

# Religion and sustainable Development – An Analysis of Jainism’s Religious Ethics Related to Sustainable Development

Moumita Mazumder  
PhD Research Scholar  
Department of Sociology  
Jadavpur University

**Abstract:** Modern society now a day only relies upon material prosperity which lacks moral and ethical principle. This trend can be harmful for the society in long run. If morality can be injected in society with the help of ethical religion it can open the path for sustainable development in long run. This paper is an attempt to understand how Jainism incorporated some ethical values which opens up the path for sustainable development.

**Key words-** Non violence, Non-possession, co-existence, sustainable development, Three Jewels

**Introduction :** It is current trend that people tend to think that religion does not have any role to play when it comes to development. Moreover some scholar thinks that religion is an obstacle in the path of development. Especially when it comes to the religion of the ‘East’ it just a hindrance in the path of development. There is many evidences that prove religion has hidden impact in development, it act as a catalyst y providing moral base for the society. According to oxford dictionary of sociology ‘Religion is set of beliefs, symbols and practices which is based on the idea of sacred and which unites believers into socio-religious community. On the other hand sustainable development focuses on the development which is sustainable with the environment, does not destroy too much natural resources, an equal distribution of wealth and where a peaceful existence of individual and society is possible. It is come through mutual understanding of individual with peaceful cooperation. In today’s world poverty, unequal distribution of wealth, social exclusion, marginalization act as a biggest threat in the path of development. So, in this scenario we cannot ignore the role of human culture and institution in overcoming these problems. A peaceful existence among communities, shared values and principles can help us to overcome these difficulties. If we look at history we can find that major social changes came in human civilization with the help of moral and ethical guidance, so when it comes to development we have to keep our society’s moral and ethical base functional so that we can achieve a bigger and better future for our society. Weber’s classical work on protestant ethic is the starting point for many scholars who are interested in the relationship between religion and development but this work somehow undermined the role of Asian religion in terms of developmental aspect. But Asian religion like Jainism not only provide moral base for development but sustainable development which is beneficial for the society in long run. It’s religious ethics and spirituality is very compatible with the idea of sustainable development. Here in this article we will see in detail how Jainism’s religious ethics help the society for creating a moral base of sustainable development.

**Jainism’s Religious Values and Sustainable Development:** Religion is such a factor that played an important role in terms of development since the ancient time and we can still feel it’s effect in today’s society. Human capital, social capital, social stability are some of the important social factor that are related to development. In today’s world the concept of development related with the idea of owning physical capital and maximizing productivity. In this manner concern for human values and concern for the natural world is neglected. But religion like Jainism besides promoting path for development also ensures human value and concern for nature. Acharya Mahapragnya in his book ‘Economics of Mahaveera’said that modern economics is based on materialistic progress and per capita income and all this things related to one’s self interest. This approach of modern economics created many serious issues like unequal distribution of wealth and income, exploitation, corruption e.t.c . For example if we look at capitalist economy we can find that there is exploitation and inequality due to peoples self interest. After the introduction of globalization, free market policy India is no exception of this problem. In future we are going to face much bigger problem but unlike other countries India has its own mechanism which will defend the society from degradation and decline. India is the land of different religion and they have their own preaching of ethical base. Jainism is one of them. Jainism is the ancient religion in India. The socio, religious and economic and political conditions of the 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C led to the rise of development. Jainism mainly based on non-violence, equality. Jainism does not only give importance to only individual ut they give importance to the society as a whole. Hence it has a sustainable developmental view point in its approach where greater environmental degradation, problem of inequality, problem of modern economy can be easily overcome. Lord Mahaveera’s preaching not only ensures survival of the individual but the society as a whole.

According to Jainism there is no opposition between individual well being and the well being of a bigger society. According to him individual cannot be given greater interest at the cost of bigger society. Individual well being and social well being are inter related.

Jainism gives paramount importance to the concept of Ahimsa or non-violence. Development does not necessarily mean the improvement of living standards people's idea and mentality plays a vital role in the arena of development. When there is greater materialistic prosperity but people's mentality remain unchanged then all of the benefit that has come through development would go in vain. According to Pratiha J.Mishra 'Social development is a process which results in the transformation of the social structures in a manner ,which improves the capacity of the society to fulfill it's aspirations. Society develops by consciousness and social consciousness developed by organization. The process that is sub conscious in the society emerges as a conscious knowledge in pioneering individuals. Development is a process not a programme. It's power issue more from a subtle aspect that form material object.'

The main principle of Jainism is believed in co-existence which treats each and every one equal. In Jainism there is also concern for the environment. If we closely analyze Jainism then we can find that it actually teaches one to stay away from environmental exploitation. Jainism's notion of Ahimsa is very close to the concept of sustainable development where development will ensure overall progress of the society and preservice of nature.

For Jainism non-violence is the main pillar of this religious faith. For Jainism non-violence is the religion. They state that 'Ahimsa paramo dharma'. In Jainism there are three jewels which ensure peaceful co-existence between individuals and individual right conduct towards nature and society. This three jewels are Samyak darshan, Samyak Jnana, samyak charitra. Samyak darshan is mainly associated with the concept of non-possession ,Samyak jnana is more of a liberal knowledge which give preference to the other members of the society, samyak charitra is mainly associated with individual's self control and develop a mindset of detachment and non-possession which leads to the sustainable development. With this three jewels there are five vows of Jainism which is Ahimsa, satya, acharya, ramhacharya and aparigraha. This principles of Jainism based on non violence and non-possession. It advises people to stay away from stealing and over possession of material wealth. In fact in Jainism charity holds a great place. Data suggest that the bigger portion of the charity come from the Jains ,this leads to the flow of wealth and equal distribution of resources. The problem of mankind and modern economy can be solved by following these principles. Economic development does not necessarily mean that people can exploit natural resources and can use everything selfishly and unlimited. A sustainable development occurs when people limits their use of resources and there is a peaceful coexistence between nature and human. Economic development should be achieved ethically. To expand their wealth and material possession people becoming unethical. Following Jainism's Ahimsa principle create a ethical base for society which clears the path for sustainable development.

Lord Mahaveera in his teaching always give emphasis of moral values and limitation of selfish interest. According to Mahaveera unlimited desire and material possession leads to violence thus for a peaceful societal coexistence one needs to limits their possession and selfish needs. Jainism always gives emphasis to 'Aparigraha' which means non-possession, where is 'Parigraha' is possession that leads to greed and violence in society. According to Acharya Mahapragnya modern economy lacks the ethics of non-violence which leads to various conflicts in our society. So, he advocated the ethics of non-violence and non-possession for sustainable development. Because non-possession ensures flow of wealth among maximum number of people, limiting one's resources which leads to equal distribution of resources which is the main motto of sustainable development. Jainism advocated liberalism and equality. When there is this two feature it automatically reduce the practice of violence so, the idea of non-violence is the base for peaceful and the better society.

The modern Economics give little emphasis to nature. People exploiting the nature like anything to meet their own selfish needs. In Jain philosophy not only living beings but the non living beings also have soul. There is a principle of Jainism which states 'Parospar jeevanam' means every single entity have soul so therefore it is the duty of individual not to harm anyone for their self even the non living being like earth, water ,stones all need equal amount of protection. Thus Jainism told individual to stay away from exploiting the nature. Concern for the nature is one of the most important considerations in sustainable development.

In today's modern world economic development lacks morality. Social scientist and policy makers never give emphasis on these ethical principles, so, there is only material development and no harmony between individual and society. As a matter of fact this de3velopment failed to achieve greater welfare for the mankind. So, it is high time we think about not only material development but a balanced and sustainable development for the long run of our society. Society can incorporate this value with following religious principles like Jainism which has ethical values based on no-violence, following the same will possible a better society and the effect of development can reach among greater number of people and which will also make peaceful existence between individual ,society and nature possible.

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