



Non-Violence and Environmental Responsibility in Jain Thought: An Ecological Interpretation of the Concept of Sthāvara Baddha Jīva

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Abstract

The ecological crisis of the twenty-first century has strengthened the need for ethical systems that promote a balanced and non-exploitative relationship between human beings and the natural world. Climate change, biodiversity loss, deforestation, pollution, and the exhaustion of resources reveal the limits of development models that place immediate economic gain above ecological stability. Jain philosophy offers a significant ecological vision through the principle of ahimsā, or non-violence. Its distinctive contribution lies in the doctrine of sthāvara baddha jīvas, that is, immobile and one-sensed living beings bound by karma, including earth, water, fire, air, and vegetation. This paper examines how this doctrine provides a metaphysical and ethical basis for environmental protection. Using a qualitative, philosophical, and textual approach, the study analyses Jain ideas such as jīva theory, karma, ahimsā, aparigraha, samyama, and pudgala. It argues that Jainism offers a life-centric and spiritually grounded environmental ethic that speaks directly to contemporary debates on sustainability, ecological justice, and responsible living. By understanding nature as a community of living beings rather than a set of inert resources, Jain thought advances an ethic of restraint, responsibility, and reverence toward the environment.

Keywords: Jain philosophy; Sthāvara baddha jīva; Ahimsā; Environmental ethics; Sustainability.

1. Introduction

Environmental degradation has become one of the defining concerns of the contemporary world. Climate change, deforestation, pollution, biodiversity decline, and rapid depletion of natural resources show the failure of development models built mainly on economic growth and human convenience. These problems demonstrate that the ecological crisis is not only technical or scientific. It is also ethical, because it arises from the way human beings understand, value, and use the natural world (Pal, 2026). Environmental ethics therefore provides a necessary framework for rethinking human conduct toward nature. Although much of the modern debate has been shaped by Western philosophical traditions, Indian philosophical systems also contain rich ecological insights that deserve serious attention (Dutta Banerjee & Mete, 2024a). Jain philosophy presents one of the most comprehensive ethical approaches to environmental responsibility. Its central ethical principle is ahimsā, or non-violence. In Jainism, non-violence is not restricted to human beings and animals. It extends to plants and to natural elements such as earth, water, fire, and air (Chapple, 2002; Tatia, 1994). This broad ethical vision is grounded in the doctrine of jīva, according to which life exists in many visible and invisible forms. Jain thought therefore places human beings within a larger living universe and gives them a moral duty to act with restraint, responsibility, and care (Jaini, 1979).

The concept of sthāvāra baddha jīva has special importance in this context. It refers to immobile, one-sensed living beings whose souls remain bound by karma. These beings include earth-bodied, water-bodied, fire-bodied, air-bodied, and plant-bodied forms of life. Jainism does not treat them as lifeless matter. It recognises them as living realities with ethical and spiritual significance (Siriwardene, 2026). The concept therefore expands the moral community beyond human beings and animals and gives the natural world an independent ethical status.

This paper examines how the doctrine of sthāvāra baddha jīva strengthens an ahimsā-based environmental ethic in Jain philosophy. It argues that Jainism provides a coherent, spiritually grounded, and practically relevant framework for environmental protection. Through ahimsā, aparigraha, karma, pudgala, and self-restraint, Jain thought offers a powerful response to contemporary ecological challenges and supports sustainable ways of living (Sayem & Mostofa, 2026; Phulwaria, 2025).

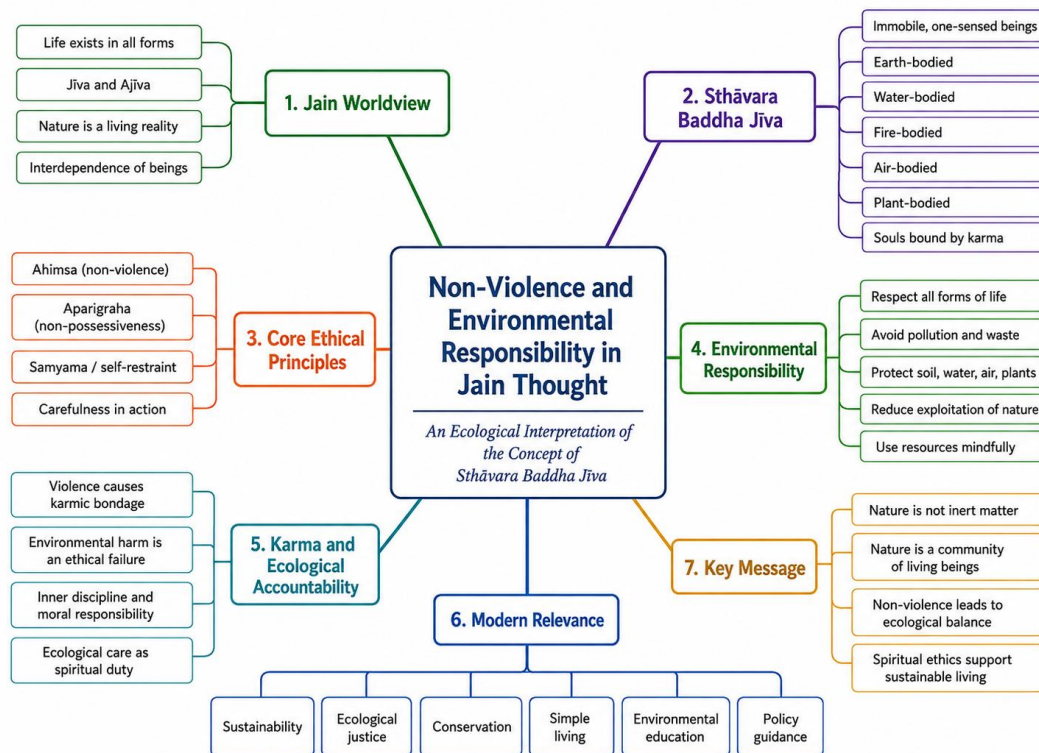


Fig. 1. Jain environmental ethics and Sthāvāra Baddha Jīva.

2. Objectives of the Study

- To examine the concept of sthāvāra baddha jīva in Jain philosophy and explain its role in understanding immobile, one-sensed living beings such as earth-bodied, water-bodied, fire-bodied, air-bodied, and plant-bodied forms of life.
- To analyse the relationship between ahimsā and environmental responsibility by showing how Jain non-violence extends beyond humans and animals to plants, natural elements, and subtle forms of life.
- To explore the contribution of Jain metaphysics to environmental ethics, especially through the doctrines of jīva, aḥjīva, karma, pudgala, aparigraha, and samyama.
- To establish Jain philosophy as a life-centric ecological framework that challenges anthropocentric views of nature and recognises the moral value of all living beings.
- To examine the relevance of Jain environmental ethics to modern sustainability discourse, including ecological justice, conservation, responsible consumption, and environmental accountability.
- To identify the educational, practical, and social value of Jain ecological thought in promoting restraint, compassion, reverence for life, and sustainable living.

3. Methodology of the Study

The study uses a qualitative, philosophical, and textual methodology. It is based on the interpretation of Jain philosophical concepts related to jīva, sthāvāra baddha jīva, karma, ahimsā, aparigraha, samyama, and pudgala. The study

adopts an analytical approach in order to show how these concepts create an ethical foundation for environmental responsibility. It does not use surveys, experiments, or statistical measurement. Its method is conceptual and interpretative. The paper connects classical Jain ideas with contemporary issues such as climate change, pollution, deforestation, overconsumption, ecological justice, environmental education, and sustainability. The methodology is therefore interdisciplinary. It brings together Jain philosophy, religious studies, environmental ethics, Indian knowledge systems, and sustainability discourse. This approach is appropriate because the study seeks to interpret a philosophical tradition and explain its relevance for modern ecological problems.

4. Background of Jaina Thought

Jaina thought provides one of the most systematic religious and philosophical foundations for ecological responsibility within Indian traditions. Its central claim is that life is not confined to human or animal existence. Life appears in multiple forms, including plants, water, air, fire, and earth-bodied entities. This worldview becomes especially clear in the Jain doctrine of *sthāvāra baddha jīva*, which extends moral concern from sentient animals to the broader material and ecological world (Siriwardene, 2026). From this standpoint, environmental harm is not only a technical or economic problem. It is also an ethical failure rooted in ignorance, attachment, and violence.

The foundation of Jain environmental ethics is *ahiṃsā*. *Ahiṃsā* is more than the absence of physical harm. It is a discipline of thought, speech, consumption, and action. Because Jainism recognises subtle and non-human forms of life, it requires restraint in the use of natural resources. This makes Jain ethics directly relevant to modern ecological debates, where climate change, biodiversity loss, and resource exploitation are often linked to excessive consumption and human-centred development (Pal, 2026). Jain ecology therefore challenges the idea that nature exists only for human use.

Aparigraha, or non-possession, is another major principle. It teaches that attachment to material things increases greed and violence. In ecological terms, *aparigraha* supports simple living, reduced consumption, and responsible stewardship of resources (Sayem & Mostofa, 2026). It connects spiritual discipline with sustainability because environmental responsibility begins with self-regulation. A person who limits desire also limits ecological damage.

Recent scholarship also links Jain thought with environmental justice and corporate social responsibility. Lutfiyani and Santoso (2025) argue that ecological justice requires institutions to recognise their duties toward both society and nature. Jainism strengthens this idea by insisting that responsibility must go beyond legal compliance and include moral accountability. Phulwaria (2025) also explains that the Jain way of life integrates society, values, and self-welfare, which means that ecological care forms part of a balanced and ethical life.

Jain ecological ideas also critique the modern climate crisis. Pal (2026) presents ancient Indian ecological wisdom as a neglected resource for responding to global warming. Jainism contributes to this wisdom through its emphasis on restraint, interdependence, and respect for all life forms. Its psycho-philosophical dimension is also important. Siriwardene (2026) connects non-violence with inner discipline and awareness of life in all forms, while Bohanec (2026) shows that reverence for life can become a deeply spiritual attitude. These ideas together provide a strong background for interpreting Jainism as an ecological tradition.

5. Concept of Sthāvāra

The concept of *sthāvāra* is central to Jain metaphysics and environmental ethics. Jain thought divides living beings into two broad categories: *sthāvāra* and *trasa*. *Sthāvāra* refers to immobile or one-sensed beings, such as earth-bodied, water-bodied, fire-bodied, air-bodied, and plant-bodied lives. These beings possess only the sense of touch, but they are still recognised as *jīvas*, or living souls (Siriwardene, 2026). This idea expands the moral boundary of life beyond human beings and animals. It teaches that nature is not lifeless matter, but a field of subtle living existence.

The doctrine of *sthāvāra baddha jīva* teaches that souls remain bound by karma even in immobile forms. Therefore, harming soil, water, air, fire, plants, and other natural elements carries ethical significance. This view strengthens Jain *ahiṃsā* because non-violence must include care for the smallest and least visible forms of life. In ecological terms, the doctrine of *sthāvāra* encourages restraint, careful consumption, and respect for natural resources. It also supports *aparigraha*, because reduced possession and controlled desire reduce ecological harm (Sayem & Mostofa, 2026). *Sthāvāra* therefore gives Jain environmental responsibility a spiritual and metaphysical foundation.

6. Understanding Baddha and Jīva

In Jain philosophy, jīva means the living soul, while baddha means bondage. Baddha jīva therefore refers to a soul bound by karma. Jain karma theory explains that actions performed through body, speech, and mind attract subtle karmic particles. These particles attach to the soul and obscure its natural qualities, including knowledge, perception, purity, and bliss (Sangave, 2001). Because of this bondage, the soul remains within the cycle of birth, death, and rebirth.

Sthāvara baddha jīva refers to immobile living beings whose consciousness is strongly restricted by karmic bondage. Earth-bodied, water-bodied, fire-bodied, air-bodied, and plant-bodied lives belong to this category. They are called one-sensed beings because they possess only the sense of touch. Even so, Jainism does not classify them as inert objects. It understands them as living souls whose awareness is subtle and difficult to perceive (Siriwardene, 2026).

The ethical significance of these beings lies in their vulnerability. Since they are immobile, they cannot escape harm or defend themselves. This places a greater moral duty on human beings, who possess higher awareness and greater power over the natural world. Jain ethics therefore instructs humans to act with care, restraint, and non-violence toward all life forms (Sangave, 2001). The concept of baddha jīva consequently gives Jain environmental ethics a spiritual foundation. Protecting nature becomes more than ecological responsibility. It becomes respect for souls existing in different embodied conditions.

Flow Chart: Interconnection of Sthāvara Baddha, Jīva, and Environmental Ethics

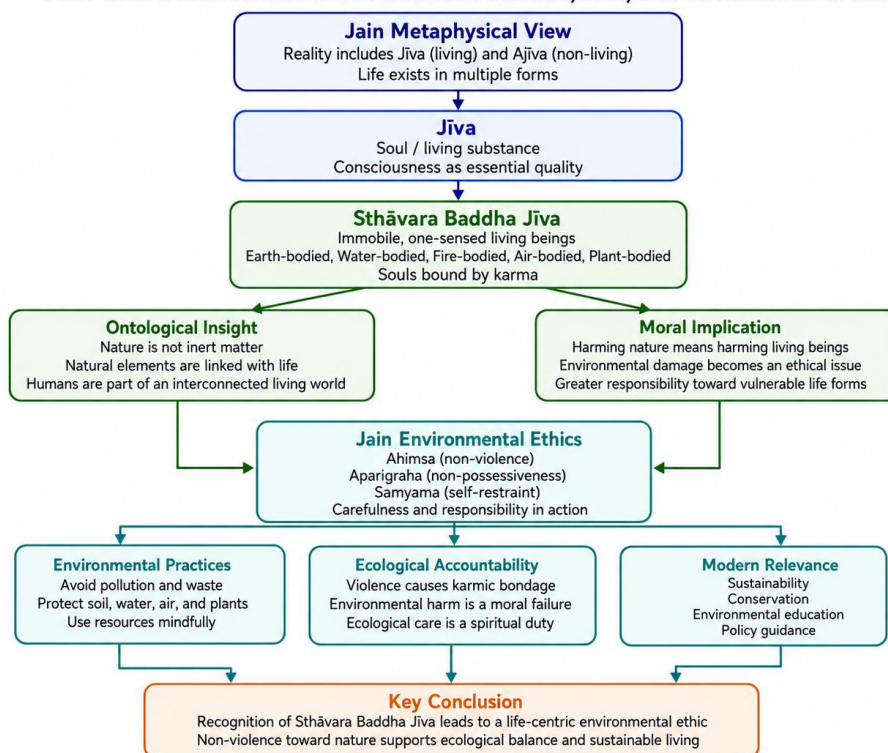


Fig. 2. Sthāvara Jīva and Jain environmental ethics.

7. Jīva Theory and the Ontology of Nature in Jainism

Jain philosophy presents a distinctive view of life and nature through the doctrine of jīva and ajīva. Jain metaphysics holds that reality consists of living and non-living substances. Jīva means living substance or soul, while ajīva refers to non-living substance. Ajīva includes matter, space, time, motion, and rest. Jīva is eternal and is marked by caitanya, or consciousness, which is its essential quality (Jaini, 1979). Life is therefore not understood only in biological terms. It is also understood as a spiritual reality.

Jainism gives a wider meaning to life than many modern approaches. Contemporary thought often associates life with organisms that show visible movement, sensation, or advanced cognition. Jain philosophy does not restrict life in this way. It teaches that consciousness exists in different degrees. Some beings possess highly developed consciousness, while others possess subtle and limited awareness. This makes it possible to include many forms of existence within the moral category of life.

This broader ontology is central to Jain environmental thought. The natural world is not seen as dead, passive, or merely material. It is a living continuum containing countless forms of life. Earth, water, fire, air, and plants are connected with

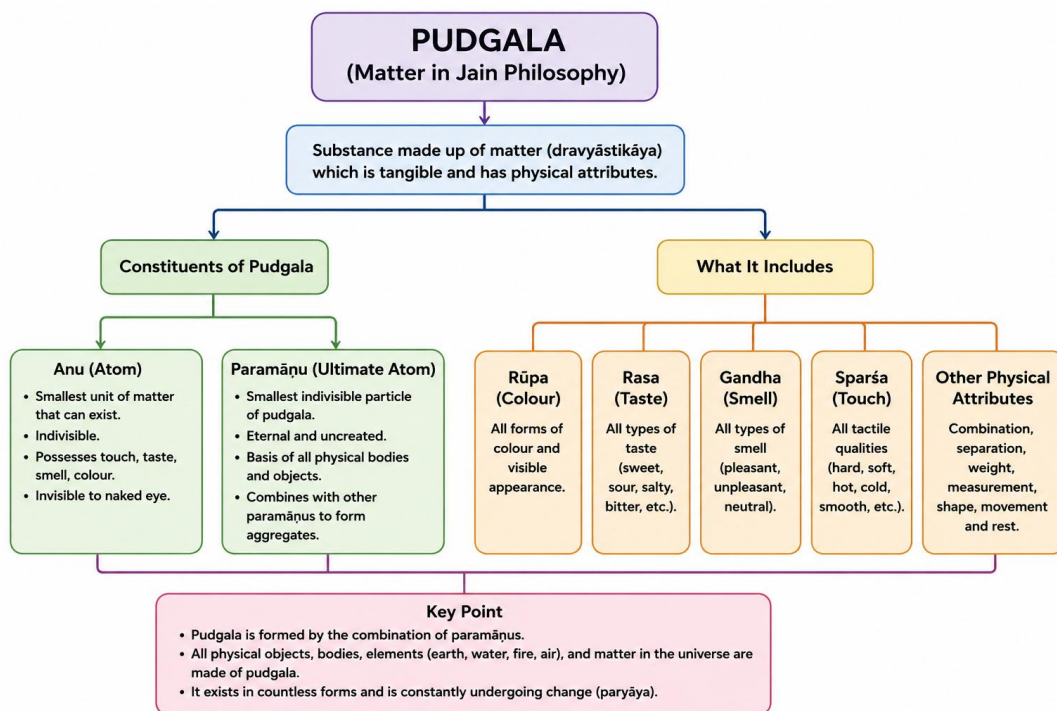
sthāvara jīvas. Although they have only one sense, they remain living souls (Siriwardene, 2026). Jainism therefore gives moral importance to forms of life that are invisible, silent, or unable to move.

This ontological view changes the ethical status of nature. Nature is not only a resource for survival, comfort, or economic development. It is also a domain of living beings. Human beings cannot claim absolute ownership over the natural world. Cutting plants, polluting water, disturbing soil, wasting resources, or damaging air involves harm to living beings. The doctrine of jīva therefore becomes the foundation of Jain environmental ethics. Since life exists in visible and invisible forms, human action must be guided by ahiṃsā and restraint (Chapple, 2002; Tatia, 1994).

Jain ontology also supports aparigraha. Excessive desire and consumption intensify violence against nature. By limiting wants, humans reduce ecological harm and cultivate disciplined living. Thus, the Jain theory of jīva offers a spiritual and ethical interpretation of nature. Environmental responsibility becomes a moral obligation toward all living beings rather than a merely modern social duty.

8. Pudgala and Environmental Law

In Jain philosophy, pudgala refers to matter or material substance. It is one of the principal forms of ajīva, or non-living reality. Pudgala includes physical matter that can be touched, tasted, smelled, or seen. It exists in subtle and gross forms. The body, air, water, soil, fire, minerals, and material objects are connected with pudgala. Jainism does not separate matter entirely from ethical life because human actions toward material substances affect living beings and karmic bondage (Jaini, 1979).



Flow chart 1. Detailed forms of Pudgala and its environmental connections.

The connection between pudgala and environmental law becomes clear through Jainism’s view of material nature. Environmental law regulates the use of natural resources, prevents pollution, protects ecosystems, and maintains ecological balance. Jain thought similarly teaches that careless use of matter harms life. Polluting water, contaminating air, degrading soil, and wasting resources disturb both material nature and the living beings dependent on it (Tatia, 1994).

Pudgala is also significant because karma itself is understood in Jainism as a subtle form of matter that attaches to the soul through violent or careless conduct. Environmental harm therefore has external, moral, and spiritual consequences. It damages the environment and also increases karmic bondage for the person or community causing harm (Jaini, 1979). Modern environmental law is concerned with sustainability, prevention of harm, ecological justice, and duties toward future generations. Jain principles such as ahiṃsā and aparigraha strengthen these legal goals by giving them an ethical and spiritual basis. Corporate and social responsibility toward the environment expresses this wider duty to protect nature from exploitation and injustice (Lutfiyani & Santoso, 2025).

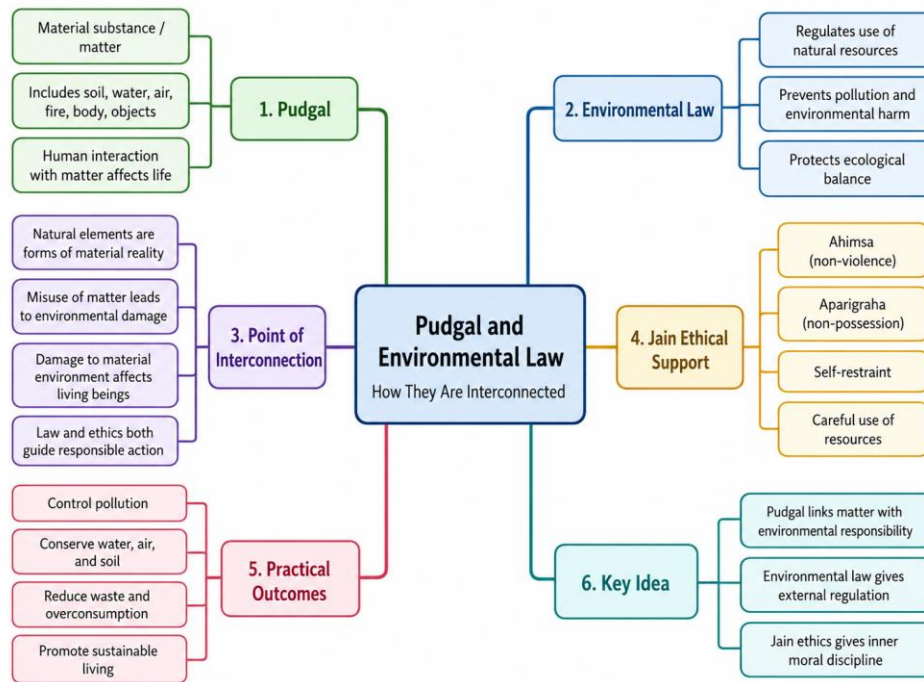


Fig. 3. Pudgala and environmental law.

Thus, pudgala helps connect Jain metaphysics with environmental law. It shows that matter is not ethically neutral in human practice. The way humans use material resources directly affects ecological balance, living beings, and moral accountability.

9. Ahimsā as an Environmental Ethic

Ahimsā, or non-violence, is the central principle of Jain ethical thought. It is not limited to avoiding physical injury to humans or animals. In Jainism, ahimsā means avoiding harm to all forms of life, visible or invisible, mobile or immobile, developed or subtle. This wider meaning rests on the Jain belief that life exists in multiple forms and that every living being possesses a soul. Moral responsibility therefore extends beyond human society to the entire natural world (Tatia, 1994).

The ecological importance of ahimsā becomes clear when applied to sthāvāra baddha jīvas. These are immobile living beings whose souls are bound by karma and whose consciousness is highly limited. Earth-bodied, water-bodied, fire-bodied, air-bodied, and plant-bodied beings belong to this category. Although they possess only touch, Jainism recognises them as living beings (Jaini, 1979). This gives nature moral status. Soil, water, air, fire, and plants are not lifeless objects; they are linked with subtle forms of life.

Because of this belief, environmental harm becomes a form of violence. Cutting trees without need, polluting rivers, contaminating air, wasting water, damaging soil, and overusing natural resources are not only ecological problems. They are ethical failures that injure living beings and deepen human participation in violence (Siriwardene, 2026). Jainism therefore changes the meaning of environmental degradation. It is not merely a technical issue solved by science or policy. It is a moral issue requiring self-discipline, restraint, and compassion.

Ahimsā also challenges human-centred attitudes toward nature. Modern society often treats the environment as a resource for comfort, profit, and development. Jain thought rejects this assumption. It teaches that humans are not absolute owners of nature. They are responsible participants in a larger living order. Jainism does not deny practical human needs, but it insists on careful and limited use of resources. The goal is to minimise injury and live with awareness. Aparigraha supports this ethic because excessive desire leads to excessive consumption and greater violence against nature (Sayem & Mostofa, 2026). Ahimsā therefore functions as both personal discipline and social environmental ethic.

10. Jaina Perspective on the Environment

Jain spiritual teaching gives a deep ecological message. It teaches that nature is not lifeless matter but a living system filled with many forms of jīva. Life exists not only in humans and animals, but also in plants, water, air, fire, and earth-bodied beings. For this reason, environmental care becomes a moral and spiritual duty in Jain thought (Jaini, 1979).

A central Jain principle states: *parasparopagraho jīvānām*, meaning that all living beings support and depend on one another. This principle teaches that no living being exists in isolation. Humans, animals, plants, water, soil, and air are interconnected. This view closely resembles the modern ecological idea of interdependence. When humans pollute rivers, destroy forests, or damage soil, the whole web of life is affected. Protecting the environment therefore means protecting the network of life itself (Tatia, 1994).

Another important Jain teaching is that non-violence is the highest duty. In environmental terms, this means that unnecessary cutting of trees, wasting water, polluting air, and destroying natural resources are forms of violence. The Jain phrase 'live and let live' expresses respect for all forms of existence. It asks human beings to live in ways that allow other beings to survive. Forests, rivers, animals, plants, and subtle forms of life hold value beyond human profit or convenience (Siriwardene, 2026).

The teaching of *aparigraha* instructs individuals to limit possessions and desires. In ecological terms, overconsumption produces deforestation, pollution, waste, and climate stress. *Aparigraha* therefore encourages simple living and responsible use of resources (Sayem & Mostofa, 2026). The discipline of careful conduct, or *samiti*, further instructs individuals to act mindfully while walking, speaking, eating, using water, and handling natural objects. Such carefulness protects visible and invisible forms of life. Jain *vāṇī* therefore presents nature as living, interdependent, and ethically significant.

In Jain philosophy, the distinction between living and non-living things is not only a biological issue but also an ethical and environmental issue. Jainism divides reality into **jīva** and **ajīva**. **Jīva** means living beings or souls, while **ajīva** means non-living substances such as matter, space, time, motion, and rest (Jaini, 1979; Dundas, 2002). This distinction helps explain how humans should relate to the natural world. Living beings are not limited to humans and animals. Jain thought also recognises plants, microorganisms, water-bodied beings, fire-bodied beings, air-bodied beings, and earth-bodied beings as forms of life. This broad view creates a deep respect for life and supports an environmental ethic based on care, restraint, and nonviolence (Chapple, 2002; Sangave, 2001).

From a modern environmental perspective, this idea is important because it challenges the belief that nature exists only for human use. Jainism teaches that all living beings have value, even if they are small, weak, or invisible. This view is connected with **ahimsā**, or nonviolence, which is one of the central principles of Jain ethics. **Ahimsā** means avoiding harm to living beings through thought, speech, and action. In environmental terms, this principle supports compassion toward animals, protection of plants, careful use of natural resources, and reduction of human activities that damage ecosystems (Phulwaria, 2025; Siriwardene, 2026). Therefore, the Jain idea of *jīva* encourages ecological responsibility because it sees life as interconnected.

The concept of **ajīva** is also environmentally meaningful. Non-living elements such as soil, water, air, and minerals may not be living in the ordinary biological sense, but they support the survival of living beings. If water is polluted, aquatic life suffers. If air is contaminated, humans, animals, and plants are affected. If soil is damaged, food production and plant life decline. Thus, the relationship between *jīva* and *ajīva* shows that living beings depend on non-living environmental conditions. Jain philosophy therefore supports a holistic understanding of ecology, where harm to the non-living environment indirectly harms living beings (Chapple, 2002; Sayem & Mostofa, 2026).

Another important Jain principle is **aparigraha**, which means non-possession or limiting desire. This principle has strong environmental relevance because overconsumption is one of the causes of ecological crisis. Modern society often promotes excessive production, consumerism, and exploitation of natural resources. Jain ethics, however, encourages moderation, simplicity, and self-control. *Aparigraha* teaches that people should take only what they need and avoid unnecessary accumulation. This idea is closely related to sustainable living because it reduces waste, pollution, and pressure on natural systems (Sayem & Mostofa, 2026; Pal, 2026).

Jain environmental thought also connects with the idea of spiritual biophilia, or love for life. Śrīmad Rājcandra's teachings present nature and living beings as worthy of reverence and ethical concern. This spiritual attitude can strengthen ecological awareness because it encourages humans to see nature not as a resource to dominate but as a living network deserving respect (Bohanec, 2026). Similar ideas are found in Indian philosophical traditions, where nature, self-discipline, and moral duty are connected with human well-being and social harmony (Dutta Banerjee & Mete, 2024a, 2024b).

In the present climate crisis, these Jain principles are highly relevant. Environmental problems such as pollution, deforestation, species extinction, and climate change are linked to human greed, violence toward nature, and irresponsible consumption. Jain ethics offers an alternative model based on nonviolence, restraint, ecological justice, and responsibility. These values can also support modern discussions on corporate social responsibility, where businesses are expected to reduce environmental harm and act with ecological accountability (Lutfiyani & Santoso, 2025). Therefore, the Jain distinction between living and non-living things is not merely philosophical. It provides a practical environmental framework that teaches respect for life, protection of nature, and sustainable human behaviour.

11. Karma Theory and Ecological Accountability

Jain karma theory gives environmental responsibility a strong spiritual foundation. In Jainism, karma is not only a moral idea. It is also a subtle form of matter that attaches to the soul because of actions, passions, thoughts, and desires. Every act of violence, whether performed through body, speech, or mind, creates karmic bondage. This bondage covers the natural purity and knowledge of the soul. Harm done to living beings therefore affects both the external world and the moral condition of the person who causes harm (Siriwardene, 2026).

This idea becomes especially important in relation to *sthāvāra baddha jīvas*. These immobile beings include earth-bodied, water-bodied, fire-bodied, air-bodied, and plant-bodied forms of life. Their consciousness is limited, but Jainism still recognises them as living souls. Because they cannot move or protect themselves, they are highly vulnerable to human actions. Polluting water, damaging soil, cutting trees unnecessarily, wasting resources, and contaminating air become forms of violence toward subtle life forms (Jaini, 1979; Tatia, 1994).

Karma theory creates ecological accountability. Environmental harm is not outside human responsibility. It becomes part of one's ethical and spiritual life. A person who harms nature increases karmic bondage because nature contains many forms of life. This view makes environmental responsibility deeply personal. It does not depend only on law, punishment, or government regulation. It begins with inner discipline, awareness, and self-control.

Ahiṃsā strengthens this ecological accountability. When applied to the environment, it defines ecological destruction as violence and as a moral failure caused by carelessness, greed, and attachment (Phulwaria, 2025). Aparigraha also supports ecological self-regulation because excessive consumption increases pollution, waste, and exploitation of resources (Sayem & Mostofa, 2026). Modern discussions of environmental justice and corporate social responsibility similarly insist that individuals and institutions must be accountable for the ecological consequences of their actions (Lutfiyani & Santoso, 2025). Through karma, ahiṃsā, aparigraha, and awareness of *sthāvāra* life, Jainism offers a powerful model of ecological accountability (Pal, 2026; Bohanec, 2026).

12. Jain Environmental Ethics and Modern Sustainability Discourse

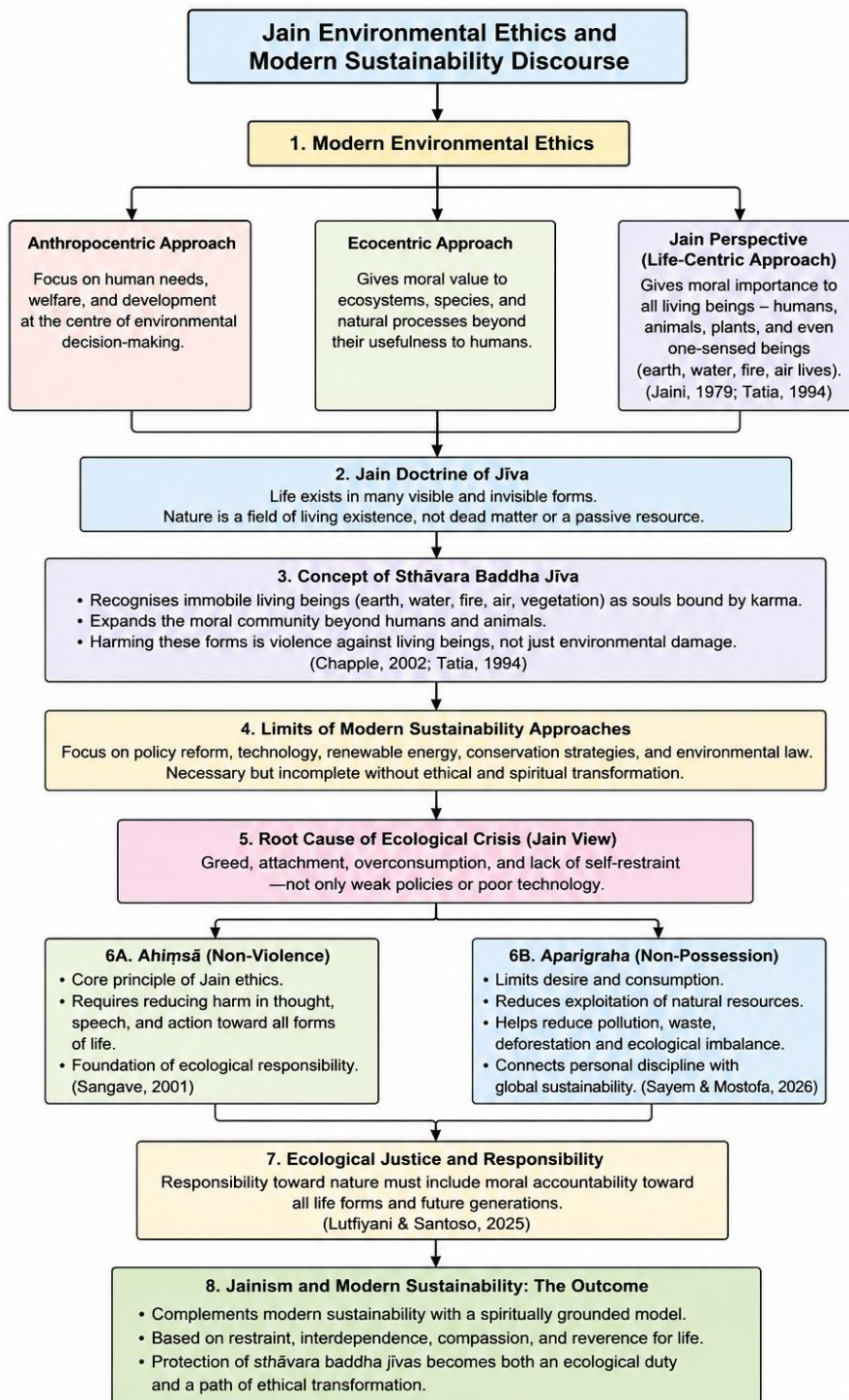
Modern environmental ethics is often divided between anthropocentric and ecocentric approaches. Anthropocentric ethics places human needs, welfare, and development at the centre of environmental decision-making. Ecocentric ethics gives moral value to ecosystems, species, and natural processes beyond their usefulness to humans. Jain philosophy offers a different and deeper perspective. It is life-centric because it gives moral importance to all living beings, including humans, animals, plants, and subtle one-sensed lives such as earth-bodied, water-bodied, fire-bodied, and air-bodied beings (Jaini, 1979; Tatia, 1994).

The Jain doctrine of *jīva* teaches that life exists in visible and invisible forms. Nature is not dead matter or a passive resource for human consumption. It is a field of living existence. *Sthāvāra baddha jīva* is central here because it recognises immobile beings as souls bound by karma. This expands the moral community beyond humans and animals. Harming soil, water, air, fire, and vegetation becomes not merely environmental damage, but violence against living beings (Chapple, 2002; Tatia, 1994).

Modern sustainability usually emphasises policy reform, technological innovation, renewable energy, conservation, and environmental law. These approaches are necessary, but Jainism adds a moral and spiritual dimension. It identifies greed, attachment, overconsumption, and lack of self-restraint as root causes of ecological crisis. Ahiṃsā requires humans to reduce harm in thought, speech, and action toward all forms of life (Sangave, 2001). Aparigraha supports sustainable living by

limiting possessions and consumption. It reduces pollution, waste, deforestation, and ecological imbalance (Sayem & Mostofa, 2026).

Jain environmental ethics also supports ecological justice. It reminds individuals, societies, and institutions that responsibility toward nature must go beyond legal compliance. It must include moral accountability toward all life forms and future generations (Lutfiyani & Santoso, 2025). Jainism therefore complements modern sustainability by offering a spiritually grounded model based on restraint, interdependence, compassion, and reverence for life. The protection of *sthāvara baddha jīvas* becomes both an ecological duty and a path of ethical transformation.



Flow chart 2. Jain ethics and sustainability.

13. Significance of the Study

The present study is significant because it highlights the ecological relevance of Jain philosophy in the context of contemporary environmental crises. Climate change, pollution, deforestation, biodiversity loss, and overconsumption show that environmental degradation is not only a scientific or technological problem. It is also an ethical and spiritual problem.

Jain philosophy provides a strong ethical framework for addressing such problems through *ahiṃsā*, *aparigraha*, *karma*, and *saṃyama* (Chapple, 2002; Jaini, 1979).

The study is also significant because it explains *sthāvāra baddha jīva* as a foundation of Jain environmental ethics. Jainism recognises earth-bodied, water-bodied, fire-bodied, air-bodied, and plant-bodied beings as living forms bound by *karma*. This view expands the moral community beyond humans and animals and gives ethical value to natural elements that modern development models often treat as lifeless resources (Tatia, 1994; Siriwardene, 2026).

Another significant aspect of the study is its challenge to anthropocentric environmental thinking. Human-centred development often justifies the exploitation of nature for economic growth and material comfort. Jain environmental ethics rejects this narrow view. It presents human beings as responsible members of an interconnected living world rather than as absolute owners of nature (Dundas, 2002; Chapple, 2002).

The study contributes to environmental education by showing that students need more than scientific facts about pollution, climate change, and conservation. They also need ethical values such as non-violence, restraint, compassion, and responsibility toward all forms of life. Jain principles strengthen ecological awareness and moral sensitivity (Phulwaria, 2025; Bohanec, 2026). The study also supports practical sustainability because *aparigraha* promotes reduced consumption, simple living, and careful use of resources (Sayem & Mostofa, 2026).

14. Findings of the Study

14.1. Concept of Sthāvāra Baddha Jīva

The study finds that *sthāvāra baddha jīva* is a central concept in Jain environmental thought. It refers to immobile, one-sensed living beings whose souls are bound by *karma*. These include earth-bodied, water-bodied, fire-bodied, air-bodied, and plant-bodied lives. Jainism recognises them as living realities with ethical and spiritual significance, thereby expanding the idea of life beyond humans, animals, and visible organisms (Jaini, 1979; Tatia, 1994; Siriwardene, 2026).

14.2. Ahiṃsā and Environmental Responsibility

The study finds that *ahiṃsā* forms the ethical basis of Jain environmental responsibility. Non-violence includes care for plants, soil, water, air, fire, and subtle life forms. Pollution, deforestation, wastage of water, destruction of vegetation, and misuse of resources therefore become forms of violence. Jainism transforms environmental protection into a moral and spiritual duty (Chapple, 2002; Sangave, 2001; Tatia, 1994).

14.3. Jain Metaphysics and Environmental Ethics

The study finds that *jīva*, *ajīva*, *karma*, *pudgala*, *aparigraha*, and *saṃyama* provide a philosophical base for environmental ethics. *Jīva* theory establishes that life exists in many forms. *Karma* theory creates ecological accountability. *Pudgala* connects material reality with environmental law, while *aparigraha* and *saṃyama* promote restraint and responsible use of resources (Jaini, 1979; Tatia, 1994; Sayem & Mostofa, 2026).

14.4. Jainism as a Life-Centric Framework

The study finds that Jain environmental ethics is best understood as life-centric. It is not purely anthropocentric or only ecocentric. Jainism gives moral value to all life forms and rejects the idea that nature exists only for human benefit. It places humans within the web of life rather than above it (Chapple, 2002; Jaini, 1979; Dundas, 2002).

14.5. Relevance to Sustainability

The study finds that Jain environmental ethics has direct relevance for sustainability debates. It strengthens policy, law, technology, renewable energy, and conservation by adding ethical and spiritual discipline. It identifies greed, attachment, overconsumption, and lack of self-restraint as roots of ecological crisis. *Ahiṃsā* and *aparigraha* support reduced consumption, conservation, ecological justice, and sustainable living (Pal, 2026; Sayem & Mostofa, 2026; Lutfiyani & Santoso, 2025).

14.6. Educational, Practical, and Social Value

The study finds that Jain ecological thought has strong educational, practical, and social value. It develops environmental awareness, empathy, responsibility, and respect for life. It encourages simple living, careful consumption, avoidance of waste, and protection of resources. Socially, it supports ecological justice, moral accountability, compassion, and duties toward future generations (Phulwaria, 2025; Bohanec, 2026; Lutfiyani & Santoso, 2025).

15. Educational Implications

The Jain understanding of nature as living has important implications for environmental education. Jain philosophy does not view nature as lifeless matter or as a mere resource for human use. It teaches that life exists in earth, water, fire, air, and vegetation. This idea is rooted in the doctrine of *jīva*, which recognises both mobile and immobile beings as living realities (Jaini, 1979; Tatia, 1994). Environmental education based on this view develops respect for nature and ethical responsibility toward natural elements.

Environmental education often focuses on scientific facts about climate change, pollution, biodiversity loss, and resource depletion. These subjects are necessary, but they remain incomplete without ethical values. Jain environmental ethics teaches *ahiṃsā* as a principle that applies not only to humans and animals, but also to plants and natural elements (Chapple, 2002). This approach helps learners understand environmental harm as a moral issue as well as a scientific and economic problem.

Aparigraha is equally useful in education. It teaches that excessive desire and consumption create violence, exploitation, and ecological imbalance. In the modern context, this principle supports simple living, reduced waste, responsible consumption, and sustainable use of resources (Sangave, 2001; Sayem & Mostofa, 2026). Such values connect personal lifestyle choices with wider environmental responsibility.

16. Practical Implications of the Study

The study establishes strong practical implications for individual behaviour, education, public policy, and institutional responsibility. Jain environmental ethics demonstrates that environmental protection begins with disciplined personal conduct. The principle of *ahiṃsā* directs individuals to avoid unnecessary harm to all forms of life, including plants, water, soil, air, and subtle living beings (Jaini, 1979; Tatia, 1994). In practical life, this principle supports careful use of natural resources, protection of vegetation, reduction of waste, and responsible consumption.

Aparigraha provides a clear ethical foundation for sustainable living. It establishes that excessive desire and attachment lead to overconsumption, exploitation of resources, and ecological imbalance. By limiting wants and possessions, individuals reduce pollution, waste generation, deforestation, and misuse of natural resources (Sayem & Mostofa, 2026). Jain ethics therefore becomes a practical guide for simple living, mindful consumption, and sustainable lifestyle practices.

The study also strengthens the role of environmental education. Jain philosophy teaches students that nature is a living reality rather than lifeless matter. The concept of *sthāvara baddha jīva* develops respect for earth, water, fire, air, and plants as forms of life with moral significance (Siriwardene, 2026). This approach builds environmental awareness, empathy, responsibility, and ethical sensitivity among learners.

At the policy level, Jain environmental ethics supports conservation, biodiversity protection, pollution control, renewable resource use, and minimal ecological disturbance. Public policy based on *ahiṃsā* and *aparigraha* gives importance to ecological balance along with human development. It also strengthens institutional accountability by placing moral responsibility at the centre of environmental governance. Jain philosophy therefore provides a practical ethical framework for sustainable living, responsible education, and environmentally conscious policy-making.

17. Social Implications of the Study

The social implications of the study are significant. Jain environmental ethics promotes a society based on non-violence, compassion, restraint, and respect for all forms of life. It challenges the human-centred attitude that treats nature only as a resource for comfort and profit. Instead, Jainism presents nature as an interconnected living system in which humans, animals, plants, water, soil, and air are morally connected (Dundas, 2002; Chapple, 2002).

The study also supports ecological justice. Environmental destruction affects vulnerable communities, future generations, and non-human life forms. Jain ethics teaches that responsibility toward nature should not be limited to law or punishment. It should include moral accountability, self-restraint, and concern for all living beings (Lutfiyani & Santoso, 2025; Pal, 2026).

The concept of *sthāvara baddha jīva* strengthens social awareness about hidden forms of violence. Pollution, excessive use of water, forest destruction, and careless consumption are not only environmental problems. They are forms of harm caused by greed, attachment, and lack of discipline (Tatia, 1994; Siriwardene, 2026). This understanding encourages more responsible patterns of production, consumption, and development.

Jain ecological thought also promotes peaceful coexistence. Its teachings of *ahiṃsā*, *aparigraha*, and *saṃyama* encourage people to live with moderation and care. These values support a more balanced relationship between human society and the environment and reduce conflict over natural resources (Sangave, 2001; Sayem & Mostofa, 2026).

18. Conclusion

The concept of *sthāvāra baddha jīva* occupies a central position in Jain environmental ethics because it expands the meaning of life beyond human beings, animals, and visible organisms. Jain philosophy recognises immobile natural elements such as earth, water, fire, air, and vegetation as forms of living existence bound by *karma*. This view gives nature moral and spiritual status. It challenges the modern tendency to treat the environment as inert matter or as a resource meant only for human use. By placing all forms of life within the moral community, Jainism offers a life-centred approach to ecology (Jaini, 1979; Tatia, 1994; Chapple, 2002).

This ecological vision is grounded in the broader framework of Indian philosophical thought. Jainism connects metaphysics, ethics, and practical conduct. Indian philosophical systems have long reflected on the relationship between the self, nature, duty, and liberation (Dundas, 2002; Dutta Banerjee & Mete, 2024a). Jain thought develops this relationship through *jīva*, *karma*, *ahiṃsā*, *aparigraha*, and *saṃyama*. These principles show that environmental care is part of spiritual discipline and responsible living (Sangave, 2001; Siriwardene, 2026).

Ahiṃsā gives Jain environmental ethics its strongest moral force. If natural elements contain life, then unnecessary environmental damage becomes violence. Pollution, deforestation, waste, and overconsumption are not only ecological problems. They are moral failures. *Aparigraha* strengthens this view by teaching that attachment and excessive possession increase the exploitation of nature. Reduced consumption, simple living, and self-restraint therefore become essential practices for ecological balance (Sayem & Mostofa, 2026; Phulwaria, 2025).

Jain environmental ethics speaks directly to modern sustainability discourse. Climate change, biodiversity loss, resource depletion, and ecological injustice require more than technological solutions and legal regulation. They require ethical transformation. Jainism contributes to this need by linking sustainability with inner discipline, compassion, and reverence for life (Pal, 2026; Bohanec, 2026). Its emphasis on moral accountability also supports contemporary concerns about environmental justice and institutional responsibility (Lutfiyani & Santoso, 2025). Thus, Jain philosophy provides a coherent and forward-looking ecological framework. Its understanding of *sthāvāra baddha jīva* teaches that nature is a community of living beings, not a collection of objects. By combining non-violence, restraint, interdependence, and responsibility, Jain environmental ethics remains highly relevant for sustainable living in the contemporary world (Dutta Banerjee & Mete, 2024b).

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