

Jain Views: Oneness of Humanity, Peace and the Environment



Jains pray that forgiveness and friendliness may reign throughout the world and that all living beings may cherish each other. This ancient Jain principle teaches that all of nature is bound together, and says that if one does not care for nature, one does not care for oneself.

An important Jain principle is not to waste the gifts of nature and even to reduce one's needs as much as possible. As **Gandhi** said, 'There is enough in this world for human needs, but not for human wants.'

"Parasparopagraho Jivānām." All life is bound together by mutual support and interdependence.

Environment is imbued (saturated) with living beings. Therefore, if we harm "ONE," we harm "ALL" living beings. -

Pravin Shah

Two of the five ethical vows:

- Ahimsa (non-violence)
- Aparigraha (non-possession or non-possessiveness)



Another key theme of Jain beliefs is the theme of the interrelatedness of all in the universe. Jainism teaches that all matter – living and nonliving – is bound together by mutual support and interdependence (Parasparopagraho jivanam). Air, earth, fire, water and vegetation are also considered living substances. Life is viewed as a gift lived only with support from the interdependent web of all creation. We are responsible for our own future through our thoughts and actions. With this understanding, harming another living being inevitably means harming ourselves. This teaching combined with teaching of ahimsa provides an important Jain foundation for an environmental ethic.

- **Anop R. Vora**, (President JAINA Organization).

"Ahimsa Parmo Dharma" or "Nonviolence is the Supremely Righteous Path" is the foundation of Jain religion. It insists on *ahimsa* or non-injury to all forms life, mentally, emotionally, verbally and physically. Jains recognize that it is not possible to sustain life with absolute nonviolence, as there is some violence in every activity, however minute. However, Jainism does advocate a path of minimum harm. An attitude marked by *ahimsa* makes a person humble and peaceful in living both with fellow humans and with the natural world.