandhi has become a battleground where innocent people are killed every minute under religious conflux, poverty, pollution, exploitation, etc. We hear incidents of religious fanatics-turned-terrorists shooting down innocent people in Kashmir every day.
Men should open their eyes and minds to reason. They should realise the universal truth that every religion in the world teaches non-violence, not violence. They may differ in other aspects, but none of them tolerate *Hīṃsā*, rather *Ahīṃsā* or non-violence.

"In Western cultures, nonviolence usually denotes passive, non-resistance, civil disobedience, pacifism, and conscientious objection to war. In India, nonviolence or *Ahīṃsā*, though preached by all religions, is more closely associated with Jaina religion. It is not an abstract religious concept but a personal commitment of every true follower of Jainism to respect life in its myriad forms." The concept has far-reaching implications in today's world where the root cause of all crises is man's violent and grasping ways. *Hīṃsā* (violence), according to Jains is not just causing violence to other living beings; it is caused by severance of vitality in a mobile (for eg, humans, animals, etc) or immobile being (for eg. trees, plants etc). Passion, hatred, violence, irresponsibility and foolishness contribute to *Hīṃsā* and individual invites *Karma* for himself.

Jainism gives a pragmatic and positive solution to the crisis we are facing. Dr Ramiji Singh in his scholarly article "Jainism as a World Religion" observed that Jainism has a historical identity in as much as it is the sublime gift of Indian culture, not only to India, but also to whole humanity. Evangelical spirit and missionary ambitions have been unknown to the Jainas because to them religion is self-realisation and is based on the principles of non-violence, love, truth and compassion. He argued that denial of non-violence and violation of natural rhythm is equivalent to violation of the truth. Non-violence is not limited to cessation of war and bloodshed; it also includes stopping of man's ignorant and irresponsible attitude towards nature. The twentieth century has been the century of science; the Twenty first century can be a century of synthesis of science and spirituality. Jainism as a religion of
non-violence synthesises science and spirituality is synthesised as religion of non-violence in Jainism.

Prof Sagarmal Jain has remarked that there is a vital link between Jaina philosophy and ecology while speaking on Jaina perspective in terms of Ahimsā, Aparigraha and Anekānta. He also observed that Jainism has always preached tolerance in thought, words and action and contributed to peace and harmony, universal fraternity and co-existence.

Thus we can conclude that emphasis in Jainism is on reverence for life and principle of compassion for living and non-living beings. Non-violence as a means of consciousness free from both love and hatred represents the spiritual aspect of Dharma.

Ahimsā as practised under Jainism is a very comprehensive concept. According to the religion, anyone committing Himsā invites influx of kārmic matter and thus suffering. Jainism does not target people committing crime alone. Even the person, who silently contributes to the crime by encouraging it or being indifferent towards it, is guilty of causing Himsā. Once we are guilty, the influx of kārmic matter begins. Once the kārmic influx conquers the body, the pure state of soul becomes soiled. This causes bondage and suffering. To liberate the soul from this bondage, man should follow the path of non-violent attitude and deed. If we have spread dust on a precious stone and hence dulled it, we alone have to clean it to restore it to its original glittering self.

Of course, many obstructions hinder the dissemination of the message of non-violence. One of them is that the concept of Ahimsā has been misinterpreted as being too rigid and impractical for the present world. Gandhi preached that when you are slapped on one cheek, you have to show the other cheek. But how far is it practicable in today's violent world? However, the true nonviolent attitude of showing the
other check has its route in the Jaina concept of *Ahimsā*, which not only tells man to defend himself, but also not to encourage the other man to commit further violence. This should begin at the household level and should be extended to societal, state, national and global levels. Thus a woman whose husband beats her after drinking alcohol should not bear it mutely. She should defend herself. By keeping quiet, she only encourages him to inflict more violence on her. Similarly slavery, subordination, exploitation, etc. target both the persons exploiting and exploited under *Ahimsā*. So, the person who subjects for exploitation and the exploiter both invite *kārmic matter* equally.

So we see how without understanding the concept of non-violence, we condemn the same as being escapism. It is neither escapism nor cowardice. Rather it is a superior principle, which demands self-restraint and self-discipline. It teaches man to live harmoniously, in peaceful co-existence with his environment. If we observe *Ahimsāṇuvrata* and take care not to commit any *aticāras* in our daily lives, we can safely conclude that environmental crisis will be resolved to a great extent. This is the great truth our ancestors realised and articulated in the religious texts centuries ago, and nothing other than this and only this. Because man the crown of creation never had trust in him and he may land up in crown of destruction, as is the result today. So, analysis of early man in the fear of devastation has come true today. Before analyzing from this point of view how the Jaina concept of *Ahimsā* can be a sacred response to environmental awareness in detail, it is necessary to trace in brief, origin and articulation of *Ahimsā* in world religions.
4.1 Origin and Articulations of Ahimsa in world Religions

All the religions of the world preach non-violence. Bible teaches non-violence and tells Christians not to do onto others what you'd not have done to you, to show the other cheek, etc. Vendidad of Zoroastrians has many passages that tell man how to live in coexistence with nature. Ancient Zoroastrians respected elements of nature — fire, air, water and earth and formulated rules to see that man does not overexploit these resources for his own profit. Quran, the holy book of Islam, declares that all beings, creatures crawling on the earth, birds flying in the sky, every being is a creation of the Lord and has been considered in the Book. References to sanctity of nature and peaceful co-existence can be found in Judaism, Taoism and other religions also.

Ramayana, Mahabharata, Upanishads and other Hindu texts uphold non-violence. "One should never do that to another which one regards as injurious to one's own self. This, in brief, is the rule of dharma. Yielding to desire and acting differently, one becomes guilty of adharma." Mahabharata, the revered Hindu epic and religious text extols Ahimsa as the highest dharma in various passages. Moreover it says that no other virtue is possible to man if he doesn't practice Ahimsa: Ahimsa is the dharma. It is the highest purification. It is also the highest truth from which all dharma proceeds.

Thus, a worldview based on notions of karma implies that violent activity leads to future painful retribution. This mechanistic model has been expressed differently in Jaina, Buddhist, and Hindu forms. The Jainas posit the existence of uncountable life forms (Jivas), everyone seeking liberation from the shackles of karma. The Buddhists practice non-injury to life due to the precept that all life is fleeting, that no self exists, that all things hence merit compassion. Various schools of Hinduism have stated that the Vedic ritual is ineffective; that it is far
better to see the Self (ātma) in all beings than to perform even a hundred sacrifices. Each of these perspectives differs radically from one another, yet all these traditions, despite various explanations and justifications, remain rooted in nonviolence as their primary ethical virtue and all agree upon the efficacy of the law of karma.

"In the context of the Rgveda, Karma means action; through one’s actions in the sacrificial process, certain benefits are said to be assured. Numerous studies of early Hindu notions of Karma as summarised in Herman Tull’s The Vedic Origins of Karma, and my earlier study of Karma establish a link between Vedic ritual-action and Upanisadic forms of meditative transformation. Although such Vedic sources like Śātapatabrāhmaṇa, and the Chāndogya mention Ahimsā, these texts from the earliest phases of Hindu thought do not demonstrate as great an emphasis on ethics as expressed in later Hindu texts that list non-violence as pre-eminent virtue.

In contrast to this, the very first written documents of the Jaina tradition have a fully developed and distinct doctrine of Karma that entails strict observance of ethical precepts rooted in Ahimsā. The earliest text of the Jainas, the Ācārāṅgā sūtra, dating back to the fourth century B.C.E., proclaims a much stronger message than that of Yajñavalkya: "Injurious activities inspired by self-interest lead to evil and Darkness. This is what is called bondage, delusion, death, and hell. To do harm to others is to do harm to oneself. Thou art he whom thou intendest to kill! Thou art he whom thou Intendest to tyrannize over! We corrupt ourselves as soon as we intend to corrupt others. We kill ourselves as soon as we do intend to kill others .

Some form of religion involving meditation and veneration of animals flourished in the Indus Valley cities. Although it is not possible to conclude that these persons were practitioners of Ahimsā as it exists in its present form, some iconography and thematic continuity
stretches from the Indus Valley into classical and modern Jainism seems evident.”

Reference to the theory of Karma can be found in Dhammapada; Buddha too refers to the theory of Karma: “If a man speaks or acts with an evil thought, evils follow him even as the wheel follows the foot of the ox which draws the cart. If a man speaks or acts with a pure thought, happiness follows him like a shadow that never leaves him.”

Action (karma) in the present will make its presence felt at a later time. Through accumulation of merits, one can avoid painful experiences in the future. The most obvious painful act is one of violence; by abstaining from violent acts, one can avoid incurring a kārmic matter deposit, which will require retribution in the future.

Though there is reference to Ahimsā in the religions of the world. The Jaina and Buddhist traditions share a lot in common including their disdain for animal sacrifice.

Concern for animal welfare is emphasised. Asoka, the follower of Buddhism one of the greatest Indian emperors, he brought in several laws that advocated kind treatment to animals. Excerpts from Asoka’s inscriptions that were translated from rocks and pillars tell us that laws included restrictions on meat consumption, curtailing hunting and establishing hospitals and roadside watering holes for animals. But a point to be noted is that Buddha is a contemporary of Mahāvīra, and Mahāvīra is the twenty fourth Tīrthaṅkara; Jainism and its concept of Ahimsā, however can be traced back to early Vedic period. 

Tattvārtaśūtra of Jainism says: Have benevolence towards all beings — Jīva and ajīva. The worldview of the Jainas presents an unparalleled concern for life. All beings are fond of life; they like pleasure and hate pain, shun destruction and like to live, they long to live. To all, life is dear. This is the greatest contribution of Jainism to mankind. It declares that every being, small or big, mobile or immobile has a right to exist. It
has a role to play in maintaining the balance of the ecology though man
may not be aware of its functions. However this ignorance does not
entitle him to destroy any being for his own selfish purposes.

With this basic orientation, the Jaina community has exerted a
great deal of influence on Indian society as a whole, though it has
consistently remained a tiny minority.

Jaina texts have protested strongly against violence towards
animals in the early period of civilization of man. Yoga-śastra of
Hemachandra declares that those terrible ones who kill animals under
the guise of making an offering to the gods, or the guise of sacrifice, are
bereft of compassion and go to a bad fate.

We see from the excerpts and explanations above that all
religions of the world preach Ahimsā. Jainism, especially right from its
inception has been based on the core concept of Ahimsā that extends to
not only other human beings and animals, but also to plants, trees,
insects and micro-organisms and non-living beings. Jainism originated
as a solution to the atrocities that were taking place in the name of
religion thousands of years ago. Hinduism had been defiled into a
bundle of rituals and customs. It bred corruption, inequalities and
cruelties against lower castes and classes, and anti-nature practices.
Jainism took birth as a way of life rather than a religion that was based
on concepts of non-violence and equality. It was for everyone
irrespective of caste, creed, sect, gender, nation, language, etc. It is a
religion, which comforts a common man as well as Ascetic. And it made
every individual responsible for him self and his environment. It laid
down explicit rules to protect and preserve plants, animals, natural
resources and people. In a nutshell, Jainism included all Jīva and ajīva
in its philosophy of Ahimsā, which is not a religious concept but a way
of life.
In spite of such rich treasure house of wisdom, man continues to tread the path of Hirfsd. No amount of sermons and preaching has changed man for the better than for the worst. Why? The reason has to be traced to the concept of Ahirs in the western and eastern world, for he is more towards materialistic world than towards his inner spiritual world.

4.2 Ahimsa and the Western World

"The life well lived is one that is open to the divine heart. Openness of this sort is faith, and it is an art rather than a science. The fruits of openness include value-pluralist thinking, care for others, a hunger for justice, the enjoyment of relational power, a union of thought and feeling, discovery of one's self as creatively integrative, and appreciation of nature as organic and evolutionary, and a reverence for life."\(^{11}\)

All religions preach non-violence as the basic principle of life and agree upon the efficacy of law of Karma, though they may vary in their explanations and perspectives.

A constructive theology of reverence for life based on non-violent practices can accord well, not only with the current effort to reverse environmental destruction and protect animal life, but also resonates with some values, both aesthetic and ethical, that are at the core of life and history of western world. Just as there was the spread of the non-violent ethic from its home in India throughout the Buddhist world, some scholars believe that Indian traditions of renouncement had a direct influence on Greek and later European thought. Many texts, including Geography of Strabo (63 BCE-21 BCE) reveal that Mediterranean world was well acquainted with certain aspects of religion in India.
With reference to status accorded to nature in religions, many environmental activists today say that religions like Judaism, Islam and Christianity are environmentally unfriendly because they emphasise the transcendence of God above creation. Lynn White and others claim that “the injunction in Genesis 1:28 for humanity to have ‘dominion’ and ‘subdue’ the earth, sets humanity apart from nature, and enjoins humanity to exploit it.”

However others disagree with this view. “Nature has value and is to be respected, not primarily or just because it can be used for human purposes, but because it is created by God and is part of God’s order.” But how far has the human race accepted and imbibed this philosophy? Not much, going by the state the world is in today. “Of late, the mainstream Christianity has begun to seriously question the current ecological problems. There is a widespread realisation dawning on all peoples that the trees, the grasses, the animals, the viruses and bugs of our planet are not there just for us. And the hitherto anthropocentric bias in Christianity is being challenged seriously.”

The blame for degradation of nature rests not so much on the religious texts as on the modern man, who has interpreted these texts to suit his convenience. He believes that natural resources and animals on the earth are to serve his purposes. The developed West, which adheres to this view, also believes that poorer nations and their natural and human resources should be exploited for its own gain. People are not bothered about the violence they are inflicting upon trees, soil, lakes, rivers, animals and their fellow human beings as long as they achieve their goals — more money, more fame, more power, etc. This stress on materialistic ends and aggressive means to achieve those goals by the West has contributed greatly to the ecological catastrophe we are seeing today. This lopsided development of the West at the cost of other nations is not without its ill effects, which is affecting all parts of the globe — global warming, depletion of the ozone layer, depletion of non-
renewable resources, pollution of renewable resources, extinction of
many species of flora and fauna, spread of epidemics and terminal
diseases like AIDS, increase in social evils, psychological disorders,
absence of mental equanimity the list is endless.

Arguments of supremacy of human comfort at the cost of the
natural order have been proven to be self-contradictory. Today, the
West is looking towards the East for spiritual guidance. Hundreds of
Americans and Europeans come to India every year — they have all the
material comforts but no peace of mind. This can be interpreted with
reference to Jaina Karma theory. Hiṁsā the Westerners have inflicted
upon other nations, directly or indirectly, has come back to them in the
form of social evils and mental disturbances. Thus, hordes of them visit
pilgrim places and ashrams in India hoping to find some succor from
tensions and anxieties. However, this search for peace and harmony will
not have the desired effect if it is confined only to religious dimension.
The West will have to redeem its Karma by adopting an eco-friendly
and coexistent way of life. What is happening today is that despite the
universal knowledge of superiority of non-violence, the whole world led
by anti-nature, materialistic principles of the West, is in the midst of a
crisis.

Yet, there is a ray of hope. There is an increasing awareness
about environmental degradation among the western countries today.
But they have to realise that the solution lies in a complete change in
the way of life. Merely innovating technologies, which will temporarily
check physical environmental degradation is not enough. What we have
to understand is that earth can no longer be manipulated for purposes
of human consumerism without affecting our own well being. The self
cannot be isolated from other selves in the larger life order.

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The multivalent logic of the Jains with \textit{Ahimsā} as its basic credo provides a paradigm that is sufficiently flexible and probing for today's issues.

4.3 \textit{Ahimsa} and the Eastern World

India and the Buddhist countries have long been associated with \textit{Ahimsā}. Many of the religious aspects have a close connection with the natural world. They also define a code of conduct to be followed towards one's fellow beings.

The Hindu tradition, which finds its primary authority in the \textit{Vedic} literature, offers conceptual resources that promote ecological sensitivity. In the \textit{Vedic} hymns, we find an intimate relationship between persons and various personifications of the earth, water, thunderstorms, and so forth. The \textit{Vedic} rituals, many of which are still performed today, invoke elemental forces. The \textit{Saṅkhya} tradition reveres the five great elements (mahābhūta) of earth, water, fire, air, and space as the essential building blocks of physical reality.

The songs of the \textit{Rgveda} extol the powers and wonders of the earth, regarding them to be divinities worthy of worship. The rivers (Gaṅga, Yamunā, Sarasvatī, Sindhu) and the earth (Prithivi) are regarded to be goddesses, while the winds (Māruti) and fire (Agni) are invoked as gods. From these hymns an image of the human person arose that sees continuity between the individual and cosmos.

"\textit{Ahimsā} is the highest Dharma. \textit{Ahimsā} is the best austerity. It is the greatest gift. \textit{Ahimsā} is the highest self-control. \textit{Ahimsā} is the highest sacrifice. \textit{Ahimsā} is the highest power. \textit{Ahimsā} is the highest friend. \textit{Ahimsā} is the highest truth. \textit{Ahimsā} is the highest teaching."\textsuperscript{15}

The \textit{Atharvaveda}, the source of India's traditional medicine known as \textit{Ayurveda}, includes passages in praise of the earth, asking for
her beneficence and pledging protection in return. The text states, “The earth is the mother, and I the son of the earth.”

The author attributes all wealth to the earth and appeals for her to be generous: “The earth holds manifold treasures in secret places: Wealth, jewels, and gold shall she give to me. She bestows wealth liberally: let that kindly Goddess bestows wealth upon us!”

Despite this yearning to benefit from her largesse, the author nonetheless harbours a desire not to hurt her, stating: “What I dig out of thee, O earth, shall quickly grow again: may I not, O pure one, pierce thy vital spot, (and) not thy heart!” This plea indicates a sense of respect and care for the earth, expressing concern that the earth be made aware that the speaker will not hurt her. “In yet another verse, the speaker states: Your snowy mountain heights, and your forests, O earth, shall be kind to us! The brown, the black, the red, the multi-colored, The firm earth that is protected by Indra, I have settled upon, not suppressed, not slain, not wounded.”

“In recognition of mother earth’s abundance, the Atharva Veda offers both praise of her power and assurances that she will not be harmed by human intervention.” However today man has forgotten that he has to be grateful for the generosity of nature. He has become the tormentor of Mother Earth instead of its protector.

Vedānta tradition says there is no fundamental difference between others and us, both are under girded by the common substrate known as Brahman. To violate another person is to violate Brahman, and in turn oneself. This philosophy preached that all life forms are like ourselves — the implications of the concept is minimum utilisation of natural resources with minimum Hīṁsā to all beings.

Mahābhārata too exemplifies Ahīṁsā as the greatest dharma. The Bhagavad Gītā states the person of knowledge “sees no difference
between a learned Brahmin, a cow, an elephant, a dog, or an outcaste."

The tragedy is that we have not imbibed the essence of Vedas and religious texts as a way of life. We can trace this lapse to non-imposition of religious tenets as a way of life; the tenets are just confined to rituals during the time of worship, festivals, etc. And this too is again confined to one section of the people; and hence did not reach out to the population at large. People retained only the meaningless rituals, which they perform blindly. Many of these rituals entail violation of nature and pollution of environment. The harmful practices range from plucking large number of herbs and shrubs for worship of idols of Gods and Goddesses to animal sacrifices. What we are practicing today is a corrupted form of Hinduism. This pollution of religion is what gave rise to Buddhism and Jainism that have *Ahimsā* as their core value. Thus, the two religions took their birth as religious movements as distinguishable from Hinduism, which had degenerated due to harmful practices like anti-nature rituals and animal sacrifices.

In contrast to this, Buddhism and Jainism forbid animal sacrifices. They uphold non-injury to all life forms as the highest virtue. King Asoka who converted to Buddhism, formulated and enforced various laws protecting animals. These spread to Japan and China with the spread of Buddhism to these countries. But the purpose is lost due to the relaxation shown on the type food, living on flesh of animals.

In fact Jaina philosophy of non-violence begins— with food habits. It preaches strict vegetarianism. In addition, *Ahimsāntuvrata* does not even permit indiscriminate plucking of flowers, cutting of branches or trees harming insects and microbes etc. Such an act is considered an *aticāra* or transgression (which will be discussed in detail later in the chapter), and brings *Karma* to the individual.
In spite of a strong foundation in values of *Ahimsā* and compassion, today we see that what is prevailing in Asia is not any different from the West — humanitarian values have been buried underground, violence and hatred are ruling the roost. In India, the scene is going from bad to worse. We still remember the days under the British rule and the atrocities and injuries we suffered under them. More than fifty years of independence from the British things are no better in India. Our rich heritage of teachings on *Ahimsā* has been confined to religious texts. Politicians make a big show as advocators of non-violence — but only in speeches and political rallies. Instead of working together to stop the violence and alleviate the suffering of people, they are busy with their parliament squabbles, power struggles and petty differences.

In the name of scientific advancement, most eastern countries are blindly following the West. In the process, we have forgotten our rich spiritual tradition that taught us to live in coexistence with nature. We now believe that nature is there to be conquered, not protected and nurtured. The adoption of wrong knowledge and conduct is causing havoc and contributing to environmental degradation. The same attitude is carried over to the fellow-beings and other creatures. We believe animals and plants exist only to serve our aims and comforts — a concept, which we borrowed from the materialistic West. And in our dealings with our fellow-beings, we think that might is right. If we have to push, hit, stamp another person in the race to get ahead and stay ahead; we are ready to do so. We have replaced co-operation with the unhealthy competition.

Some people argue that this kind of dog-eat-dog competition and rat race are realities and you have to be ruthless if you want to survive in the modern world. They state that a non-violent method to solve problems is not effective. Yet if we look into our own history, there are
many instances of resourcefulness in using non-violence to solve problems — at all levels. Here is one such instance of in violent act towards an insect family that occurred in West Bengal:

"An important local temple was overrun with ants. The offerings to the enshrined deity were being consumed, not by the gods or resident priests, but by swarms of industrious insects. To kill them was unthinkable, but their presence grew increasingly intolerable. Finally one enterprising temple-visitor proposed a solution — next to the existing temple, a small structure was built for the ants. This solely comprised sugarcane and included offerings of refined sugar. Soon the human temple was free of pestilence. Non-violent attitude towards beings of the nature is ageold tradition. Some form of religion involving meditation and veneration of animals flourished in the Indus Valley cities. Although it is not possible to conclude that these persons were practitioners of Ahiṃsā as it exits in its present form, some iconographic and thematic continuity stretching from the Indus Valley into classical and modern Jainism seems evident". 22

Jainism has a great contribution to make to the philosophy of Ahiṃsā, which is the only way of life for true followers of Jaina religion. Jainism imbibes the principle of Ahiṃsā through imposition of Anuvratas and theory of Karma from an early age. So an individual is conscious of his every thought, deed or word. Such a training makes the individual stop and contemplate before he takes any step and analyse whether his action contributes to Hīṃsā or not. Jainism does not tell
man to run away from his problems, it helps him to resolve them through non-violent ways.

The Jaina and Buddhist traditions are referred to as the heterodox schools of Indian though. Both reject the authority of the Vedas; both emphasize meditation; both contain teachings regarding rebirth; both were established in their present forms by historical personalities. However, whereas Buddhism is rooted in a markedly anti-theistic stance and generally evades questions of a metaphysical nature, Jainism seemingly combines physics with metaphysics, propounding a worldview that regards all aspects of physical reality to be imbued with multitudes of life. This perception of the livingness of things resulted in the practice of *Ahimsa*, an ethic requiring respect for all forms that shape the day-to-day life of lay Jainas and the austere path followed by Jaina mendicants.

The thorough respect for life, and its attendant lifestyle, profoundly influenced Buddhism, Hinduism, and Islam within India and, to the extent that it helped to shape Buddhist practice, spread throughout Asia. We have seen some indications of Jainism’s antiquity; a survey of its basic teachings, which have served as a major inspiration for the observance of *Ahimsa* in India for millennia, now follows.

The specter of environmental ravage looms equally over all continents of the world. The principle of non-violence, which is the basis of Jainism, goes beyond physical, religious, social, political, economical and spiritual differences, can help us address the issues of contemporary life, such as the abuse of animals, the current state of ecological ravage and the disconnectedness of modern society.

4.4 *Ahimsāyuvarata — Environmental Conviction of the Self*

“All beings are fond of life; they like pleasure and hate pain, shun destruction and long to live. To all life is dear.”

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The root cause of all crises is the dominance of lower self of man that nurtures hatred, envy, lust, selfishness and other negative traits. Jainism targets the man to overcome his lower self. This is symbolised by Jina or the conqueror, which has overcome his lower self. By living the practical life of ethics alone man can resolve the environmental crisis. This may not appeal to the present generation. Truth tastes bitter. For a man suffering from fever even the sweet juice tastes bad. Similarly, the good does not appeal to a man who is drowning in worldly pleasures and whose mind is invaded by materialistic values.

But let us just contemplate for a minute: Is the world, as we know it today, better than what it was six thousand years ago? Hatred, violence, lust, envy, greed — are these the values we want to nurture and uphold? Social evils like corruption, unfair business practices, harassment of women, etc, depletion and overexploitation of natural resources, war and bloodshed, population explosion, incurable diseases, etc — are these the achievements of the human race which we want to pass onto the future generations? No. Even the most cynical of men has to admit that they would not like to live in a world which does not possess humane values like love, compassion, non-violence, etc. Then why are we going away from such a harmonious world towards an anti-nature, non-coexistent world? The answer is we are adopting wrong faith and knowledge. We are pursuing momentary pleasures in exchange for true happiness, which cannot be gained at the cost of others' unhappiness.

So how do we come onto the right track? Can seminars and debates on ecology save it from overexploitation? Can legislations on animal rights protect animals from being killed by man? Can laws and regulations prevent man from harming or murdering another man? Trees are being cut down, grazing lands are being converted to make way for more houses in spite of the laws. Animals are being shot down for food, fur, leather and sport despite the legislations. And incidents
like carnage in Gujarat, Bethlehem and Kashmir continue though there is no dearth of laws and regulations. These prove that these measures are not enough to reverse the process of degradation of nature and man. What is required is right awareness and revival of humanitarian values of non-violence and coexistence, practised in day-to-day life. Jainism has analysed with great subtlety and in detail what actions or speech contributes to Hīṅsā to others and Karma to self. Jainism counters this by classifying the 'don'ts' of Ahiṁsā as aticāras that deal with even the minutest form of Hīṅsā. Aticāras are nothing other than the exploitative and violent attitude of the modern man, which was considered by Jainism five thousand years ago.

At the heart of Jainism is the practice of Ahiṁsā the vow of non-injury. The word Ahiṁsā comes from the Sanskrit root hims, a desiderative form of the verb han, to kill or injure or strike. Prefixed with a privative 'a,' it is best translated as 'absence of the desire to kill or harm.' This is the prime practice in Jainism for overcoming past actions, and all dimensions of the religion violence are to be avoided because they will reflect a concern for Ahiṁsā. Acts of future time, even perhaps in another embodiment. In order to uphold the vows of Ahiṁsā, two paths of practice were developed: one for the Jaina monks, who adhere to greater vows (Mahāvrata), and another for the Jaina lay community, who follow a less-rigorous (satya), not stealing (asteya), sexual restraint (brahmacarya), non-possession (aparigraha). Four types of violence are acknowledged: intentional, non-intentional, related to profession, and self-defense. The monks live according to rules that avoid all types of violence; layman, as we will see, are allowed to take life in some instances. All Jainas are strict vegetarians, living solely on one-sensed beings (vegetables) and milk products. Alcohol, honey and certain kinds of figs are also prohibited, because they are said to harbor many forms of life, especially nigoda (microorganisms).
Jainism details the aticāras, by avoiding which we can prevent all our environmental hazards and risks, animal assaults and criminal attitude towards fellow beings. Jainism has given so much importance to environment that it has dealt with even simple injuries through transgressions. And these minor injuries were proscribed when nature was abundant and man was not so greedy and heartless. Today, when man is overexploiting and destroying the environment, these aticāras become all the more significant and vital.

Ahimsānuvrata lays great stress on aticāras, which cause influx of kārmic matter, binding man under misery and suffering. Ācārya Samantabhadra in the verse fifth four of Ratnakaranaḍaka Śrāvakācāra has dealt the aticāras of Ahirvavā in great details These are:

1. Chedana
2. Bandhana
3. Piṭana
4. Atibhārārōpana and
5. Āhāraṇa

Chedana: Deforestation, soil erosion, loss of bio-diversity, etc.

A sustainable solution to the above problems lies in overcoming this aticāra (transgression).

Chedana involves in torturing the plants, animals and the five elements for the pleasure and comfort of man. Chopping of any of the parts of a living entity by sharp or destructive instruments out of anger, for sport or with no purpose. This includes cruel attack on flora, fauna and matter. According to Jainas, Chedana, i.e. causing suffering to others, results in misery for the culprit too. Stripping the bark of the trees, plucking leaves or flowers, breaking off twigs or branches without any purpose, carving drawings, names, on the trees, etc, all these amount to Chedana and invite Karma.
According to Jainism, plants possess four vitalities, viz. touch (are responsive to touch), energy, respiration and life duration. And we are causing *Hīṁsā* by disturbing or damaging any of these vitalities. We are of course, causing certain amount of *Hīṁsā* by the very fact of our existence, because we depend on plants for our food needs. But the motto should be to live with minimum violence.

This concept has a great relevance to the modern world. Today we are ruthlessly cutting down trees for our own selfish purposes that range from financial gains to clearing land for building more homes and infrastructure for exploding population. We are torturing animals in our research labs to test whether cosmetics, helmets, etc are safe for human use. We are destroying hills and mountains for granite, rocks, etc, to decorate our houses. We are draining lakes to replace buildings; we pollute the river and sea for the low cost business and high profit rate. Is there no end to the avarice of man?

The forest cover on the earth has been decreasing at an alarming rate. Especially in the last three hundred years, man has destroyed what took nature thousands of years to create. Such indiscriminate destruction of forests threatens the very existence of mankind and animals on earth. According to Christopher Key Chapple, the destruction of forests not only contributes to soil erosion, it also adds to globe warming, interrupts rainfall patterns and allows significant loss of species. Forty thousand square miles of tropical rain forests are being cut down each year. But we should not forget that rainforest cannot regenerate them as temperate forest can, moreover they contain between forty to fifty per cent of the earth’s species. Due to cutting down of the tropical rain forests, it is estimated that between hundred to three hundred species are being lost each day. And this number is increasing every day. Can you imagine how this is affecting the ecosystem? We are dependent on other species directly or indirectly.
Every plant and animal is an integral part of its environment and has a major role to play in maintaining the ecological stability that is required for our own survival.

The global ecological tragedy is reflected in India too. Destruction of forests has meant social, cultural and economic destruction of the tribal population in particular. Beginning with the British and continuing on with free India, the government has decided to control the forest resources by itself, leaving little or no control in the hands of the forests dwellers. The destruction of the grazing lands has meant enormous hardships for poor people, especially for the nomadic groups in the country. The government blames the tribal and nomadic people for the reduction of the forest cover. However these people, who live in coexistence with nature, treat forest with regard and respect. They collect food and firewood from forests — they take just enough to fulfill their meager needs. The main culprits for despoiling the forests are establishment of industries, housing projects, railway lines, etc., that clear off large tracts of lands. We have not even spared the Great Himalayas, which seemed invulnerable and incorruptible. Tourism has wreaked havoc on the delicate ecosystem of the mountain. Overexploitation of natural resources and deforestation has led to imbalance in nature in India. From the past few years we are seeing the blatant results of a worsening ecology — unnatural occurrence of seasons that is affecting agriculture, the primary occupation in India, droughts, summers that are getting hotter from year to year, etc. We are experiencing the operation of law of cause and effect. *Hīṁsā* that we inflicted on mother Earth has just rebounded and we are suffering the consequences.

*Aticāra* has a great significance in today's world where violence in various forms is the order of the day. The solution lies in understanding *Ahiṁsā*. Everyone should realise that they are inviting
suffering for themselves by committing Hiṁsā. Not only the person committing Hiṁsā, but also passive witnesses to acts of Hiṁsā are going to be caught in the bondage of Karma.

**Bandhana: Problems of captivity and cruelty to animals and fellow-beings**

A solution to the above problems lies in overcoming this aticāra.

Keeping anything under captivity without any consideration for its freedom to exist or live is Bandhana. Rearing animals without adequate shelter, air, light, space and food, is considered as aticāra. Keeping pet animals tied with ropes or chains throughout the day is a great Hiṁsā. This is the case with even dairy animals. Earlier when there were more grazing lands, they could be left free to roam and feed throughout the day, then gathered in the evenings. But now, in cities, this is not possible. So people tie cows and buffaloes in a small shed, where they stay throughout the day. The sheds are more often than not, dark, damp and unclean. This is a great Hiṁsā. Not only is man making a living by selling the milk he gets from these animals, but is also torturing these animals by keeping them in captivity in unhygienic and small spaces. Sometimes in zoos and circuses, animals don’t even have enough space to move around; but they are kept there so man can have the pleasure of seeing them. Man has not even spared his fellow-beings. In Tamil Nadu, mentally retarded people were chained to their bedposts in a so-called mental asylum.

Ill-treating prisoners is also a form of Hiṁsā. Instead of rehabilitating them, if the police and jailers ill-treat them unnecessarily, they invite Karma. Acceptance of Jaina concept of Aḥiṁsā will ensure such cruelty is not practised nor allowed. Right knowledge of Aḥiṁsā can not only save plants and animals but can also save mankind from being sinful.
According to Jinas, it is not just the person who commits the criminal act who invites the Karma, but also the person who harbours such a person passively or knowingly or being indifferent or being careless.

**Piṇḍana: Monopoly, Dominance And Inhumane Behavior Towards Others**

Piṇḍana is punishing or hunting with ropes, whips, rods, and sticks, kicking, beating, etc. Today, this includes not only physical assaults, but also social evils. Child labour, atrocities on women, racial discrimination, attack upon a weaker nation, unfair business practices, etc., all these constitute Piṇḍana.

We hear many instances of Blacks being illtreated for minor offences in the West, one of the most advanced nations in terms of economical growth and scientific progress. Even in the Twenty first century, racial discrimination exists and Blacks are abused in many ways — physical, psychological and social for no fault of theirs.

In India, it is the same with Dalits the untouchables and women from rural and tribal areas. There are also cases everyday of alcoholics, especially from lower classes, getting drunk and beating their wives and children. In spite of various laws, there is no solution to such domestic violence and the resulting trauma that women and children go through almost everyday of their lives. In the case of women in urban areas, the crime is veiled behind sophistication. Working women are regularly harassed sexually and verbally in their working environments. All these are not just social evils, they also contribute to influx of kārmic matter into the soul and prevent in finding a solution to various global crises we are facing.

As mentioned earlier, rules and laws are not adequate to prevent these; what we need is a ethical living philosophy of Ahimśā that each
Srāvaka and Srāvika is introduced to at an early age, so it becomes a part of them.

**Atibhārārōpana: Exploitation of fellow men and fellow beings**

Atibhārārōpana comprises of over-burdening fellow beings or animals with loads to be carried or work to be completed. If horses or bullocks are made to draw overloaded carts, it is an aticāra. Underpaying the manual labourers or servants and extracting maximum work is also aticāra. Even the exploitation of energy amounts to aticāra.

A classic example of this transgression can be found in today's industrial precept of maximum work or returns, for minimum salary. Developed countries employ and exploit people from Third World countries because the labour is cheaper here. They exploit the natural resources and infrastructure available in developing countries. They grow richer, while developing countries, that just blindly follow the West, just grow poorer and go backwards on the path of development. What the western countries must realise is that they may be accumulating more wealth by this, but they are also amassing a lot of Karma by exploiting natural and human resources.

But overexploitation is not the vice of the West alone. Even in developing countries, the rich and powerful exploit the poor. Take Indian villages for instance. More than fifty years after independence, bonded labour is still the bane of Indian agriculture. Bonded labour is one of the worst forms of ill treatment and exploitation. It is nothing but a kind of slavery. Landlords grow richer and richer; while the farmers toil tirelessly, season after season, year after year, generation after generation, to repay a debt they don't even remember. The landlords may grow richer by snatching away all the harvest from poor farmers, but they will ultimately pay for their misdeeds. No escape under the guise of God or worship under the Karma theory of Jainism.
The remedy, in the true sense, is uplifting the downtrodden fellow-beings and restraining from exploiting the natural resources.

Āhāravāraṇā: Problems related to food distribution and deliberate deprivation of basic rights of another being

Causing starvation of another being through negligence, indifference, deliberation or bad governance. If you buy a plant, but fail to nurture it by watering it, it is an aticāra. Neglecting to nurture animals or fellow-beings when you know they are hungry is also a sin.

"An increasing number of people are dying of hunger and malnutrition. Estimates of severely malnutrition people range from 450 million (FAO) to a billion (World Bank). Experts agree that the absolute number of hungry people has never been so high and that this number is increasing. UNICEF estimates that 15 million children are dying out of hunger and hunger-related diseases. Industrialised countries, with not quite twenty five per cent of the world population, consume three quarters of the world's food production. Over consumption of food in one part of the world leads to destitution elsewhere. These statistics point to the lack of social justice and lack of equitable distribution of resources. Imbalances in these factors are only aggravating the ecological crisis.

Food is the most basic necessity for survival of any living being and depriving another being of it will inevitably invite influx of kārmic matter. Deforestation has resulted in thousands of animals with no shelter or food, resulting in cosmic Karma.

Jainism is very practical and progressive in inducting Ahīṃsāṇuvrata to one and all, irrespective of man-made barriers, because overcoming of the above transgressions is Ahīṃsāṇuvrata. Vrata is nothing but a vow promising oneself.
Jainism points out that we indulge in *Hiṅsā* only when we fail to understand the positive virtues of *Ahimsā*, namely, *Maitri* or love for all relationships, *Pramoda* or respectful joy and *Kārunya* or compassion, *Madhyastre* or tolerance, which redeems of our accumulated *kārmic* particles binding soul under bondage of suffering.

By inculcating these qualities on an individual and social level, we can address and resolve the various problems at the global level. What this implies, is that we should regard the cares and concerns of others as our own and strive together to find a solution. Moreover, Jainism preaches that taking care of us does not consist in amassing more wealth, but in achieving self-purity and compassion for all beings — *Jīva* and *ajīva*, mobile and immobile.

*Ahimsā* supplemented with restraint and penance contributes to Dharma and religion. *Ahimsā* is the true religion. September 11 catastrophe should be analysed in this light. Violence has occurred, but non-violence cannot be its cause. Violence begets violence. Violence is not just killing or committing other crimes; even allowing it to happen by passively contributing to it is a crime and invites *kārmic* matter.

All the worlds’ religions can contribute something to this cause for no religion of the world preaches violence. However, what is happening today is that people are confusing dogmas and rituals with religion, which is nothing but compassion for all beings. There are many conflicts over superiority of one religion over another that has led to disastrous effects.

A fragmented planet and a world divided by religions cannot survive in harmony with nature and the environment, and indeed with itself. The challenge facing the global community makes it imperative to evolve a common agenda of action. A poet has put it aptly: So many sects so many creeds So many paths that wind and wind while just the art of being kind is all this world needs.
“This is basically the message of Jaina religion. There is inherent in Jaina principles and practices and integrated view of universe, a spirit of universality, a deeply compassionate outlook, an all pervasive belief in live and let live, and above all a down-to-earth stress on ethical integrity of thought, purpose and conduct.”

Jainism is down-to-earth in the sense that it is not made of some abstract concepts that is meant for few learned scholars only. Jainism is a religion for everyone, irrespective of caste, creed, race, nationality, gender, etc. It is a way of life with non-violence and coexistence as its mission. And right from the time of its inception, Jains have preached and practised tolerance towards other religions, which the need of the hour.

Jainism is a combination of scientific temper and spirituality. What make the religion particularly relevant today are its concepts of self-help and ethical way of life. Jainas do not believe in creator-God as mentioned earlier. Rather they believe in godhood in man. The only faith is that man should become a human being by conquering his lower self or his passions. The person who has conquered the lower self is Jina, Jains believe Jina is worthy of following rather then just worship.

By rejecting the creator-God, Jainism also commits man for his environment and makes him the cause for any event taking place around him, or within him or for him or by him. So if he leads a righteous life, it is reflected in his environment; if he leads a polluted life, then that too is reflected in his environment. So today, we are seeing the degradation of the ecology because man is living a life of depravity. If man wants to reverse the process and reduce the damage caused to the environments and consequently to himself, he must adopt the non-violent way of life.

“There has never been a darker time for mankind than the one we are going through now. All material achievements cannot hide the fact that the world is being torn asunder by conflicts caused by
differences in religion, economic status, race, caste, creed, nationality and what not. There has never been a time when the need for peace has been so acute. The reason is that there has been such a dangerous increase in the means of destruction during recent times. War first starts in the human mind and not elsewhere. If the human mind is turned to \textit{Ahimsā} all over the world, there would be no cruelty and war. But, merely chanting the word \textit{Ahimsā} cannot change the mind. \textit{Ahimsā} has to be practised in word, thought and deed by each individual with a conviction that it is a law of nature, breach of which will be avenged by nature itself.\textsuperscript{27} This is the environmental conviction of the self-propounded by Jainism.

And it does not stop there. Jainism also provides the practical and positive code of conduct that can teach man to live a life of compassion and non-violence. A self-imposition of this code of conduct or \textit{Aṇuvratas} is the need of the hour — the vow of \textit{Ahimsā}, especially makes it the duty of every individual, irrespective of race, caste, creed, etc., to preserve all forms of life and matter. So, if the \textit{Ahimsānuvratas} is taken by every householder \textit{Śrāvaka} (man) and \textit{Śrāvika} (woman) at an individual level, environmental crisis will be resolved by itself. This small vow to revere life in all forms proposed by Lord Mahāvira is more effective than any rule or legislation formulated by the modern man. Betterment at a global level can be brought about only through change at an individual level; and the path to a better world is through the strict adherence to \textit{Ahimsānuvratas}. It is a spiritual mission that should inevitably be practised by one and all to protect the society from further crisis.

\textit{Is Ahimsānuvratas} effective in resolving complex problems of the modern world? This is discussed in more detail in the following section.
4.5 Ahimsānuvrata: A Universal Solution to Environmental Crisis

The philosophical system underpinning the practice of Ahimsā posits that all being (sat) is divided into nonliving a (ajīva) and living (Jīva) forms. The nonliving forms include what might be considered principles (motion, rest, space, time) and matter. Matter includes atoms that are indivisible and infinite in number, each possessing form, taste, smell, and palpability. These atoms form the foundation for both physical and psychic or kārmic realities.

With space and continuous with atomic structures are an infinite number of life forces that have existed since beginning-less time. The category of living forms includes almost everything regarded as animate or inanimate by non-Jainas. According to Jainism, rocks, mountains, drops of water, lakes, and trees all have life force of Jīva. These Jīva are able to assume diverse dimensions, just as a piece of cloth can be rolled into a small ball or unfolded to occupy an extended space. Each Jīva is in a state of flux; each is suffused with consciousness (caitanya), bliss (sukha), and energy (vīrya). However, this latter aspect is obscured due to each Jīva having been defiled by psychic atoms called karma that cause the Jīva to be reborn repeatedly and suffer. So the non-violence owes offers solution to self and thus to the society the simple prayer Jaina reveals the compassions for his environmental. “Let the King be victorious and righteous. Let there be rain in every proper season. Let diseases die and famine and theft be nowhere. Let the Law of the Jaina gives all happiness to all the living beings of the world.”

“All beings are fond of life like pleasure, hat pain, shun distruction like life long to live, to all, life is dear”.

This above prayer captures the essence of Jainism. Immediate and sustaining solution to environmental crisis can be sought under this religion, which has Ahimsā and consequently universal well-being as its core values. Though all world religions preach non-violence, it has a
special significance in Jainism because it is the very heart of the
religion. The Ahimsā concept of Mahāvira is the complete unity of
mankind and the unity with nature — “I have friendship with all the
living beings, I have no revenge nor enmity with anybody.”

No discrimination created by man — caste, creed, languages,
religions, economic status — can be accommodated under non-violence.
All such artificial boundaries dissolve under the universal religion i.e.,
non-violence, compassion and love.

So the question may arise how Jaina ethics can be of great value
in preserving our environment and passing it on to the coming
generation? Can the magnifying problem of pollution of mind and body
of man and the physical world be controlled through Jaina way of life?
Can Ahimsānuvrata serve in protection of flora and fauna? Does it have
the answer for border disputes, AIDS, unethical business practices,
broken homes, drug abuse and other modern problems? Can the vow of
non-violence prevent further deterioration of water, air, energy,
economy and societal structure?

The answer is a bold YES. If anyone attempts to understand the
scope of Jainism, he/she will realise that it is a storehouse of wisdom,
which can help and enrich everyone. As Vincent Sekhar puts it: Jaina
religion is founded on life experiences, it defines the path of purification
and the Jaina Monastic Model upholds those who led the life of purity.

As explained earlier in the section on Anuvratas, Jainism lays
great emphasis on aticāras or transgressions. These transgressions are
like danger zones that have to be avoided if we have to safely reach our
destination — resolution of ecological crisis and peaceful coexistence.
These aticāras have to be avoided by every Śrāvaka and Śrāvika if we
have to find a sustainable solution to global problems — we have to
proceed from the individual level to global level through Anuvratas, and
not the other way round through laws and regulations that have proved
ineffective. Let us see how Jainism can scientifically and practically help us in resolving some of the major problems.

Degradation of natural resources: As mentioned earlier, man the crown of creation has become the crown of destruction. His lower self — greed, lust, envy, hatred, etc., rules him. He has wreaked havoc on the world around him due to overexploitation of resources — both natural and human. Jainism says that even plucking flowers without any purpose or pelting stones at a still lake idly, amounts to *Karma* for the individual. Imagine the amount of *Karma* the man is accumulating by abusing natural resources.

By avoiding *Chedana* or inflicting deliberate *Hīṃsā* in a small way on flora, fauna or matter, man can reduce deforestation and soil erosion to a great extent. This in turn will stop the extinction of many of the animals, birds, etc., that require forest cover for shelter and food. By avoiding *Atibhārārōpana*, which in this case involves putting excess pressure on ecosystem and ecology, we can definitely reduce the destruction and degradation of resources.

"Jainism may appear austere in terms of inculcating mental and physical discipline and restraint, but it has a clear potential of universally creating a healthy climate by spreading the philosophy of live by need and not greed."[^31] Jaina concept and practice of non-violence extends to all beings — big or small, living or non-living. The *Karma* theory is closely related to this concept and proposes a simple scientific explanation for all the miseries and problems of the world. According to Jainism, *Hīṃsā* invites the influx of *kārmic* matter into the soul, thus spoiling the purity of the soul. This pollution of the pure soul causes suffering. To redeem oneself of *Karma*, one should follow the *ratnatraya* or the three-fold path of right faith, knowledge and conduct.
Political and economic domination: Big brother is a concept that most of us are familiar with. The West, which is the unquestioned super power today, follows a foreign policy of interference and manipulation. A technologically developed and an economically strong nation, it is using its power to exploit the lesser developed nations for amassing more wealth. By overburdening its fellow-beings and natural resources in developing countries, the West is committing the aticāra of Atibhārārōpana and thus inviting great Karma for the country itself and thus to the citizen of the country.

Jainism preaches that Hīṁsā (violence) and Parigraha (desire for possession) are the root causes of all conflicts. According to the Jaina Karma theory, such acts invite Karma (the reaction) and hence suffering. The WTC tragedy and resulting loss of lives and mental peace can be explained in this light. This dominations amounts to kulamada and balamadhā of Antarāya Karma.

Conflicting ideologies: Ramjanmabhoomi, believed to be the birth place of Lord Rama, and Bethlehem, the birth place of Jesus Christ, have become battlegrounds today because of the conflicting ideologies between Muslims and Hindus, and Muslims and Jews respectively. Ironically, both Rama and Christ were messengers of peace. Differences in religions, ideas, opinions, etc., have divided the human race today.

Can Jainism help in resolving these divergent views? Yes, through its non-absolutist principles of Anekāntavāda and Syādvāda. Jainism holds that reality is complex. We can know and describe the reality only from a certain angle or viewpoint. We must accept that the views of our opponents may also be true from some other angle. The Anekāntavāda and Syādvāda forbid the dogmatic and one-sided approach. If this open-mindedness and regard for others’ views, religions, etc., is practiced by everyone, there will be no fights between
Hindus and Muslims over a piece of land leading to killing of innocent people, no fighting between nations belonging to different faiths, no international conflicts over boundary lines, etc.

**Economic inequalities:** As mentioned above, the gap between rich and poor nations is large and is increasing everyday. This inequality exists not only between nations, even within a nation, state, city, the divide between rich and poor exists. What is the reason for this divide?

*Parīgraḥa* is the culprit. Desire for amassing wealth and lust for worldly enjoyment have made man blindly chase material values at the cost of others and even his own health and mental equilibrium. Thus, the world is divided into haves and have-nots. Haves are accumulating *Karma* by blindly chasing wealth by exploiting natural resources and other human beings. On the other hand, the have-nots accumulate *Karma* by hating and being jealous of the rich and their luxurious way of life.

"Jainas considered wealth as a means to lead a life and not a destination."³² Mahāvīra propounded *Aparīgraḥa* or non-possession to save humanity from class conflicts. Such a self-imposed limitation of one's wealth alone can bring about an equitable distribution of world's resources and sustainable development.

Another dimension to this problem is *Hīṁsā*. Jainism believes that one who deprives a person of his rightful share of resources or basic needs is committing *Ahāravāraṇā*. *Ahāravāraṇā* is causing starvation of another being through negligence, indifference, deliberation or bad governance. However this does not apply to food alone; it includes shelter, clothes and other basic necessities and dignities of life. Politicians are guilty of this *aticāra*. They channelise public money for their own personal use; in the process they are snatching it from the needy public, which has a right to it. This is also
**Hinīsā. Aparigraha** and **Ahinīsā** therefore, go hand in hand. One is incomplete without the other.

**Various kinds of abuses:** In the guise of helping the underprivileged, man runs a prostitution establishment and victimising innocent children etc. Jaina **Karma** theory and vow of Brahmacarya forbid such Hinīsā and warn that such sinful acts will definitely bring more suffering to the culprit than to the victim.

Cases of sexual harassment of women, drug abuse, racial abuse of the Blacks in the West, parading of the Dalit women in India, child labour, illegal detention and ill-treatment of prisoners, etc are all targeted under the aticāras and **Karma** theory. For instance, problem of sexual harassment of women can be resolved if every layman and woman observes the vow of celibacy. This is extremely important in the present day situation where incidence and kinds of harassments are increasing at an alarming rate. *We can prevent illegal detention and ill-treatment of prisoners by avoiding aticāras of Bandhana and Pidana.*

According to Jainism, not only the person who implements the misdeed, but also those who instigated it and those passively witnessing it, invites **Karma**. The implication of this principle is enormous in the context of present-day world: Not only will the terrorists invite **Karma**, but also those harbouring and hiding them. Not only will the underworld dons suffer, but also the politicians who are protecting them. Not only will bandit and murderer suffer, but also the bureaucrats who are letting him roam free (and inflict more violence) to save their own skins.

**Tensions and anxieties:** The modern world is not only an age of information technology; it is also an age of mental tensions and unrest. Our ancestors would have been totally unfamiliar with mental
afflictions like tension headaches, anxiety attacks, depression, etc. These stress-related symptoms are uniquely modern phenomena. We seek relief for these ailments through medicines and drugs. But, if we reflect sincerely on this issue, what we think, what we experience is a result of the deed we are involved with.

Mahāvīra contribution of Ahimsā the prime Ānuvratas can go a long way in alleviating mankind at large in this direction. For example, according to Jainism, when you envy another person's progress, the kārmic matter of envy causes great damage to your system rather than to the other person's progress, resulting in causing Hiṃsā to your own system. The Jaina concept of non-violence begins at this basic level and extends to cover national and global issues. We may also add here that the main aim of Jainism is to guide man to attain Sāmāyika or equanimity. It believes that basic human suffering is not physical, but mental. These mental tensions are due to our attachment to worldly possessions. Only a detached attitude towards material pursuits and goals can free mankind from tension, which is the basis of concept of Aparigraha.

Jainism believes that lesser the attachment, greater will be the mental peace. It is only when attachment vanishes, the human mind becomes free from mental tensions and emotional disorders and attains equanimity, which is the ultimate goal of all our religious practices and pursuits.

“One should desist from one thing, and practice another: desist from neglect of self-control, and practice self-control." 33 “Love and hatred are two evils which produce bad Karman; if one always avoids them, he will not stand within the circle (of transmigration).” 34 “One who always avoids the three threefold hurtful, conceited and delusive acts, will not stand in the circle (of transmigration).” 35
These above instances are just a few illustrations of how Jainism can answer the multi-faceted problems we are facing today. If the concepts of Ahimsa, Aparigraha and Aneknántavāda are understood and internalised by every Śrāvaka (man) and Śrāvika (woman) at an individual level, universal environmental crisis will be resolved by itself. Concern for environment and energy and its preservation will be prime concern of each and every person. Since the Jaina concept of Ahimsa applies not only to humans, but extends to include all beings around man — animals, plants and non-living things like mountains, lakes, etc, it becomes the religious duty of everyone to care for all these things and live in peaceful coexistence with them.

It is amazing how Mahāvīra foresaw the exploitation and depletion of resources at a time when resources were bountiful. He based his teachings on practical directives that are necessary for Jīva and Ajīva to coexist. In the world visualised by Mahāvīra, which is based on need, not greed, man will have fewer wants and the resources available will be more than adequate to cater to the needs of every single being.

4.6 Ahimsā — Preservation of Flora

"Have benevolence towards all living beings."\(^{36}\)

"As the nature of man is to be born and grow old, so is the nature of plants to be born and to grow old; as this has reason, so that has reason; as this falls sick when cut, so that falls sick when cut; as this needs food, so that needs food; as this will decay, so that will decay; as this is not eternal, so that is not eternal; as this takes increment, so that takes increment; as this is changing, so that is changing. He who injures these plants does not comprehend and renounce the sinful acts; he who does not injure these, comprehends and renounces the sinful acts."\(^{37}\)
Jainism regards *Ahimsā* and ecological harmony as two sides of the same coin. *Ahimsā* means sanctity of life and universal love for all beings. This includes plants, animals, matter and human beings. But this principle is lacking in the modern world, where people are striving to achieve false goals of riches, fame, power, etc. They don't care if they destroy invaluable natural resources or kill animals on the road to material success. But we are drawing closer and closer to our own destruction by destroying the environment. We have to remember that there can be environment without man, but no man without environment.

Two thousand five years ago Lord Mahāvīra preached that one who disregards the existence of the earth, water, fire, air and vegetation, disregards one's own existence, which is entwined with them. Today this interdependence has been proved scientifically — every organism depends on the others, directly or indirectly for its survival. We are all parts of a giant jigsaw puzzle called nature and the picture is incomplete even if a single piece is missing. In spite of this knowledge, man continues to inflict *Himsā* on nature — he is destroying her forests, polluting her rivers, emptying her bowels by reckless quarrying and mining, contaminating her soil with acid rains, poisoning her atmosphere with harmful chemicals.

"In his mad rush for material advancement, he has even forgotten his natural way of living. What unfortunately has happened, is that the intoxication of ambition and success has made us forget even the natural discipline, which we, inherited from the animal kingdom." Man, the most superior and advanced living being on the earth is proving to be inferior to animals in understanding his relationship with nature. Animals do not take more resources from nature than they require; they take only enough to satisfy their need. It is the man who takes more than his share of nature's resources; he exploits nature and
hoards more and more resources to assuage his insatiable greed. Animals have more concern for plant life than man is exhibiting today.

Primitive man regarded nature with awe and respect. He was a nomad and wandered around gathering food from plants and hunting animals when the need arose. Note the word need. At that time, even man’s requirements were based on his needs. Man lived in coexistence with his surroundings and the creatures in it. Six thousand years later, the modern man, who is far more knowledgeable and advanced than the primitive man, is foolishly ignoring ecological concerns upon which his survival depends. Plants and trees are one of the most important factors for the survival of humanity and other animals on earth. So is man protecting and preserving them? No on the contrary, the green cover on the earth has decreased drastically after industrial revolution, and especially in the last century. Man is cutting down forest zones for raw materials, to make way for agricultural lands, to construct more houses, etc to cater to a rapidly increasing human population. In the process, he is destroying the very life support system that nurtures him and other creatures. A simple example to show this: Lotus can absorb harmful chemicals like Cadmium, Chromium, and Mercury from the pond water in the air and purify air around it. Research has proved that lotuses have got an ability to absorb all heavy metals to an extent of 18 per cent of its dry weight. But today, since the lakes are drying up everywhere, we cannot derive benefits from lotus and its healing qualities.

“We are choosing to ignore the basic reality of life — every civilization is rooted in nature, every life is supported, sustained and nourished by nature; prosperity, progress and happiness of every person, every society and every nation depends heavily on the bounty of nature. There is an indefinable and irrefutable inter-dependence between nature and mankind. Dharma Rakṣhāti Rakṣīthāha. This is
very much true of man-nature relationship." Mother earth has showered all the creatures with wonderful gifts from the beginning of time. Man has had more than his share of her treasures. In exchange, it is his sacred duty to protect and preserve her.

And this destruction is occurring all over the world. Take Thailand, for instance. "Siam, the old name for Thailand, was very appropriate. It means dark green. Twenty years ago, eighty per cent of the country was covered with rich forest. It was truly dark green. But in the past twenty-four years, 77.88 per cent of our rich forest has been destroyed." Today, only sixteen per cent of the land is covered in forest. It's an alarming situation. Globally, "the destruction of eleven million hectares of rain forest annually, resulting in the extinction of forty eight species a day, is even more alarming."

"The only way to check such wide-scale destruction is by spreading awareness about importance of conservation among people — through right faith and knowledge. But awareness is not sufficient. People have to convert this into action through right conduct or practice of Anuvratas. To conserve nature, we firstly need to educate ourselves with regard to the reasons contributing to exploitation at all levels causing damage to environment. The concept of pressure and demand for the economic growth should be introspected. For example, the third world environment not only provides raw materials for its own country, but also for the industries of the west. The Japanese and western timber industries have been the biggest source of forest destruction in south East Asia. Having turned countries like Thailand from net exporters into net importers of wood, Japanese companies are now turning to the last great wooded frontier of the world — the Amazon basin of South America."
Thirty three million hectares of forests have been damaged by acid rains in Europe alone, the biggest culprit being thermal power plants.

Six billion hectares of productive croplands have become deserts because of mismanagement.

Every year twenty six billion tons of topsoil is being washed off. To produce one inch of fertile soil it takes one thousand two hundred years.

These statistics show that it is now time to press the panic button and take up preservation measures on a war footing.

What is the scenario in India and other Asian countries? In India, the first major attack on the forests of the Northeast came with the establishment of tea plantations. The current over fishing on India's coasts, as on the coasts of almost all Southeast Asian countries, is taking place because of the heavy demand for prawns in Western and Japanese markets. This over fishing is leading to considerable tensions between traditional fisher folk and trawler owners, and violent encounters between the two are regularly reported. Recently, Indonesia completely banned the operation of trawlers from its coastal waters, and several countries including India, have set up regulations to prevent trawler operators from fishing in the first few kilometers from the coast. This zone is reserved for the traditional fisher folk. But policing such an extensive coastline is an expensive proposition and regulations are, therefore, seldom observed or enforced.

As I have mentioned in an earlier section, man has not spared even the great Himalayas, which is considered as the abode of gods and sacred plants. Himalayas is in great danger because the caves in which sages and llamas did their penance have become bunkers. They are not doing japas. Instead, there are sentries sitting with machine guns pointed towards their neighbors. This has become the most disturbed
area of the world. There is a saying in our Garhwal: Who will extinguish the fire, if the water catches fire? If the area where people have been meditating for peace, where they have been working to bring peace all over the world becomes disturbed, who will extinguish that fire? Himalaya is also disturbed by aggressive development. Development reached Himalaya recently after 1962 Chinese aggression. According to Sunderlal Bahuguna, the Himalayas is suffering from the evil results of blunders made by governments of the nations that surround the Himalayas. Firstly, they dammed the river Ganga. These dams will spoil the landscape of the Himalayas and create a time bomb in the Himalayas, which is a seismic region. If the dam bursts the destruction it can wreak is unimaginable. Mining is the second evil. By mining up in the hills, the governments are creating deserts below. Deforestation is of course, another major evil. Forests are vanishing in the Himalayas. Luxury tourism is the bane of development and has already caused a great deal of harm to the Himalayas.

An important factor to be emphasised in any discussion on overexploitation of world's resources, is that the main source of environment destruction in the world is the demand for natural resources generated by the consumption of the rich (whether they are rich nations or rich individuals and groups within nations). Because of their gargantuan appetite, it is their wastes, mainly, that contribute to the global pollution load.

The pattern of environment exploitation that we see on the global scale simply reproduces itself on the national scale within a country. An example to illustrate this point: half the industrial output in India is accounted for by biomass-based industries, that is, industries like cotton textiles, rayon, paper, plywood, rubber, soap, sugar, tobacco, jute, chocolate, food processing and packaging, and so on. Each of these industries exerts an enormous pressure on the country's cultivated and
forest lands. They need crop lands, they need forests, and they need energy and irrigation.

However, where millions of people are heavily dependent on biomass sources for their daily existence, any policy that reduces access to biomass resources – like the creation of wildlife sanctuary or enforcement of forest conservation legislation – will have an extremely adverse impact on the daily lives of the people. Environmental policy-maker should keep this in mind while formulating laws and regulations.

The need of the hour, therefore, is environmental awareness that can give impetus to positive action for the conservation of environment. How can we spread environmental awareness? Political policies, ecological seminars, other national and international regulations and acts to preserve green cover of the earth have proved futile. What we need is a self-sustaining system and deep-rooted culture of living. Violence, selfishness, self-centeredness, greed, and ego are ruling man today; these have to be tackled on a daily basis. Environmental awareness can be inculcated only after a thorough scientific and spiritual analysis of the symbiosis between man and nature. The system, statistics and documentation of the West should be supplemented with deep-rooted spirituality of the East.

Jainism is a discipline that combines scientific with spiritual. Guiding principle of Jainism is reverence for all life. By giving definition of Dharma as protecting the environment, it makes ecological concern the prime duty of man. In reality, Jain Dharma is Mahāvīra Dharma. It always thinks of the welfare of others, be it other humans, animals, insects or plants. Jaina concept of Ahīṃsā (non-violence) can provide a sustainable answer to the ecological problems we are facing today. Members of the Jain community have to observe Anuvrata or small vows not to hurt any plant or tree. They are strictly forbidden from plucking flowers and leaves, without a very good reason.
Ahimsānuvratas, the most important vow, details various transgressions that should not be committed. Violation of the vow will invite influx of kārmic matter and cause misery. Protection of environment has been addressed practically in Jainism. Cutting down trees indiscriminately for profit, taking more than what is necessary in terms of fruits, timber, etc, or even plucking out leaves or bark purposelessly is considered an aticāra or transgression under Jainism.

I have repeated the Jaina parable, which I have used in the Chapter I to illustrate my point that the concern for ecology is the focus of Jainism. "Once six men lost their way in a forest. They tried to find their way out but failed. Hunger made them realise that finding food was their most immediate need. They came upon a tree whose boughs were heavy with fruits. One of the men, whom we'll just call number six said, "Let us cut down the tree and collect all the fruits. We may be stuck in the forest for a long time if we fail to find our way. So we'll need food." Number five broke in with, "No, we'll just cut down all the branches which bear fruits." Number four said, "No, no. We'll just break off the twigs with fruits." Number three said, "No let us just pluck out all the fruits." Number two said, "Let us just pluck only the ripe fruits." And then number one spoke up: "Let us collect the fruits, which have fallen from the tree and are strewn all around it. They are enough to satisfy our hunger for now."

In stark contrast to this non-violent and coexistent approach to ecology is modern man's thoughtless and greedy attitude and actions. Recently, a documentary on the National Geographic channel revealed that seventy-five per cent of the coral reefs in the Arabian Sea are damaged due to human intervention in form of oil rigs, fishing equipment, etc. This is affecting the lives of marine creatures and consequently the whole food chain. Through such thoughtlessness, humanity is inflicting great Hiṃsā on all other creatures. Pollution of
water, air and terrestrial affect the lives and growth of plants too. The
trees on the roadside are assailed daily by smoke and dust from the
exhaust pipes of thousands of automobiles. We are not even aware that
we are inflicting Ḥiṁsā on these trees. Mankind is amassing enormous
amounts of Karma by its acts of deforestation and negligence towards
plant life.

Chedana, one of the aticāras of Ahīṁsāṇuvrata comprises
chopping of any of the parts of living entity by sharp instruments or
destructive instrument out of anger, carelessness sport or with no
purpose. Anyone cutting off barks, branches or twigs will end up with
influx of kārmic matter. Even if we disembark the leaves from the plants
absentmindedly, it is considered as Ḥiṁsā, according to chedana.\textsuperscript{44}

We must aim to preserve and pass on nature's gifts to the future
generations. According to Gandhi, not thinking of the future
generations, is greater Ḥiṁsā, because you are depriving them of their
rightful share of natural resources. Not nurturing the plants is also
considered an aticāra. So if you have a plant, and fail to water it due to
laziness or forgetfulness, that is also Ḥiṁsā; because you are depriving
it of a basic necessity of life and hence life itself.

Mahāvīra showed remarkable foresight in laying down strict
rules to preserve natural resources at a time when the nature was
bountiful. In the present day scenario, when flora and fauna are being
constantly depleted and not being replaced, the Āṇuvratakṣa or code of
conduct has greater significance. Jainism makes man aware of his every
step. He is led consciously through small vows to a life-long
commitment to conserve nature and her resources. Āṇuvratakṣa not only
direct man to protect and preserve nature, they also prevent man from
committing Ḥiṁsā and thus save him accumulating Karmas and hence
misery.
Thus, Jaina ecological consciousness is grounded in a judicious blend of divine holism and vision of non-exploitative science and technology. Instead of ignoring or sidetracking one another, religion and science must go hand in hand and chart a single path to guide human spirituality in the direction of preservation of our planet and conservation of its resources. The scientific approach, reasoning and practices prescribed by Jainism are, thus highly relevant today when environmental concerns are on the top of human agenda.  

4.7 _Ahimsā — Animal Rights And Protection_

The category of animals and plants (trīyaṇca) is divided into three parts. The lowest forms of life are called nigoda, beings that are so undifferentiated that they lack even individual bodies; large clusters of them are born together as colonies which die a fraction of a second later.

“Oh man! Think that the being that you wants to kill is none else but you; he too experiences happiness and sorrow just like you. Think about this — the being whom you wish to govern and enslave is none else but you. Also think about this — the being whom you wish to hurt and harm is none else but you, the being whom you want to punish and drive away is also none else but you. An ingenuous and self-disciplined one who lives unto these sentiments, therefore, neither harms nor kills any living being, nor does he cause them to be harmed and killed by others. One has to bear the consequences of one’s actions. Hence, never desire to harm any living being.”

“All animals wish to live, and not to be slain; therefore one should relinquish the killing of animals.” “The world’s human population is now past five billion. Wilson and Myers estimate that 10,000 species disappeared in 1990 alone, and that the annual species
mortality rate at the end of this present decade (Nineties) will be 20,000 to 50,000 a year.\textsuperscript{48}

Hundreds of microorganisms, animals, plants, etc are dying out every day. On the other hand, human population continues to skyrocket. Man is taking up more space on mother earth than any other species; he is using up more resources than all the other species put together.

Man is fighting for space with the world's wildlife, which has to contend with hunting, pollution, pesticides, and, most important of all, the loss of habitat. Besides this, he is also killing a large number and variety of animals' everyday to satisfy his appetite.

Currently there are of course hundreds of laws and legislations — local, national and international those are formulated to protect wildlife. On the basis of International cooperation, forums on migratory wild life and living resources of sea, world conservation strategy and the world charter for nature, United Nations conference on environment and development etc. have been framed to check the crisis.

In India, we have umpteen national legislations:

i) Legislation restricting hunting, killing or over exploitation of a species on group of species.

ii) Legislation for the protection of wild life, preservation of natural habitats and environment in general.

And there are various specific acts formulated to protect specific species. We have Madras Wild Elephant Preservation Act, All Indian Elephant Preservation Act, 1879. But have these acts stopped poachers from shooting down elephants for its ivory tusks, which they sell at exorbitant prices? No, they haven't. I repeat, there are hundreds and hundreds of laws — Wild Rhinoceros Preservation Act, 1932, Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, Wild Birds and Animals Preservation
Act, 1912, etc, etc. But these laws and fear of punishment have proved grossly inadequate and ineffective in checking the cruelties against animals. Most of these rules are not even implemented.

The failure can be traced to the error in the approach. Laws and rules cannot resolve this problem. What we need is a basic shift in the philosophy; we need a philosophy that does not consider that man is the center of universe and all other animals are here to serve him. A philosophy that preaches that man is just a part of the universe and should hence share it equally with other beings. A philosophy that emphasises that all other beings have a right to exist, just as much as he does. A philosophy that points out that man as the crown of creation is having more than his share of world's resources, and hence should in turn contribute greatly for their protection and conservation. A philosophy that practically inducts him into a life of non-violence and compassion for all beings is required.

Does this mean that we have to formulate a new philosophy? No. As explained in earlier chapters, the ancient traditions of Jainism has already analysed man thoroughly in relation to his environment and given a positive and practical code of conduct to man for coexisting with his environment — not as a destroyer, but as a protector.

Jainism says that even a microbe contributes to ecology. Its concept of *Ahimsā* does not include just the endangered species of animals, but all beings beginning with the single-celled amoebae. Its message is simple: every being has a right to exist as does man. "To every being life is dear as it is to man. All living beings love life, they wish to relish pleasure; loath misery, shun annihilation; enjoy life and love to live long. In short, life is dear to all beings.""49 "Na Ya Vittasae Param" — Hence one should not inflict pain on any creature."50 "Nor have any feeling of enmity or antipathy."51 "Nothing is higher than Mount Meru, nor anything more expansive than the sky. Similarly know that
no Dharma is equal to *Ahimsā* in this world."⁵². Therefore, man should not harm other beings for his selfish purposes or due to carelessness.

*Ahimsānuvratā* of Jainism forbids cruelty to animals or indifference to its welfare under *aticāras* of Chedana, Bandhana, Pīdhana, Atibhārārōpana and Āhāravāraṇā. For example, Chedana forbids man from hurting animals with sharp instruments out of anger, for sport or due to indifference. All the *aticāras* attract *kārmic* matter that leads to misery for man, which is greater than that of his victims.

It is noteworthy that Jainas had a code of conduct that stressed compassion towards and coexistence with animals three thousand years ago — an awareness that animal rights organisations like CUPA, SPCA, etc are trying to imbibe in people today. In spite of many awareness and educative programmes that are telecast regularly on television channels like Discovery, National Geographic, etc, even the urban population continues to harm animals without realising that they too will be hurt in the long run. In fact, urban population, more than rural population is the main culprits. Meat-eating population, especially the rich, contribute greatly to the *Himsā* against animals. Marine life is being destroyed steadily to supply fish, crabs, prawns, etc to satisfy the palates of people. What modern man, with all technology and knowledge at his fingertips, fails to understand is that every being is necessary to sustain the food chain. If the food chain is damaged, he will ultimately be the sufferer.

Animal sacrifice performed by the Hindus is one issue that Jainism strongly protested against. Jainas disdained animal sacrifices publicly. One of the Jaina texts declare, "Those terrible ones who kill animals under the guise of making an offering to the gods, or the guise of sacrifice, are bereft of compassion and go to a bad fate. The early Hindu community performed intricate rituals that culminated in the sacrifice of live animals. One such ritual, the horse sacrifice
(aśvamedha), entailed releasing a horse for one year, following it as it wandered throughout India, and then killing and dismembering it. This ritual eventually became internalised and the process was visualised but not enacted.\(^{53}\)

For years, Jainas and Buddhists lobbied against all animal sacrifice, using the argument that such activities violated the first and most important ethical principle: nonviolence. (For instance, the *Saṅkhya Kārikā* of Iśvarakriśṇa dismisses Vedic sacrifices as being ineffective means to alleviate suffering because of the destruction they entail. The description of Ahimsā in Patanjali’s *Yoga Sūtra*, similar to that in Jaina texts, condemns violence whether done, caused, or approved, and claims that the Great Vow (*Mahāvrata*) is not limited by time, place, or circumstance.) However, although the Jainas have successfully lobbied for the ban of this practice in most states in India, goat sacrifices continue to be practised in Orissa.

Another way in which Jainas follow the vow of Ahimsā is through vegetarianism. Vegetarianism is a must for the practice of purification of self and humane values in Jainism. Gandhi was inspired by the Jaina principle of vegetarianism. People have of late realised the benefits of vegetarianism. There are two benefits accruing from this practice: firstly it stops the killing of animals to a great extent; secondly scientific research has proved that vegetarianism makes for healthier and ecological sound way of life. However vegetarianism should not be narrowed down to mean just refraining from eating flesh. Vegetarianism stands for minimising one’s wants and consequently minimising violence. One’s attitude towards life begins with food. When man kills an animal for food, when he has a choice not to, he is committing deliberate Hirhsā. And once he has killed and eaten it, he continues to do so, due to habituation. This makes him aggressive and violent in other areas too. Therefore, vegetarianism is stressed under
Jainism, because it has greater and subtler implications for non-violence in other areas of life, besides food habits.

Western countries that make a hue and cry about environmental monitoring and management and conservation of natural resources totally depend on animals for food. Irony is that India being a land of prophets of *Ahimsā* like Buddha, Mahāvīra and Gandhi exports tones of meat to the western world. To meet the demand, fisheries have savaged the sea. *Dīgvrata* of Jainism, which has given the boundary limits for all activities of man, warns him against going deep into the sea and exploiting its resources. Transgression of this vow has resulted in pollution and consequently crisis.

Let us discuss briefly compassion for animals preached by Buddhism, diverting from Jainism per se (though the underlying principles of concern for animals is the same in both religions) The concern for animal welfare was not confined to the Buddhist monastic community. Asoka, one of the best-known Indian emperors (274-232 B.C.E.), converted to Buddhism and established several laws that demanded kind treatment to animals. These included restriction on meat consumption, curtailing hunting, establishing hospitals and roadside watering stations for animals.

Though in many ways only a partial assertion of animal rights, these inscriptions nonetheless reveal a highly unusual compassion on the part of a temporal ruler towards his subject, both human and animal. This concern is in variance with the present-day leaders, who do not care, whether the legislations, formulated for the protection of animals, are implemented or not. Few years ago, noted film stars were accused in the killing of the black-buck deer in a village in Rajasthan and the incident is still getting nation-wide publicity, though the culprits are roaming around freely even today. The most ironical feature of the issue is, the villagers of that area, who are mostly illiterate are
more environmentally aware than the jet-setting movie stars. According to an article in India Today, these villagers are very careful about cutting even twigs from trees for firewood. They never break off more than what is required, they look down upon killing of animals for pleasure, etc.

Jainism gives equal importance to the life of an insect, animal or a plant, as it does to man. The venerable One has declared As is my pain when I am knocked or struck with a stick, bow, fist, clod, or potsherd; or menaced, beaten, burned, tormented, or deprived of life; and as I feel every pain and agony, from death down to the pulling out of a hair; in the same way, be sure of this, all kinds of beings feel the same pain and agony, etc. as I, when living they are ill-treated in the same way. For this reason all sorts of living beings should not be beaten, nor treated with violence, nor abused, nor tormented, nor deprived of life. “I say the Arhats and Bhagavats of the past, present and future, all say thus, speak thus, declare thus, explain thus; all sorts of living beings should not be slain, nor treated with violence, nor abused, nor tormented, nor driven away. This constant, permanent, eternal, true law has been taught by wise men that comprehend all things.”

Mahāvīra did not advocate the above simply, sitting in his ivory tower. He lived a harsh and austere life in the forests for twelve years. He studied nature up close and analysed man in relation to nature. He comprehended true ecology and ecosophy; he practically lived in coexistence with nature before he advocated Aṇuvratas and Mahāvratas. What he preached to his disciples, was thus, what he had lived and experienced first hand. Mahāvīra’s advice to his disciple Indrabhuti centers on ecology and man’s responsibilities towards it. The whole message of Mahāvīra’s preaching in relation to the eco-crisis we are facing now can be summed up: Man is responsible for his ecology. If he
is facing crisis today, he is responsible for it. And he alone can solve it through self-imposition of Anuvratas and by avoiding the aticāras.

I have mentioned earlier too that under Ahinśāṇuvrata, the aticāras or the 'don'ts' of the vrata give in detail the acts to be avoided in our attitude and treatment towards animals. For instance, Bandhana, one of the transgressions, is keeping anything under captivity without any consideration for its freedom to exist or live. This includes rearing animals without adequate shelter, air, light, space and food.

Even keeping pet animals tied with ropes or chains throughout the day is considered a Himsa and forbidden. This is what is happening today in zoos, circuses, dairies, etc. Man is not only making money by exploiting these animals, he is also inflicting great Himsa on them by curtailing their freedom and forcing them to live in unhealthy conditions. By depriving them of food and basic freedom, he is also guilty of Āhāravāraṇā. (All the aticāras are dealt with in more detail under Ahinśāṇuvrata) By committing these aticāras, man is inviting great Karma for himself. He may think that he can get away from laws and escape punishment; but he cannot escape from the bondage of Karma, which will cause him greater suffering.

By refraining from Himsa on animals, man will be able to reverse at least some of the ill effects of ecological crisis, because by killing animals indiscriminately, he is damaging the food chains and causing imbalance in nature. And here is stress again, what affects nature affects man too.

Coming to problems that are considered a uniquely modern phenomenon, use of animals for scientific research is one such prominent one. Obviously, no clear statement that can be applied to these problems can be found in the classical Jaina texts. Ironically, the Jaina community controls much of the pharmaceutical industry in India and is undoubtedly required to adhere to safety and testing regulations.
that require animal testing. The compromise that Jainas have worked out combines modern exigency with tradition. Animals are used for testing but then are 'rehabilitated' through shelters and recuperation facilities maintained by the laboratories. "For instance, one Jaina-controlled pharmaceutical company uses animals for the production of immunoglobulin but then releases them into the wild."^\textsuperscript{55}

"This practice fits well with the ages - old Jaina tradition of constructing animal shelters for infirm animals, allowing them to survive until their natural demise."^\textsuperscript{56}

Some Non Governmental Organisations and animal activists are raising protests against cruelty to animals and are attempting to spread awareness among people. Such efforts have succeeded in attracting media attention, but have not alleviated suffering of animals. Though some of them are genuine attempts at animal protection and animal rights, more often, these efforts are political strategies and end up as meaningless seminars and conferences.

We don't need such half-hearted attempts and meaningless propaganda. Instead, *Ahimsānuvrata* of Jainism should become a second nature for us. Protecting and preserving the harmony in nature should become a part of our daily living. But unfortunately, sixty per cent of child population, in both eastern and western world, is exposed to violence from an early age. So they become habituated to violence. And laws and regulations cannot correct this early habit. However if we imbibe *Ahimsā* through self-imposition of *Ahimsānuvrata*, then legislations and laws become redundant and unnecessary. Because then man will comprehend that by torturing animals, he is torturing himself too, and by living in coexistence with them, he can set right the ecological inequilibrium that threatens his very survival.
4.8 *Ahimsā — War and Peace*

Passions are both the causes and results of *Karma*. They are the doors by which the *Karma* enters and binds the soul. The four enemies of man, anger, pride, deceit and greed, result in individual and collective violence in thought, word and deed. They are the deadliest enemies of man and cause tensions and strives in society. *Ācārya Haribhadra* said person cannot seek peace on grounds of being a *Digambara, ācārya, logicians, philosophers or belonging to any particular sect. On the other hand, “a person attains emancipation only if he frees himself from the clutches of the four deadly enemies.”

Lord Mahāvira says, “Anger, pride, deceit and greed are the four powerful enemies, which stimulate sinful deeds. One who desires the welfare of mankind should battle with these four flaws. This battle is war and peace.”

War is the collective manifestation of individual dissatisfaction. Peace is the collective manifestation of individual satisfaction. Dissatisfaction is due to *āsrava*, the influx of *kārmic* matter of hatred, intolerance and passion for one's own distorted faith, knowledge and character. All great wars can end in peace in a second's time, provided the Jaina concept of *Samvara* is realised. *Samvara* is stoppage of influx of *kārmic* matter, which alone can redeem man of his *Karmas* of suffering and sorrow.

War for any reason, at any level, or of any kind, is still a war. War should be understood in a wider perspective than just as use of guns and bombs between two countries to settle disputes. It begins at the individual level when there is a gap between one's concepts and the reality. Differences in ideology and consequent disagreement between two individuals may also result in conflict. Dispute between Karnataka and Tamil Nadu over Cauvery river issue can also be considered as war.
War includes not only physical manifestations of violence, but includes conflicts rising out of socio-economic, political, religious and spiritual differences. Wherever there is a failure to accept viewpoint other than our own, war occurs. Examples of conflict are innumerable in the history of mankind. Issue of Ramajanma bhoomi for instance. Hindus and Muslims have shed blood of innocents since past few years to claim this piece of land as their own. Hindus want to build a temple at the site, while Muslims a mosque. Religious differences and the unwillingness to tolerate each other's views have led to this conflict. The solution would lie in both the religions agreeing to bury their differences — Hindus can find Rama even in the mosque and Muslims Allah in the mosque, since coherence is the only basis for true religion.

Inequality, non-compassion economy, unethical business and trade practices, exploitation of human resources and ecology also amounts to war waged by man. As mentioned earlier, war starts in the human mind and not elsewhere. Jainism gets to the source — germination of the idea of war in the mind through its concepts of Dravya hīṃsā and Bhāva hīṃsā. The act of harming is Dravya hīṃsā or external violence; the intention to harm or kill is Bhāva hīṃsā or internal violence. Jainism condemns the intention to hurt or intended violence as well as the actual act of violence. It warns that both types of violence invite Karma.

Besides Hīṃsā, another cause of war, is Parigraha. The West is already a rich country, but it wants to grow richer by controlling the oil-producing countries and Third World countries. This will for possession has resulted in wars and killing of innocent people, unrest and destruction of resources and property. Another cause of war is conflicting ideologies, religious differences, opinions, etc as mentioned in an earlier section. A solution to all these problems lies in three As of Jainism: Ahīṃsā, Aparigraha and Anekāntavāda.
Jainism aims at achieving world peace, not by policies and punishments, but by literally inducting every man and woman into principles of non-violence and coexistence from the day one. It preaches that if you want to fight, fight against your passions. It is much better to fight with one's own passionate self than to fight with others. If some one is to be conquered, it is no other than your own self. One who has got victory over one's own self is greater than the one who conquerors thousand and thousand of warriors.\(^{59}\)

Nowadays people blame the advance in science and technology for the prevailing state of global unrest and strife. Scientific advance per se does not lead to war. Science is neutral; it is the use of science which is good or bad and not the scientific knowledge and technology. Nuclear and atomic energy can be utilised for betterment of mankind or for manufacturing destructive weapons as we saw in the second world war, Gulf wars, etc. The greatest scientist of the twentieth century, Albert Einstein, had written to the President of the US Franklin Roosevelt requesting him to consider producing nuclear bombs seriously — to counteract the threat by Nazi rule. And then it was Einstein who engaged in post-war efforts to prevent nuclear war.

Today the world is facing the threat to the survival of whole of humanity. Countries have the technical know-how to produce nuclear weapons and continue to produce it, though they know it can destroy all life on this planet. Issue of survival of mankind and other creatures is related to the question of disarmament. To achieve this we have to develop mutual faith or trust and thus remove the sense of fear and insecurity that is the root cause of armament. According to Mahavira there is nothing than the sense of security, which a human being can give to others. But, due to attachment towards the world man contributes to insecurity of fellow beings “Shed all attachments as a great snake that sheds off its skin” \(^{60}\)
And ironically, while one nation or group considers weapons as a means of security, another nation or the opposite party looks at it with fear and sense of insecurity. Hence the competition to produce superior weapon with more destructive power begins. It is all due to pride and greed the war results with. So "one should again and again suppress the effect of delusion and control himself for external things weaken the intellect and allure many, keep off delusion, remove pride, donot practice deceit, leave off greed" for the self is going to be bound by further karma than the society suffering resulting with the further crisis of the war.

Though Jainism is against war and violence of all forms, allows defensive and occupational Hīṃsā. Protective violence is the violence, which takes place in saving the life of one’s own or his fellow being or in order to make peace and ensure justice in the society. Jainism does not preach a person to show the other cheek, when he is slapped. It tells him to defend himself and others in such a situation.

Occupational Hīṃsā is the violence that takes place by a person in the discharge of his duties. It might be the violence a soldier inflicts on an enemy in the defence of his country and fellowmen, or the violence inflicted by a farmer on soil and tiny worms and microorganisms while tilling the land. Violence may be inevitable, but Jaina teachings and practices aim at minimising the violence as much as possible. Jainism is unyielding when it comes to Sankalpi Hīṃsā, which is not excusable under any circumstance and will invite the influx of Karma. This awareness should be imbibed in every householder through observance of Ahimsa anvavrata, if we have to achieve world peace.

We have made terrific advances in science and technology. As a result, the world is shrinking, but unfortunately distances between our hearts are increasing day by day. Instead of developing mutual love, faith and co-operation, we are spreading hatred and hostility. The fault
lies in adopting the wrong faith, which preaches hatred, violence, lust, egoism, etc. The only true religion, which can unite people with all their diversities, is the one, which preaches non-violence, compassion and love.

4.9 Ahimsā — Approaches To Multiplicity (Socio-Religious and Intellectual Clashes Contributing To Crisis)

"Those who praise their own doctrines and disparage the doctrines of others do not solve any problem."^63

The Jaina commitment to non-violence arose out of a concern that action in the world promotes violence, violence results in additional Karma and Karma obstructs one from liberation. In addition to minimising violence through rigid practice of vegetarianism, Jainas also extended the non-violent ethic to their intellectual life through principles of Anekāntavāda and Syādvāda.

Under Jainism, "every statement or judgement is provisional, though not skeptical. The Jaina principle of respect for life (Ahimsā) is the origin of respect for the opinions of others (Anekāntavāda). Closely connected to Anekāntavāda is Syādvāda, another principle, which also extols tolerance. According to Syādvāda, the existence is a huge complexity; neither can human mind properly understand it nor can human language adequately express it. The absolute statements are out of court and all statements are true from a certain point of view only."^64

Ahimsā means reverence for all beings; Anekāntavāda and Syādvāda mean reverence for opinions, viewpoints, etc of all beings. Jainas refuse to take an exclusivist standpoint, and proclaim that truth can be viewed from different angles. They respect others' religions, viewpoints, ideas, etc and accept that they may be true from a certain angle; hence the question of conflict does not arise.
Much violence in the world has risen due to fundamental religious disagreement. If Muslims and Hindus, Jews and Muslims, Christians and Muslims, and people of different sects within the same religion, understand and tolerate the differences in each other’s religions, the massacres of thousands of people can be avoided. Not only religious differences, even differences in food habits, customs, languages, and etc give rise to conflicts. No amount of technological advance can help countries to live in peace if conflicting religious, social and political differences are not sorted out on a common ground. However, if persons with divergent cosmologies and ideologies can be given a framework through which to tolerate one another, non-violence can prevail. Multiplicity is regarding others views as you regard your own and accepting their right to exist.

Jainism has been tolerant and respectful toward other religions right throughout its history of existence. In fact Jaina thinkers assert that unity implies diversity. For them unity and diversity are two facets of the same reality. Absolute unity, i.e., monism and absolute diversity, i.e., pluralism, both of the theories are not agreeable to Jains. Isn’t this the reality — unity in diversity — that should make us Indians proud? Different languages, different religions, different cultures, different sects, different customs, different modes of dressing, different mannerisms yet we are all Indians. This is the vision of India that was upheld and encouraged by great leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, Nehru, Vivekananda, etc. But the present-day politicians have made us forget the unity. On the contrary, they are disrupting the rapport that exists between different groups for ulterior motives. They are again adopting the British policy of divide and rule.

Jainism is scientific in analyzing environment and man’s relation to it based on two postulates of science, viz, Law of Causation and Law of Uniformity of Nature. Undoubtedly, these two postulates are necessary to comprehend the nature of the universe. Jainism, however
goes a step further and says that unity in diversity too is a law of nature. Nature everywhere is one, but there is diversity in it, as the natural phenomena differ from each other, so is the case with human beings also. Though all human beings have some common characteristics and features, yet every individual being has some specific qualities that are different from others is due to their own *karma* imbibed in series of birth and death. It is also true about religions. All the religions have common characteristics, which they share with others as well as specific qualities of their own. Universal virtues such as non-violence, friendliness, service to the needy, truthfulness, honesty, control over senses, etc are commonly shared by all the religions of the world. Unfortunately, at present, these common universal virtues, which are the essence of religious practices, have been shoved into the background and external rituals, which are divergent in their nature, have become more important. Thus we have forgotten the essential unity of all religions and are stressing their diversities. Jinas realised that diversities will give rise to problems, which is why they propounded *Aneknāntavāda*, which advocates reverence for all viewpoints, opinions, ideologies, etc. And this is not just a theory; it is a way of life to which an individual is inducted into, under Jainism.

The theory of *Syādvāda* attempts to reconcile various conflicting schools of philosophy, not by inducing them to abandon their favourite standpoints, but by proving to them that the standpoints of all others are tenable too and represents different aspects of truth. For example, you pour some water into a glass. You may say it is half full; another person may say it is half empty. Both statements are true.

What makes Jainism particularly suited to handle the disaster we are facing today on not only physical level, but on spiritual, social, economic, religious and political planes? Jainism is a combination of science and spirituality. It is not based on blind faith, but on the right
faith. A Jaina by principle does not follow anything blindly. He rationally analyses any religious prescription or teaching before accepting it, be it his own religion or another religion. Supporting rational outlook in religious matter, Ācārya Haribhadra says: “I possess no bias for Lord Mahāvira and no prejudice against Kapila and other saints and thinkers. Whosoever is rational and logical ought to be accepted.” Thus Jainism lays emphasis on right faith or vision, which does not include dogmatism or fanaticism. There will be no fights for superiority of one faith or religion over others. If this attitude had been adopted, we would not have witnessed the continuing violence in Gujarat, where innocent people are being killed everyday in the name of religion.

Ego clashes have become a major source of disasters today. When people begin to think — my religion is superior to his, my language is superior to his, my nation is superior to his, and therefore, he should be subservient to me, etc, there is no end to it. Ideas turn into words, words turn into debates, and debates turn into knives and bullets. Therefore, Jainism arrests the problem in the mind of an individual itself. It preaches that tolerance and regard for others’ viewpoints has to be inculcated at an individual level itself, for peace to exist at the global level. It has to begin at the family level. Husband and wife have to accept and respect each other’s differences. Parents and children too have to adopt this attitude of tolerance and understanding for each other’s views and adopt a policy of live and let live. When this philosophy is adopted by every Śrāvaka and Śrāvika, conflicts will disappear. Or at least they will be solved peacefully through discussion, instead of bullets.

Jaina concept of multiplicity or many facets of the truth is very significant in today’s world. Due to advances in science, especially transport and communication, the world is shrinking everyday. Physical
barriers between people are disappearing. But mankind has not crossed the invisible barrier of differing languages, opinions, customs, religions, etc. This is because we believe that our philosophy, idea, country, etc is superior to that of others. We do not bother to understand or appreciate the good in others' philosophies, religions, etc.

What is noteworthy about Jaina thinkers is their concern for understanding traditions of others relative to their own. Earliest texts of the Jaina canon reveal this. The Sūtrakṛtāṅga, included in the second section of Jaina canonical literature, critiques other systems of Indian thought in the light of Jainism, specifically those that seem to advocate fatalism, externalism or vacuity. In the fifth century, Siddhasena Divākaras' Sanmatisūtra investigates various viewpoints as being non-valid when asserted in an absolutist manner.

Thirteenth century work, Mallisena's Syādvādamanjari offers a comprehensive assessment of non-Jaina philosophical schools and religious practices. This indicates that Jainas tried to comprehend the perspectives of other religions and philosophies. They believed that without understanding the precepts of other religions, their knowledge of their own religion, is incomplete. This is an extension of their Ahirnā principle that emphasises reverence for all. This open-mindedness and tolerance when practised universally in not only religious areas, but also social and political spheres will lead to harmony and peaceful coexistence.

I shall conclude the discussion with a simple example that illustrates the Jaina concept of non-absolutism. "If an elephant has four legs and you can see only three from a particular point you will not proceed to proclaim that the elephant has only three legs. What you do not see is not untruth and what you see is not necessarily truth, the whole truth."67
4.10 *Ahinṣā* and *Sallekhanāvrata*

"In the practice of *Sallekhanā*, all passions, which cause *Hīnṣā*, are subdued, and hence *Sallekhanā* is said to lead to *Ahinṣā*.*

The *Ācārāṅga sūtra*, a primary text of the Jaina tradition, states that all beings desire to live. Some violence is necessary to survive since eating involves taking of life, even if it is of a vegetable. Jainism prescribes how best to minimise violence, even in death, through their concept of non-resistant death or *Sallekhanā*. When it is clear that one's life will be over soon, Jains are encouraged to accept their imminent death, and in fact, actively embrace it through engaging in a final fast, facilitating their own demise in such a way that no further violence is fostered. *Sallekhanā* should not be confused with suicide; it can be practised only after certain stringent criteria have been met.

The vow of *Sallekhanā*, when properly understood as being other than suicide, presents an interesting counter point to some of the current discussion of medical ethics, specifically in the realm of euthanasia. Though it clearly exhibits a position distinct from that of the Hemlock Society, in which the pursuit of death is aggressive, the Jaina community would seemingly be supportive of a noninterventionist approach on issues of prolonging life. Depending on the spiritual mettle of the affected person, the use of life-support systems would probably be rejected if the person were ready and eager to face death (as clearly has been demonstrated as a possibility in the Jaina tradition) or if the person were unable to make a choice. With all aspects of Jainism, the consent and desire of the person would be essential, a life that would view death not as a finality but as part of an ongoing, inalienable continuity.

This is contrary to modern medical ethics in most countries where people in the last stages of terminal illnesses or extreme old age are kept alive under life support system, much against their will. This
practice does not allow the people to die comfortably and with dignity, it just results in heightening their suffering.

Modern medical technology has altered the traditional concept of death. A patient suffering from an incurable disease may be kept in a permanently vegetative state by means of artificial respiration and hydration by doctors who are bound by the Hippocratic oath to preserve life. Fear of dying and the exact mode of dying are part of the human condition. Multiple tubes stuck into the patient's veins by catheters, drains and monitors compound this fear. There may also be discomfort, pain and the sense of indignity.

"The "medicalisation" of death also places a burden on scarce medical resources. Intensive care is the most expensive ward in a hospital and the cost of maintaining a patient in the PVS is enormous."

Some of the Western countries have legalised euthanasia or mercy killing for the desperately ill. However the doctors should still follow stringent conditions and ensure that there is nothing humanly possible they can do to cure the patient of his illness.

Thus the right to die a dignified death is an extension of right to live. Mercy killing or euthanasia is kinder to a terminally patient who is suffering, than to keep him/her alive by artificial means. It is a great *Hināsā* for a terminally ill patient to continue suffering and *Hināsā* for his kith and kin too who have to helplessly witness the misery of the patient. Jainism on the other hand encourages the individual to voluntarily face death when he knows his end is near, instead of prolonging the misery for him and others by artificial means.

In the present-day world, *Sallekhanā* becomes all the more significant. Consider this: The average life span of an individual has increased, but so have medical complications. And in the fast-paced modern world, commonly the aged are ignored and neglected by their
families, not to mention the rest of the world. So they feel that there is
no use in living on. This is a kind of living death, a slow and painful
death. I will diverge here for a moment to consider the problems faced
by young widows in India a century ago in this context. It is possible
that the widows punished themselves and committed suicide because
they preferred death to a life worse than death, which social system of
that day subjected them to. Widows were repressed and subjected to all
kinds of humiliations. Maybe even the reprehensible Sati system had its
origin due to this social censure of widows.

"The act of taking one's life has taken many forms in the history
and traditions of India."^° Yajneshwar S. Shastri has noted, "several
forms of voluntary death are attribute to Hinduism, Jainism and
Buddhism. Mahāprasthāna, the great journey undertaken by the five
Pandavas and their wife Draupadi at the end of the Mahābhārata;
Jalasamādhi, drowning in a sacred river; Agnipravesa, entering the fire,
the most familiar form of this being sati or the immolation of widows;
Bṛgupatana, jumping off a cliff (in the Tīrthavivecanakānda of
Kṛtyakalpataru it is stated that persons who jump from Mount
Amarakantaka are never born again); Jauhar, self-destruction to
prevent capture and exploitation by an enemy, in the style of Masada,
where a community of Jews committed mass suicide rather than submit
to the Romans; offering one's flesh to birds of prey or wild animals, the
most famous example is from the Jātaka tales, in which in a prior
incarnation the future Buddha offers his own flesh to a lioness so that
she may feed her starving cubs; and Prayopoveśāna, fasting unto death,
referred to in the Jaina tradition as Sallekhanā."^1

Various instances of the fast unto death are found in the canon of
the śvetāmbara sect, most of which are modeled on the spiritual career
of Khandaga Kaccayana, a disciple of Mahāvīra who led an exemplary
life as a Jaina monk; his spiritual accomplishments are indicated by the
observation that he was “piled high with mortification (tapas) and piled low with flesh and blood, and like a fire confined within a heap of ashes he shone mightily with glow (tapas), with luster (tejas) and with the splendor of glowing luster.” At the end of his days, after twelve years as a wandering monk, he is granted permission by Mahāvīra to enter into the final fast, whereupon he climbed Mount Vīpula and sat with his face to the east, the ten fingers of his hands clasped before his forehead with joined palms, and recited the appropriate (mantras).

However care should be taken to distinguish Sallekhanā from suicide, which is strongly condemned by Jainas. Sallekhanā is facing death voluntarily when a person realises he is nearing his end. Samantabhadra’s Ratnakaranya Śrāvakācāra, a text of the second century of the Common Era, states that such a fast is acceptable only in four situations; calamity, severe famine, old age, or illness from which there is no escape or against which there is no remedy.” In fact, Jainas believe that wishing to live in such adverse conditions is Hirāsā — for themselves and others. Once one has decided to take up Sallekhanā, one should give up gradually all solid foods, increase the taking of liquids like milk, then give up even liquids gradually and take warm water. Thereafter, one should give up warm water also, observe the fast to the best of one’s ability with determination and depart from the body repeating the nāmokara mantra continuously till the last. During the observance of the vow, one should not commit any of the transgressions: entertaining a desire to live, wishing for a speedy death, exhibiting fear, or desire to meet friends or remembering them or expecting to be born with all comforts and pleasure in the next life.”

Another text states that fasting unto death is undertaken only if very specific criteria are met. “Before it can be resorted to, all worldly ties are to be severed; the individual will already be out of this world; and should be pure in all respects.”
In the *puruṣārthasiddhyupāya*, a twelfth-century text written by *Amrtaachandra Sūri*, the following verses address the issue of the final fast:

- “One should not kill himself by zealously giving one’s own flesh as food to another starving person, seen approaching in front.
- One should ever be devotedly thinking of *Sallekhanā* at the end, that “it is only his which would enable me to carry my wealth of piety with me.”
- I shall certainly observe *Sallekhanā* properly at the approach of death,” is the thought one should constantly have and thus be practicing the vow prematurely.
- On account of the absence of any emotion, there is no suicide by acting in this manner, on the certain approach of death, because of the observance of *Sallekhanā*, the passions are attenuated.
- He who, actuated by passion, puts an end to life by stopping breath, or by water, fire, poison, or weapons, is certainly guilty of suicide.
- In the practice of *Sallekhanā*, all passions, which cause *Hiṃsā*, are subdued, and hence *Sallekhanā* is said to lead to *Ahimsā*.\(^\text{76}\)

It is clear that *Sallekhanā* is distinguished from suicide, which is condemned even if for the sake of allowing a starving person to live. *Sallekhanā* is seen as the ultimate practice of nonviolence and spirituality, preparing one for clear passage into the death state and beyond.

“In the area of Christian moral theology, suicide and euthanasia are both generally regarded to be morally unacceptable."\(^\text{77}\) However, no one can deny that some of the techniques now available to prolong life border on the inhuman; John Paul II states that care must be taken in “judging whether the expense and personnel is disproportionate to the
foreseeable results and whether the medical techniques used will cause the sick person suffering or inconvenience greater than the benefits that may be derived from them. In certain cases, it is deemed acceptable to discontinue use of life-support systems. However, the case of the sallekhanā fast would not be an entertainable notion in most sects of the Christian tradition. In the words of Gerald Kelly, S.J., “God is the creator and master of human he and no one may take it without His authorisation.”

The Jaina worldview differs radically from the Christian; it has no creator god and asserts through its doctrines of Jīva and Karma that individuals are solely responsible for their own destiny. Consequently, grounds for dialogue on the issue of death and dying would most likely be limited to the psychological arena, wherein the bravery and freedom from fearfulness exhibited by Jaina Sallekhanā practitioners can be seen as an inspiring alternative to the fear and loathing associated with death in Western traditions. Euthanasia is now being advocated now by many modern thinkers as mercy killing, but Jainas advocated it for everyone thousands of years ago. Viewed from any angle, Jainism is a contemporary religion, equipped with solutions for all our modern problems.

The Jainas believe that purification of Karma that results from fasting with tapas (meditation) enables one to either advance to a better life after death or obtain final release. In the practice of Sallekhanā, all passions, which cause Hīṃsā are subdued and hence it is said to lead to Ahimsā. The nonviolent self in this instance is embodied in the person who no longer holds firmly to the notion that his or her individual biography has ultimacy. In a certain sense, the monastic life lived by the Jainas is a form of living death, but not in a macabre sense. The simplicity of lifestyle, stemming from a commitment to nonviolence, strips away nonessentials and reveals the core of a living, breathing,
occasionally food-consuming being not driven by conventionality or desire. Such a being can freely enter death with less clutter and concern, paving the way for either a similarly purified life or perhaps even total release.

In the words of the *Bhagavad Gītā*, where Krishna advises Arjuna on the proper attitude that he must cultivate in regard to death: Unmanifest are all beings in their beginning, “O! Bharata, manifest in their middle states, and unmanifest again in their ends. What is there to lament?”

By maintaining the perspective that all things born must die but in fact will be born again or born into a state of perpetual energy, consciousness, and bliss, the Jaina tradition offers a view of life that offers not hope but a sense of equanimity and acceptance. According to the structures of *karma*, the energies of past deeds are not utterly dissipated with the demise of the body, but will continue, whether they foster goodness, evil, or the blessedness of release. Through the practice of nonviolence, both evil and inhibiting attachment to goodness are overcome, paving the way for release.

It is commendable that Jainism, which preaches non-violence and self-realisation as a way of life, extends it to death also.

4.11 *Ahimsā* and *Mahāvīra*

“With supreme knowledge, with supreme intuition, with supreme conduct, with supreme uprightness, with supreme valour, with supreme dexterity, with supreme patience, with supreme contentment, with supreme insight, the venerable one (Lord Mahāvīra) meditated for twelve and a half years in self contemplation and proceeded on the supreme path to that final liberation which is the fruit of truthfulness, restraint and good conduct.”
Mahāvīra was one such Jīna who attained liberation after undergoing twelve and a half years of severe penance through relentless austerities in the forest. Though he was the twenty fourth Tīrthaṅkara, Mahāvīra is synonymous to Jainism. However Mahāvīra is not the founder of the Jaina religion. It is Ṛṣabdeva, the first Tīrthaṅkara, who founded Jainism, many years before Mahāvīra was even born. Lord Mahāvīra was in fact a contemporary of Lord Buddha. Though it is widely known that Mahāvīra is not the founder of the Jaina religion, and only its propagator, we still continue to associate his name with Jainism, before anyone else's. What makes Lord Mahāvīra so eminent and important, in Jainism and further his philosophy relevant even in the twenty first century? This question is very timely and hence I have dealt with it in much detail in this chapter. But let me begin with a brief biography of Mahāvīra.

Mahāvīra is the last of the twenty four Tīrthaṅkaras. He was born on the thirteenth day of Chaitra Masa. He was the son of Siddhārtha, King of Kuṇḍapura and Trisāla, daughter of Chetāka, a King of Licchavi clan. He was initially named as Vīra, but as kingdom gained more prosperity since his birth, he was called Vardhamāna.

Mahāvīra grew up with all accomplishments and when he was twenty-eight his parents thought of his marriage. There is a difference of view between Digambaras and śvetāmbaras on this point. The former maintains that he declined to marry, as he was always spiritually inclined and regarded marriage as a hindrance. Śvetāmbaras say that he married Princess Yashoda of Kalinga.

Both traditions agree that he embraced the life of a monk at the age of thirty. He spent twelve years in observing austerities and long spells of meditation. He wandered about from place to place. According to the Ācārāṅga sūtra, Mahāvīra had to endure abuses and attacks from villagers who looked upon him with suspicion. Human nature is the
same even today. People are suspicious and indignant about someone who wants to seek, realise or live the truth. However the true seekers do not give up the quest for truth fearing societal disapproval. Mahāvira endured various hardships but steadfastly proceeded on the path of salvation. According to tradition, he was gifted with Matijñāna (perceptual knowledge), śruta-jñāna (knowledge of the sacred lore) and Mānah-paryaya-jñāna (clairvoyance).\(^82\)

However Mahāvīra did not stop at this. He became involved in śukladhyāna or lustrous meditation and destroyed the four destructive Karmas: darśanāvaraṇiya, Jñānāvaraṇiya, Mohanīya and Antarāya at the individual level. From the above, we can conclude that before preaching, Mahāvīra firstly worked to destroy his own Karmas. Mahāvīra who was born in a royal family and had tasted all the luxuries of life gave it up in search for meaning of life. During his twelve years of severe austerities in the forest, he contemplated on the relationship between Hīṃsā and Karma, and why Karma occurs. His teachings on Ahiṃsā and its aticāras reveal singular concern and minute analysis and instructions about matter, animals, plants, fellow human beings, etc. Through his own example, Mahāvīra highlighted the basic principle of Jainism that man alone has to work to destroy his Karmas. He is the maker or the architect of his destiny. Few lessons from Uttarādhyayana illustrate this point about Jainism being a self-help philosophy that does not depend upon an intelligent God to solve problems.

“And whatever actions he has done, good or wicked ones, with their Karman, he will depart to his next existence.”\(^83\)

“The man of limited knowledge talks foolishly on these four heads, viz, the existence of the soul, its non-existence, idolatry, and the inefficiency of knowledge.”\(^84\)

“Men who commit sins will go to hell; but those who have walked the road of righteousness, will obtain a place in heaven.”\(^85\)
“All this delusive talk (of the heretics) is untrue and without any meaning; I live and walk about according to the rules of self-control.”

“A wise man believes in the existence of the soul, he avoids the heresy of the non-existence of the soul; possessing true faith one should practice the very difficult Law according to the faith.”

When Mahâvîra understood this delicate balance between man and nature and symbiosis of all beings on the earth, he gained Kevalajñâna or omniscience.

“When the Venerable ascetic Mahâvîra had become a Jîna and an arhat, he was a kevalin, Omniscient, comprehending all objects. He saw and knew whence they had come, where they would go, and whether they would be reborn as men, animals, or other beings. He knew the ideas and thoughts, the food, desires, and deeds of all the living beings in the world.” Mahâvîra became an Arhat, a person worthy of worship, who can guide others on the same path. But what is noteworthy about Mahâvîra is that after spending twelve years in solitary austerities, he went back to society. His life suggests that enlightenment or spiritual development obtained through penance should be utilised for social welfare.

There are various instances of Ahîrâsâ in Mahâvîra's life, who was the very epitome of the concept. However I would like to draw the attention to his attitude, which reflects that he opted for his spiritual mission after rendering his duties to his parents. This shows Mahâvîra's inclination for spirituality right from his early growing age. But, he did not proceed with his mission until his parents' demise, because he realised that he might hurt them by becoming an ascetic. So, his practice of Ahîrâsâ began at a personal level. This is in stark contrast to today's world, where abandoning one's parents in pursuit their own ambitions, has become a rule, rather than an exception.
Mahāvīra realised *samyag jñāna* that self-realisation is the prerequisite to all other realisations. And this in turn could be obtained when he had overcome eighteen kinds of hindrances viz. hunger, thirst, sleep, disease, sweat, aging, lust, greed, anger, fear, envy, and more importantly, *hiṁsā, asatya, parigraha, caurya*, and so on. Only by overcoming these could he become a *Jīna*. These are the common weaknesses experienced by all human beings. Mahāvīra overcame these weaknesses through gradual steps of increasing austerities. The logic behind this stringent discipline is that Jainism does not look to a higher god to redeem one's *Karmas*. Mahāvīra realised that he alone will have to overcome his weaknesses through self-imposition of rigorous discipline to attain self-purity. When he succeeded in controlling and overcoming his own lower self, he propounded *Aṅuvratas* for *śramaṇas* because he realised that every one should overcome their weaknesses by practising an ethical code of conduct in their daily lives. Thus he advocated *Aṅuvratas* for *śramaṇas*. Attaining purity of self-alone is not the end. Rather it is the means for man has a social obligation to his fellow-beings and environment. Therefore the person who has attained self-purity has the additional responsibility of inculcating the same in others, especially among the *Śrāvakas* or laymen.

Mahāvīra's contribution is invaluable. This is not just because he lived in forest for twelve years to realise the truth. In the sixth century BC, many great *munis* lived in the forest among flora, fauna and nature. Mahāvīra's insight and foresight lies in observation, experimentation, and realisation of protective and preservative ecosophy stressed with reference to a layman as the beginning, and spiritual guru as the ultimate.

In the age of information technology and scientific advancement, when we know that there can be no real progress without upliftment of the common man, he is not targeted, due to vested
interests; if the layman is ignorant, the crooked persons can flourish at his expense. But according to Jainism, not only does the crook invite *Karma* for himself, but also the whole social system that breeds such a person will be inflicted with *Karma*, which we are all facing currently.

In propounding *Anuvratas*, Mahāvīra also comes across as a great exponent of knowledge management, which is a modern concept. Today we discuss knowledge management in five-star hotels and sophisticated conferences. However long ago, Mahāvīra realised the error in Hindu attitude, where knowledge was concealed and suppressed from the common man. Brahmins thought that learning and self-realisation was their prerogative, and this too was restricted to men under four stages of life, namely, *Brahmacarya*, *Gṛhasthāśrama*, *Vānaprasthāśrama* and *Sanyāsāśrama*. So knowledge of *Anuvratas* not only releases self from crisis, but also resolves the crisis in society and environment.

Mahāvīra established a four-fold social order of lay-men (*Śrāvaka*), lay-women (*Śrāvika*), monks (*Arhats*), and nuns (*Arjikas*) and guided them till the last moment of his life. He was practical in emphasising *Anuvratas* (small vows), which were relatively rigid austerities for *Śrāvakas* and *Śrāvikas*, and *Mahāvrata* (great vows), which are supremely severe for *Munis* and *Arjikas*.

But one wonders why did Mahāvīra feel the need for *Anuvratas*? After all, he could not have imagined the physical, social and psychological crises we are facing today two thousand six hundred years ago. However every religion, every saviour, every reformer takes birth to encounter and overcome some malefactors or evils existing in the society. We can infer that the class and caste conflicts existed in Hinduism that day due to misinterpretation of *varṇa* system. Hinduism also included animal sacrifices, *yajñā* and other anti-nature rituals, that were harmful to the society at large. In addition, the religion had

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become elitist; it ignored the welfare of common man completely. This
socio-religious crisis made Mahāvīra propagate and reinforce Jainism as
a non-violent and ethical alternative to so-called Hinduism. Under
Mahāvīra Jainism got revived as a śramaṇa culture. Thus, Mahāvīra
introduced Anuvratas for everyone, irrespective of man-made barriers of
caste, creed, gender, language, etc. By this, he not only gave common
man and woman an equal footing in the society, he also made each and
every one aware of their social commitments and environmental
responsibility. He stood for the universal cause of coexistent mankind in
a crisis-free environment.

Mahāvīra's lessons to mankind do not advocate any meaningless
rituals; ritual according to Mahāvīra is volunteering for disciplining of
his mind, body and speech in relation to need and greed, to coexist with
his fellow-beings. All his teachings pertaining to environment and social
existence reflect concern for everything around man, by man.

Another distinct shift adopted by Mahāvīra was that of
language. He began to teach in ardha-māgadhi, which was the language
of people, instead of Sanskrit, which was for the scholars. Thus he made
knowledge accessible to each and every individual.

Mahāvīra did not give a lot of tantras-mantras and escape
chutes for the sinner. There are no provisions in Jainism to redeem of
Karmas through offering bribes to the god or performing umpteen yāgas
and yajñās. Mahāvīra emphasised that for averting the effects of
transgressions, sincere repentance for every lapse and reliving the right
way was the only efficacious method. He preached that austerities and
regular observance of vows were essential for preventing the influx of
fresh Karmas. Such a scientific perspective of cause and effect is
required in today's world. Modern man has to understand that if he
degrades nature, he is getting denatured. If he has been pursuing
materialistic pleasures like wealth, fame, power, etc at the cost of
nature, animals and fellow-beings, he will have to pay for the same through his own unhappiness and sorrow. And further, he can redeem himself only by making up for it by self-imposition of Anuvratas (See the section on Anuvratas for more details) and adopting life of coexistence and compassion.

Economic disparity and social inequality is considered according to Jaina theory is due to Parigraha and transgressions of Aparigraha. "The root of all sufferings physical as well as mental, of everybody, is attachment, towards the objects of worldly enjoyment."89 According to Mahāvīra, all vices are variations of Hīṃsā, and all virtues are different forms of Aḥīṃsā. It is Parigraha, which is the root cause of all inequalities and disparities. Letter A prefixed to Parigraha, i.e., Aparigraha can restore peace in society, but prefixing of single letter A demands another A from man — greater Austerities. And greater austerities command another A, which is the basis of existence itself, i.e. Aḥīṃsā.

Mahāvīra preached the principles of Aḥīṃsā and truth, of self-knowledge, self-control and self-realisation as leading to resolution of all crises. Though all religions have preached non-violence, the concept gained deeper implications due to Mahāvīra. He made reverence for the entire basis for the principle of non-violence. He showed how non-violence could be used practically to solve issues of great complexity. Gandhi was greatly influenced by philosophy of non-violence, which he practised in every walk of his life. In Jainism, non-violence is not merely a negative concept, that is, not to kill, but it has a positive side also as service to mankind. Once Mahāvīra's disciple questioned him: "O lord, one person is rendering his services to the needy persons, while other is offering puja to you; between these two, who is the real follower of yours? Mahāvīra answered, First one is the real follower of mine, because he is following the essence of life."90

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Today we are talking about *Himsā* in various forms on a global level like economic inequalities, problems of globalisation, greenhouse effect, depletion of ozone layer, child labour, sexual abuse of women, drugs, wars, border disputes, etc. In this thesis too, I have quoted such examples of *Himsā*. These problems are of course threatening. Hence we cannot ignore them and are trying to resolve them. Mahāvīra gave solutions for all these under *Aticāras of Ahimsāṇuvrata*. He, however, went far beyond this, to observe and lay down commandments to prevent even the minutest and subtlest *Himsā*, be it to matter, plants, microorganisms, animals or human beings. He gave a preventive code of conduct that emphasised that man should live with self-discipline and virtue in thought, speech and action every minute of his life. Mahāvīra felt that if small lapses in right faith, knowledge or conduct were allowed to occur unchecked, they would grow and mushroom in magnitude into full-blown violence. This is what is occurring today, because we have chosen to ignore a religion, which is another name for *Ahimsā* and universal compassion. I have quoted some sutras from *Uttarādhyayana* to illustrate Mahāvīra's foresight of reverence for all beings and failing which man will not be left with crisis; he will be a crisis to the society.

"He who hurts living beings, seeds, and sprouts, which do not control him, though he believes himself well controlled, is called a bad śramaṇa, i.e. he invites *Karma* for himself and the crisis for nature."\(^{91}\) This lesson commits man to principle of ecology.

"He who walks with great haste and without care, being overbearing and fierce, is called a bad śramaṇa, i.e. he invites great *Karma* for himself and crisis for the society."\(^{92}\) Today, man is rushing madly in pursuit of materialistic pleasures. In the process, he is turning out to be destructive and damaging. This is typical of Indian politicians
who are amassing wealth at the cost of thousands of needy people and non-renewable resources.

“He who is deceitful, talkative, arrogant, greedy, who does not control himself, nor share (his food, etc with those who are in want), and is not of an amicable disposition, is called a bad śramaṇa, i.e., he invites Karma for himself and thus personality clashes and conflicts, and thus crisis in the society.”

“He who eats milk, curds, and other things produced from milk, and does not practice austerities, is called a bad śramaṇa.” The essence of this sutra is, one who derives comforts from nature, but does not fulfill his obligations towards the same, invites Karma to the self and leads to depletion of resources in nature.

“He who leaves his own teacher, and follows heretical ones, who continuously change his school, being of a bad disposition, is called a bad śramaṇa.”

To follow the right attitude and ways in day-today life, one has to firstly have the right knowledge about life. And the right knowledge, of course is preceded by right faith, as explained in the section on Ratnatraya. Changing gurus, ideologies and in the modern context, changing political parties, etc from the point of selfishness and self-centeredness leads to Hiṁsā, which in turn soils the soul by kārmic particles. This has to be prevented because such constant fluctuations lead to instability — in the self and the society. And instability is a hindrance to the welfare of the mankind. So people contributing to such instability cannot escape the bondage of Karmas. The only solution to this is finding the right faith and more importantly, living it. To ensure Ahirñsā and thus stability despite different ideologies, gurus and parties, Mahāvīra advocates the adoption of Anekāntavāda and Syādvāda in our daily lives. Scientifically, Mahāvīra has propagated that uniformity in diversity is a reality.
"A monk should abandon the manifold doctrines (of heretics), and his own fancies, and such deeds as are productive of evil everywhere. One should live upto this wisdom."\textsuperscript{96}. Mahāvīra targeted not only the seeker of peace, but also the sought and guided them on the living principles of 	extit{Ahinsā} and 	extit{Aparigraha}.

"He who has left his own house, and busies himself in another's house, who lives by fortune-telling, is called a bad śramaṇa."\textsuperscript{97}. There is nothing like fortune prediction by the man, for the man. Only principle is the law of causation and uniformity of nature that is every event has a cause and the same cause, under similar conditions, produces the same effect.

"But he who always avoids these sins, and is pious amongst his brethren, is welcomed in this world like nectar; he conquers this world and the next."\textsuperscript{98}

Thus Mahāvīra taught that every person has inevitable social responsibilities, which has to be fulfilled if he has to redeem of his 	extit{Karmas} and live happily. Imbibing such a practical philosophy can solve many of the problems of the modern world that are arising due to man's indifference to his duty towards mankind as a whole.

Thus, the religion preached by Mahāvīra was not a new religion, but he systematised it and made it accessible to common man by preaching in the language of people, that is, 	extit{ardha-māgadhī}. He realised that societal welfare and environmental preservation would not be possible without educating the masses. According to Jainism, the societal awareness can only proceed from individual self-realisation. It admits the necessity of social welfare and service, but it should proceed from individual upliftment. The individual is the primary unit of the society; hence so long as individuals remain under the grip of passions, there is no question of social amelioration."\textsuperscript{99}
Mahāvīra did not espouse the view that world was just transitory, or support Nihilism like Buddhism. He emphasised that life had a meaning and that it could be purposeful only if one lived it with an awareness of its sacred goal. It is a message of hope for a life of piety and love. This is what even philosopher like Aristotle and others said — that man should live consciously. He is a thinking and rational animal, so he should be aware of the consequences of his actions.

This is what is missing in the so-called scientific age we are living in today. Take a simple example like smoking for instance. Even a child knows that smoking cigarettes is injurious to health — not only of the smoker, but also of those around him, who are innocent victims. Yet the number of smokers is on the rise. Manufacturer of cigarettes, smoker, and passive smokers, who tolerate it, are all contributing to this health hazard due to their indifference.

Mahāvīra's stress is on the importance of right belief, knowledge and character as leading to liberation from Karmas and a crisis-free society. He was not only a great teacher but also a seer. He foresaw the crisis that we are facing today at a time when resources were abundant in comparison to the population. Even before environmental degradation began, Mahāvīra had advocated the practice of Anuvratas to prevent such a possibility. His contribution to environment is invaluable. He told people to make Anuvratas a part of their day-to-day life. The Anuvratas took into consideration the welfare of all beings — matter, plants, animals, women, and weaker section of the society, etc. as explained in the earlier chapter.

Like Hinduism, Mahāvīra did not exclude women from these vratas. Women were given equal importance and responsibility as men. He gave them an opportunity to become Arjikas. In fact, female monks had the additional responsibility of visiting households and educating women and children. Mahāvīra felt that educating each and every
individual about his social and environmental responsibilities was very important to have a relatively healthy society.

Mahāvīra also made significant contribution by adding *Brahmacarya* or celibacy, i.e. purity of body and mind as one of the *Anuvratas*. Mahāvīra showed concern about all aspects of social welfare; he noticed that vow of *Aparigraha* was being misconstrued and misused by common man, who was deriving pleasure from women but not marrying them on the pretext of *Aparigraha* or non-possession. He introduced the vow of *Brahmacarya* to resolve this problem. This forbids a man from having sexual contact with other women, besides his wife and abetting others to have such contact. In his twelve years of wandering, he noticed that woman was being used as an instrument for sensual pleasures by man and was not given her rightful place in the society. He wanted to put an end to abuse of women and give her societal dignity and commit her also to environmental purity. Cases of harassment of women will not occur if everyone follows this *vrata*. Despite this, if women are misused or she willingly lets herself be misused, influx of *Karma* should not be ruled out. In both cases, until he/she realises and redeems of the *Karmas* by living the righteous life, suffering is inevitable. (See Brahmacarya for more details)

Mahāvīra deals the lessons on transgressions of *Ahimsā* in minute and what may seem like trivial details. However, when applied practically, these lessons can prevent most of the environmental and criminal problems occurring in the world today. What he preached is that the very nature of birth of the individual is to pay back his *Karmas*. But with the below actions due to ignorance, deliberation or indifference, man is constantly inviting fresh *Karmas*, and thus getting trapped in a vicious circle of suffering. The following are some of the sutras translate by Herman Jacobi and edited by F. Max Muller in 1962.
“A man, becoming a burglar, breaks into a house and beats, etc (all down to) degrade himself." 100 “A man, becoming a thief, cuts the purse and beats, etc (all down to) degrade himself.” 101 “A man, becoming a tender of sheep, beats, cuts, pierces, tears, thrashes, or puts to death a ram or some other animal. (The rest as above)" 102 “A man, catching birds, beats, etc, a bird or some other animal. (The rest as above)" 103 “A man, becoming a dog-keeper, beats, etc, a dog or some other animal. (The rest as above)" 104 “A man, becoming the helpmate of a dog-keeper, beats, etc, a dog or some other animal. (The rest as above)" 105 “A man, being angry for some reason, eg, because his granary or his liquor cask runs short, sets fire to the cornfields of the householders or their sons, has the fire set by another person, or consents to another’s setting fire to them. (The rest as above.)" 106 “A man, being angry for some reason, eg, because his granary or his liquor cask runs short, makes a deep cut in the strong limbs of the camels, cows, horses or donkeys of the householders or their sons, has it made by another person, or consents to another making the cut. (The rest as above.)" 107 “A man, being angry for some reason, eg, because his granary or his liquor cask runs short, steals a household’s or their sons’ earrings (or girdle), or jewels, or pearls, has them stolen by another person, or consents to another’s stealing them. (The rest as above.)" 108 – all ends up in the flow of karmic matter into soul more than creating crisis. The only way to get rid of from the clutches of this is to take shelter under non-violence.

Every religion preaches Ahimsā. However Lord Mahāvīra’s approach to the concept of Ahimsā is different. He himself was an incarnation of Ahimsā and his each act was inspired by it. According to him if we commit Himsā even in the smallest activities of life, our minds are vitiated by it. So we should train our minds to cultivate Ahimsā and for this we should treat even inanimate objects with a certain amount of
consideration. Sādhvī Shilapiji says in his Ṭhimsā Dharma, for instance, we should pick up a waste paper or clod of earth with our hands, rather than giving it an unceremonious kick. Because according to Mahāvīra, it is indeed the internal state of mankind, which is reflected in one's personality. Once Ṭhimsā is assimilated, it manifests itself in our treatment of fellow human beings, animals, plants, and even inanimate objects.

Ṭhimsā, nothing other than this, is, Mahāvīra's approach to life and living. His code of conduct was designed for living ethically in coexistence with the other beings in the environment. He preached Ṭhimsā as the underlying principle or the root with Aparigraha, Anekāntavāda, Acaurya, Asteya and Brahmacarya as its branches, can yield fruitful solution to all crises. These values, if imbibed among people, will effectively wipe out negative qualities of lust, greed, hatred, etc that contribute to the crisis we are up against.

4.12 Ṭhimsā and Gandhi

"A study of non-violence would be incomplete without reference to Mahatma Gandhi, who drew upon the existing tradition as learned primarily from Jainas to develop a campaign for national independence. One phase of Gandhi's work holds possible implication for a postmodern approach to environment: his proposed revitalisation of village economies based on the principles of Ṭhimsā or non-violence and Aparigraha or non-possession."

"According to Gandhi, Ṭhimsā is one of the world's great principles, which no power on earth can wipe out. Thousands like myself may die to vindicate the ideal, but Ṭhimsā will never die. And the gospel of Ṭhimsā can be spread only through believers dying for the cause."

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Gandhi emphasised the Jaina concept of life that livelihood must be undertaken with the least amount of violence possible, by minimising one's needs and the means to produce those needs. Strictly speaking, no activity and no industry are possible without a certain amount of violence, no matter how little. Even the very process of living is impossible without a certain amount of violence. What we have to do is to minimise it to the greatest extent possible. Indeed the very word non-violence means that it is an effort to abandon the violence that is inevitable in life. Therefore, whoever believes in Ahimsa will engage him in occupations that involve the least possible violence.\textsuperscript{111}

His philosophy of Ahimsa was unique and all encompassing. Without being an advocate of wilderness, as that is commonly understood today, Gandhi was resolutely of the view that nature should take its own course. On occasion a cobra would come into Gandhi's room: there were clear instructions that it was not to be killed even if it Gandhi, though Gandhi did not prevent others from killing snakes. Gandhi wrote, "I do not want to live at the cost of the life even of a snake."\textsuperscript{112}

In stark contrast, today man is killing man for flimsiest reasons. Take Gujarat, Gandhi's native state for example. As Sonia Gandhi said, Gujarat has been transformed from Gandhi's state into Godse's state today. Hundreds of innocent people are being killed and injured in the name of religion, while the police and government passively watch the carnage. Gandhi said that Ahimsa was not mere refraining from killing. He emphasised that even passive participation in torture or killing constituted Himsa. In a recent article in the Asian Age, one of the columnists has remarked that there is no Gandhi today to stop violence in the country caused due to communal strife. He went onto quote how Gandhi acted like a one-man peacekeeping force during partition. He walked all over Bengal pacifying people — both Hindus and Muslims.
This was possible because people knew that he was really concerned about them, irrespective of their caste or religion. But the present-day politicians are fuelling the fire by encouraging the already existing crack between different groups to widen.

Gandhi's greatness lies in the manner in which he successfully extended the principle of non-violence from the individual to social and political planes. He preached and stringently practised *Ahīṃsā* in his personal life. However, he observed that in order for nonviolence to be put into effect, it must not be limited to oneself. “To me virtue ceases to have any value if it is cloistered or possible only for individuals.”\(^{113}\) For Gandhi, the propriety of nonviolence has to be extended into the wider net of one's inter-relationships.

His teachings were not abstract and impractical. He did not separate the practice of *Ahīṃsā* from economic realities. He said: “I must confess that I do not draw a sharp or any distinction between economics and ethics. Economics that hurt the moral well-being of an individual or a nation are immoral, and therefore, sinful True economics stands for social justice, it promotes the good of all equally including the weakest, and is indispensable for decent life.”\(^{114}\)

Gandhi’s mission of non-violence is applicable to the mankind as a whole. However, with special reference to development of India, Gandhi had his own vision and mission.

According to Larry D Shinn, to live in an ecologically sustainable world structured by true *Swaraj*, each person, village, city and nation would have to adopt Gandhi’s dictum that “Earth provides enough to satisfy every man’s need, but not every man’s greed.” “Self-rule means that we must, as individuals and as political and economic communities, master our passions, including avarice.”\(^{115}\)

For Gandhi, the most viable vehicle for equitable economics was the village. He stressed on the importance of self-purification (*tapas*)
and self-rule (Swarāj). Though he did not make any special reference to ecology here, Gandhi's concept of Swarāj highlighted the importance of relations between people, and people and their natural environment.

Gandhi offered India a village-centered life and economy as a model of his concept of utopia: "I believe that independent India can discharge her duty toward a groaning world only by adopting a simple but ennobled life by developing her thousands of cottages and living at peace with the world."\textsuperscript{116}

He foresaw the predicament we are facing today. He warned that the village must be protected from the potential perils of mechanisation, asserting that as the economic process becomes more complex, those at the lower end suffer.

This is what is happening today. Politicians are catering to the needs of industrialists who can pay them for their favours. On the other hand, they visit the villages only before the elections to gather votes. They try to convince the villagers to vote for them by false promises of better roads, drinking water, health facilities, etc. After they win the elections, these promises remain unfulfilled. Consequently even after 50 years of independence, most villages in India continue in a state of abject poverty and neglect. The gaps between the rich and poor, urban and rural areas are growing.

We are going downhill because we failed to live on the principles of coexistence and nonviolence laid down by Gandhi. Gandhi lived the life of an ascetic by choice. He preached and lived his motto: Simple living and high thinking.

"Gandhi's non-violence included accepting people as they are. He was a staunch vegetarian. But he did not force anyone to stop eating meat, even in his presence. But this is a testimony of Gandhi's liberality. His reverence for life and respect for animals did not border on that fanaticism which is only another name for violence."\textsuperscript{117}
of people begins with food habits and rituals. For instance, among Hindus, varna system has been misconstrued for various selfish reasons and therefore, it has become a meaningless and an arbitrary classification. Ritualistic practices and food habits play an important role under this social classification. Vegetarians, especially Brahmins look down upon members of other castes who are used to non-vegetarian food. Vegetarianism is in fact a means to self-purity. However Brahmins, who claim to be learned, made it a measure of inferiority and superiority without imparting the benefits of vegetarianism to other castes. This has caused disparities among castes and is hindrance to living in harmony, leading to social violence. Social violence is more dangerous than natural calamities like earthquakes, floods, droughts, etc, because once social violence has set in, it sets off a series of catastrophes—one social evil leading to another.

"Like food habits, people, who have made it synonymous to religion, have misunderstood even the ritualistic practices. Religion is one tree with many branches. As branches, you may say religions are many, but as a tree, religion is only one. There is no religion without peace, and no peace without religion." To Gandhi, the Father of our nation, religion was an unending quest, not a body of dogmas or rituals, but a science of the spirit. He would not accept any religion blindly. In his early years, Gandhi, a Hindu, took the best from Buddhism and Jainism; especially from Anuvratas of Jainism, with special reference to Ahimsa-uvrata. His understanding of the essential teachings of Ahimsa-uvrata with its emphasis on non-violence and compassion for one's fellow-beings helped him formulate his theories and shaped his life.

Gandhi's philosophy was equality is God, and mankind is equal, he wondered how could there be social inequality to the extent that higher castes believed that Dalits were created to serve their vilest
requirements. These low caste people were conditioned to clean the excreta of the so-called superior caste people and had to tolerate innumerable humiliations heaped upon them. Gandhi fought for the right to dignity and equality under the concept of Ahirisā. He spread awareness among masses and called the so-called untouchables as Harijans (children of God). “We were perhaps all originally brutes. I am prepared to believe that we have become men by a slow process of evolution from the brute.”\(^{119}\). “Man as an animal is violent, but as a spirit is non-violent. The moment he awakens to the spirit within, he cannot remain violent.”\(^{120}\) Gandhi tried to awaken this spirit among people, however today his efforts have gone in vain, because the division between “higher and lower castes” has become more acute, thanks to politicians and others who have politicised the issue. But this poses a great danger to the development of the country and is a global threat.

Gandhi said that the wrong understanding of religion and life in general is because of wrong faith and knowledge that leads to wrong conduct, which is emphasised by Ratnatraya of Jainism. “Faith is nothing but a living wide-awake consciousness of God within.”\(^{121}\). “Faith is a kind of sixth sense, which works in cases, which are without the purview of reason. There are subjects where reason cannot take us far, and we have to accept things on faith. Faith then does not contradict reason, but transcends it.”\(^{122}\) Gandhi, however attaches due importance to reason. He holds that “on matters which can be reasoned out, that which conflicts with reason must be rejected.”\(^{123}\) Thus we see that Gandhi was a man of faith in God and his ultimate goal of life was realisation of God that is truth. This naturally leads us on to the second section of our enquiry, viz. his ethical principles or principles of conduct in this world, which he followed and preached with a view to attain his
final goal of self-realisation and his worldly goals of Sarvodaya (welfare of all) and Swarajya for India on his way to God.

If we observe life of Gandhi closely we see that he has preached and practised stringently four Anuvratas of Jainism, Ahimsa, Satya, Aparigraha and Brahmacarya, either knowingly or unknowingly. Interestingly, he has taken care to avoid aticaras of the four vratas and tried to inculcate the same in society by his own example.

Gandhi’s concept of Ahimsa has its roots in Jainism. He showed concern for the well being of all beings. For example, his close disciple and associate Kakak Kelkar, narrates that he was in the habit of breaking off an entire twig merely for four or five neem leaves he needed to rub on the fibres of the carding-bow to make its strings pliant and supple. When Gandhi saw that, he remarked: “This is violence. WE should pluck the required number of leaves after offering an apology to the tree for doing so.” This non-violent living of Gandhi comprised in literally avoiding the aticaras of Ahimsa as explained in the earlier sections. Today we have campaigns for non-killing of animals, to grow more trees, etc., but unless the principle of Ahimsa is understood in its entirety and inculcated as a living principle as shown by Gandhi, violence will continue to rule the world.

Bapu, as he was fondly called, stood by his belief that Truth is God and the means to achieve this is by Ahimsa and Satyagraha or passive resistance. The two fundamental principles of his conduct in this world both for minor worldly goals and also for the highest goal of his life were truth and non-violence. We shall first deal with the implications of his idea of truth. Truth is what the voice within tells you every one should realise his limitations before he speaks of his Inner voice. "We have the belief based on experience that those who would make individual search for truth as God, must go through several vows, as for instance, the vow of truth, the vow of Brahmacarya (purity) the
vow of non-violence, of poverty and of non-possession.\textsuperscript{125} Gandhi effectively put into practice Ahimsa and Satyagraha in the Indian freedom struggle against the British. His courage and non-violent means of resolving issues has been greatly admired by thinkers and reformers all over the world. Gandhi inspired Martin Luther King in his fight for racial equality for coloured population in the US. Gandhi affirmed that non-violence is the greatest force at the disposal of mankind and it is mightier than the mightiest weapon of destruction made by man.

Gandhi personified the Jaina concept of a spiritual guru — someone who practices the ethical way of life he preaches. He did not believe in self-realisation away from society, but showed that being true to one’s own conscience, compassion for all beings is the greatest religion. Even with regard to speaking the truth, Gandhi stressed the importance of doing it without causing Himsa to other beings. “One had better not speak it (truth) if one cannot do so in a gentle way. Truth without non-violence is not truth, but untruth.”\textsuperscript{126}

Gandhi’s common experience was that Ahimsa and truth are so intertwined that it is practically impossible to disentangle and separate them. “They are like the two sides of a coin, or rather of a smooth unstamped metallic disc Nevertheless Ahimsa is the means; Truth is the end. Means to be means must always be within our reach, and so Ahimsa is our supreme duty. If we take care of the means, we are bound to reach the end sooner or later. When we have grasped this point, final victory is beyond question.”\textsuperscript{127}

Gandhi’s concept of truth was objective and impersonal, and did not spare even his near and dear ones. Once his wife Kasturba forgot, though it was not intentional, to account four annas donated by a well-wisher to the Sabarmathi Ashram. Gandhi was very upset by this inadvertent lapse by his wife. He publicly confessed his wife’s lapse, in his Navajeevan journal. In this context, we should draw a contrast to
the present-day situations, wherein fund collections, mostly for causes, which are not genuine, are mushrooming. Huge sums of money collected for these causes are not accounted for and used for other than the purpose collected.

"Prośadopavāsa or fasting, which is an ethical means for self-purification, occupied a central place in Gandhi’s philosophy of life. He regarded fasting as an integral part of Satyagraha. He undertook in his lifetime seventeen fasts of varying lengths, the longest being of three weeks’ duration." The first fast was taken in South Africa in 1912, and the last at New Delhi in January 1948, a few days before his death. “A genuine fast cleanses body, mind and soul. It crucifies the flesh and to that extent sets the soul free.” In the twenty first century, fasting has become a fad. People undertake fasts but there is no trace of purity in their mind, body and speech. And people who fast have developed sense of superiority over those who don’t fast. “This defeats the whole purpose of “Prośadopavāsa, which is aimed at cleansing the person of all kinds of impurities — physical and mental. Fasting for prayer is a most powerful process of purification.” According to Gandhi, “it is not the physical act of fasting, but the spiritual content of the fast that gives to it its potency.”

Vinay Lal sums up compassion and concern for all beings exemplified by Gandhi as follows: “Gandhi’s entire life, I would submit, constitutes an ecological treatise, and it is no exaggeration to suggest that he left us, in his life, with the last of the Upanishads. He dispersed wisdom, but not from a mountaintop; he even waded through human waste as he walked around riot-torn villages, but he retained his equanimity. I shall endeavour to argue, for viewing Gandhi as a man with a profoundly ecological view of life, a view much too deep even for deep ecology.”
In 1926, Gandhi acquiesced in the killing of stray dogs at Ahmedabad by his friend Ambalal Sarabhai, the textile mill owner. A storm raged round his head and his reply was: "Imperfect erring mortals as we are, there is no course open to us but the destruction of rabid dogs." Similarly, "A little calf also precipitated a storm. A young heifer in the ashram fell ill. Gandhi tended it and watched it suffer and decided it ought to be put to death. {Since it was beyond the possibility of recovery and the agonies it suffered from, were insufferable."

Seeing someone suffer and allowing them to suffer is Hīṁsā. On the other hand, being compassionate towards all beings includes putting an end to another being's suffering. This amounts to understanding of Sallekhanāvrata of Jainism in life and imparting it constructively.

These are obviously hard and extreme cases in Gandhi's practice of Ahīṁsā in relation to the subhuman animal world; but in all such hard cases his general attitude was one of apology and admission of weakness rather than that of justification of violence permitted. His position is: "It is much better for me to say I have not sufficient non-violence in me than to admit exceptions to an eternal principle. Moreover my refusal to admit exceptions spurs me to perfect myself in the technique of non-violence."

"In reality non-violence is by far the most active force in the world. It is self-acting and does not need physical force for its propagation." "It (non-violence) is direct, ceaseless, but three-fourths invisible and only one-fourth visible. In its visibility it seems to be ineffective but it is really intensely active and most effective in ultimate result. A violent man's activity is most visible while it lasts, but is always transitory non-violence is the most invisible and the most effective."

As a necessary corollary from the basic principles of truth and non-violence he followed and preached the practice of open methods in all his public activities; he disliked and disapproved secrecy of any kind
in public life. He writes: “Secrecy had been deliberately ruled out of the
movement. Indian Opinion was an open book to whoever wanted to
gauge the strength and weakness of the community, be he a friend, an
deadly or a neutral. The workers had realised at the very outset that
secrecy had no place in a movement, where one could do no wrong.”
The concept of non-violence runs as a leitmotif in all his activities
including Sarvodaya movement, trusteeship, and promotion of cottage
industries, social equality, equanimity and deep ecology.

“There is no such thing as defeat in non-violence. The end of
violence is surest defeat. Hatred ever kills, love never a die. What is
obtained by love is retained for all time. What is obtained by hatred
becomes a burden in reality, for it increases hatred non-violence is,
without exception, superior to violence.” In today’s context, Gandhi’s
concept of non-violence has become crucial, if we want to survive the
threat of all sorts of crises — war, deforestation, species extinction,
ozone depletion, natural calamities, AIDS, etc, which are all offspring’s
of Hirəsə.

4.13 Myths and facts about Ahimsə

‘Suffering is the offspring of violence — realise this and be ever
vigilant’ is the message of Jaina Environmental Awareness.

A few years ago, a question was put to a few Jain scholars across
the country: what sort of society does Jainism want to project? The
answer was more or less unanimous: a non-violent society! They went
on to add that their religion preached Ahimsə, non-violence, more than
any other thing and non-violence was the need of the hour to protect
life and environment. A proper understanding of the principle of Ahimsə
and its honest practice by humans can immensely ameliorate the health
of environment. The eco-dynamics of Jainism ultimately consists in
upholding this principle and realising it in life.” Ahimsə, in Jainism, is
not just a social virtue and a religious rule; it is the very criterion and norm of spirituality and religiosity.\(^{140}\)

Modern man has many arguments against the Jaina doctrine of \textit{Ahimsā}. Most of these criticisms are however based on a superficial understanding of the concept. Let us discuss some of the myths that we nurture about \textit{Ahimsā}.

One of the main criticisms against \textit{Ahimsā} is that it is not possible to survive on this earth without some \textit{Hīṁsā}, especially in the highly competitive modern world. Utopian concept of \textit{Ahimsā} of Jains is not relevant today as it is impracticable. Therefore they dismiss it as extremist and non-practical.

But \textit{Ahimsā} as preached by Jainism is not an abstract concept but a practical philosophy that guides the individual in all his actions everyday. Individual is inducted into non-violent mode of life early in life through \textit{Anuvratas} or small vows. \textit{Ahimsānuvrata} propounded by Lord Mahāvīra is very practical, positive and preventive — it is more a way of life than a religion. Though some or other form of violence is inevitable in our life yet we should not conclude that the observance of non-violence is of no use. Just as some violence is inevitable for living, non-violence is also inevitable for the very existence of human race. Jainism realises that complete non-violence, external as well as internal can be realised only in the spiritual plane, not in practical life. So it preaches living with as little violence as possible or lesser violence is better living.

Does this mean that you have to show the other cheek when someone slaps you or remain passive when you witness injustice. NO. Jainism does not tell you not to defend yourself. Nor does it tell you to condone injustice, against yourself or others. According to Jaina thinkers, the violence is of four kinds:
1) Samkalpi or deliberate or aggressive violence i.e., intentional killing. This is condemned by Jains. It attracts great Karma and hence suffering.

2) Virāḍhi Hīṃsā or protective violence, i.e., violence which takes place in saving one's own life or lives of fellow-beings or in order to make peace and ensure justice in the society. Jainas recognise that violence becomes necessary here.

3) Udhyami Hīṃsā or occupational Hīṃsā i.e., violence that takes place in the in discharge of one's duties, like a soldier defending his country against an enemy's attack, agriculture, etc. Arambi Hīṃsā is allowed under Jainism.

4) Graḥārambhi Hīṃsā or violence, which is involved in performing the daily routine household work like cooking, bathing, washing, etc.

Jainas acknowledge that this kind of Hīṃsā is required for survival, but aim at reducing violence as much as possible. The acceptance of the inevitability of violence in the social and individual life is something different from giving it a religious sanction. Jaina thinkers accept that complete non-violence as they consider it, is not possible in this worldly life. Yet "they neither gave the religious sanction to the violence nor did they degrade this ideal of non-violence by saying it is impracticable."141

Even if some sort of violence is permitted to the householders and in some cases to monks, they never say that it is not violence at all. Violence for any cause, good or bad is still violence. However, when the violence is inevitable, Jaina thinker's advice to opt for lesser violence for the greater good.
Jaina concept of *Ahimsā* is all-encompassing and shows an equal concern for other creatures as it does to humans. I say, “Just as the consciousness of a man born without any sense organs (i.e., one who is blind, deaf, dumb, crippled, etc. from birth) is not manifest, likewise the consciousness of beings of earth-body (e.g., atoms, minerals) is also not manifest. Nevertheless such a man experiences pain when struck or cut by a weapon, and so also do the beings of earth body. Likewise for water-beings fire-beings plants animals air beings: their consciousness and experiences of pain are (actual though) not manifest.” This is what science says too. It says that protection of plants, soil, mountains, rivers, etc is essential because everything has a role to play in the cosmic drama of nature. Jainism takes this a step further by saying that the nature operates on the law of *Karma* comprising cause and effect. Thus good begets good, and the evil begets evil. From this, it logically follows that you should not harm *Jīva* or *ajīva* out of anger, greed, carelessness or neglect, because you will get hurt due to rebound of *Karma*.

*Ahimsā* does not mean cowardice or escapism. It is just a means of resolving the issues peacefully. The best illustration of this in the modern age is provided by Mahatma Gandhi’s struggle for freedom against the British rule of India. Gandhi, who was greatly influenced by Jainism’s concept of non-violence, did not use heavy artillery to protest against injustice, he followed the method of passive resistance or *Sathyāgraha*, which proved more powerful than any man-made weapon. Another example is Martin Luther King’s non-violent struggle for assertion of racial equality and protection of the legitimate human rights of the coloured population in the US.

These examples can also serve to disprove critics who claim that non-violent concept of Jainism is a passive philosophy. In fact, *Ahimsā* is a dynamic instrument. In Jainism non-violence is not merely a negative
concept i.e., not to kill, but it has positive meaning also as compassion and service to living beings. Solutions for issues like drug abuse, gender inequality, ideological differences, border disputes, etc can be found by practical application of Ahiṃsāṇuvarata. Jaina concept of Ahiṃsā is scientific and positive. It should not be confused with passivity or cowardice, because Jainism does not guide man to bow his head to injustice. It wants every injustice to be resisted, and the first best method of resistance according to Jainism is the non-violence of the brave. If one could not follow this first best method of opposing injustice, he can fall back upon the second best method of fighting against the injustice violently and if necessary by arms. This is nothing but Virūdh Hiṃsā, allowed under Jainism. There is no third method of opposing any injustice. Submission to injustice is cowardice according to Jainism and it does not countenance cowardice in any form. Under transgressions or aticāras, Jainism restrains man from being a coward and contributing to Hiṃsā.

Jainism targets Bhāva Hiṃsā and Dravya Hiṃsā. The former is the intention to hurt and Dravya Hiṃsā is the actual causing of hurt. And intentional Hiṃsā is totally ruled out like offering animal sacrifice, hunting for food or sport or for business or trade. Abstinence from them is possible with no harm to anybody. At the same time, Jainism allows Arambi Hiṃsā, which will be committed by a householder inevitably, like Uddhyami that is Hiṃsā that is inevitably committed in the profession one chooses. It classifies six such professions, that is, asi (sword), masi (ink), krṣi (agriculture), vāṇijya (trade), śilpa (sculpture) and Vidyā (education).

Another argument against Ahiṃsā is that it is not possible in the modern world if one has to be successful. But what do we mean by success — Cutting others' throats to stay ahead? Killing whales to make
expensive perfumes and cosmetics can that make us rich? Making easy money by conning the gullible?

Modern world has more than its share of *Hiĩsā*. It is manifested in all areas: Politics without moral principles, earning money without putting efforts, business without morality, sensual practices without direction, science without humanity, knowledge without character, worship without austerity.

These social misdeeds are now considered a part and parcel of life. What's more we have begun to judge a person's value by how much wealth, prestige or success he has accumulated. This leads to decline of right thinking and human values. To a person whose vision is blinded by such false values, *Ahĩnsā* might seem like an unattractive and unattainable goal.

Mahatma Gandhi recognised and extolled the greatness of the principle of *Ahĩnsā* as propounded in Jainism: "No religion of the world has explained the principle of *Ahĩnsā* as deeply and systematically as discussed with its applicability in life in Jainism. As and when this benevolent principle of *Ahĩnsā* will be sought for practice by people of the world to achieve their ends of life in this world and beyond, Jainism is sure to have the uppermost status and *Bhagavān* Mahāvīra is sure to be respected as the greatest authority on *Ahĩnsā*. If anybody developed the doctrine of non-violence, it was Lord Mahāvīra, think over it and translate it into action."²¹⁴³ That is what we need to do today. Instead of dismissing *Ahĩnsā* as an impracticable ideal, we need to contemplate on it and see how best we can solve the issue at hand through non-violent means.
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