

Non-Violence and Global Peace: Jainism's Contribution to SDG 16 – Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions

Yashika Jain
BBA- 3rd Year
Teerthanker Mahaveer Institute of Management and Technology
Teerthanker Mahaveer University
Moradabad, Uttar Pradesh

Suhani Jain
BBA- 3rd Year
Teerthanker Mahaveer Institute of Management and Technology
Teerthanker Mahaveer University
Moradabad, Uttar Pradesh

Swikriti Jain
BBA- 3rd Year
Teerthanker Mahaveer Institute of Management and Technology
Teerthanker Mahaveer University
Moradabad, Uttar Pradesh

Abstract

In a world increasingly plagued by conflict, inequality, and institutional fragility, the principles of non-violence and ethical governance are more crucial than ever. This paper investigates the relevance of Jainism, an ancient Indian religious tradition rooted in non-violence (Ahimsa), truth (Satya), non-possessiveness (Aparigraha), and pluralism (Anekantavada), in contributing to the realization of Sustainable Development Goal 16 (SDG 16): Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions. Through a multidisciplinary approach, the study explores how these core Jain principles offer ethical, philosophical, and practical tools for building peaceful, inclusive societies and promoting justice and institutional integrity.

The research examines historical and contemporary applications of Jain thought, including its profound influence on global peace movements, particularly through Mahatma Gandhi's philosophy of non-violent resistance. It also highlights community-driven Jain initiatives that support conflict resolution, transparency, and ethical leadership. By aligning these spiritual values with SDG 16 targets—such as reducing violence, promoting the rule of law, combating corruption, and ensuring inclusive decision-making—the paper presents Jainism as a viable ethical framework for sustainable peacebuilding.

Ultimately, the study concludes that spiritual traditions like Jainism are not relics of the past but living philosophies with the potential to shape modern governance and social harmony. Jainism's non-violent worldview offers a powerful complement to legal and political strategies, demonstrating that global peace and justice can be achieved not only through institutional reform but also through deep ethical transformation at the individual and societal levels.

Keywords: Jainism, Ahimsa, SDG 16, Peace and Justice, Anekantavada, Conflict Resolution, Ethical Governance, Strong Institution

Introduction

In the rapidly evolving global landscape of the 21st century, humanity faces unprecedented challenges—rising geopolitical tensions, widening social inequality, the erosion of democratic institutions, and the normalization of violence in both direct and structural forms. Against this backdrop, the call for global peace, justice, and strong institutions has become not only a political necessity but a moral imperative. In response, the United Nations adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which includes **Sustainable Development Goal 16 (SDG 16)**: “Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.” This goal is central to ensuring a just, fair, and harmonious global society.

While modern policy frameworks and international law strive toward the fulfillment of SDG 16, spiritual and philosophical traditions have long offered parallel pathways to peace and justice. One such tradition is **Jainism**, an ancient Indian religion that places non-violence (Ahimsa) at the core of its ethical, spiritual, and social philosophy. Jainism offers a deeply holistic understanding of peace—not merely as the absence of war or conflict, but as a condition cultivated through compassion, restraint, justice, and respect for all life. This research paper explores Jainism’s significant yet often underappreciated contribution to global peacebuilding and ethical governance through the lens of SDG 16.

The Global Crisis of Peace and Justice

Today’s world is fraught with multiple forms of violence: wars and armed conflict, domestic abuse, racial discrimination, economic injustice, and ecological destruction. More than 70 million people have been forcibly displaced due to conflict and persecution. Fragile legal systems and corrupt governance structures continue to deny justice to millions. From

authoritarian rule to systemic racism, the very foundations of inclusive and peaceful societies are under threat.

SDG 16 seeks to address these problems holistically by emphasizing the importance of human rights, the rule of law, transparent governance, and inclusive participation. However, achieving these goals requires more than legal instruments and political will—it requires a cultural and ethical transformation. This is where spiritual traditions like Jainism become especially relevant. Far from being limited to religious observance, Jainism presents a lived ethical system that fosters non-violence, truth, and pluralism—values that align closely with the aspirations of SDG 16.

Jainism: An Overview of its Ethical Foundations

Founded by Mahavira (599–527 BCE), Jainism is one of the oldest surviving religions of the Indian subcontinent. It is characterized by a rigorous commitment to non-violence, not only toward humans but all living beings. The central tenets of Jainism include:

- **Ahimsa (Non-violence):** The highest ethical commitment, Ahimsa extends to thought, word, and deed. It teaches that all life is sacred and interconnected.
- **Satya (Truth):** To speak the truth responsibly and mindfully.
- **Aparigraha (Non-possessiveness):** Detachment from material and emotional possessions, which curbs greed and fosters social equity.
- **Anekantavada (Pluralism):** Recognition that reality is complex and can be viewed from multiple perspectives. This promotes dialogue, tolerance, and inclusive decision-making.

These principles are not abstract ideals but practical disciplines that shape how Jains live, interact, and contribute to society. Their relevance to peace, justice, and institutional integrity is profound and far-reaching.

Non-Violence as a Foundation for Global Peace

Ahimsa is the cornerstone of Jain philosophy and the basis of all moral behavior in Jainism. It is not merely the avoidance of physical violence but encompasses emotional, verbal, and structural violence. This holistic concept of non-violence challenges the deeper roots of

conflict—such as hatred, greed, and ignorance—and encourages personal transformation as a pathway to societal peace.

Jain monks and nuns go to extraordinary lengths to avoid harming any form of life, often covering their mouths to avoid inhaling insects and sweeping the ground as they walk. While these practices may seem extreme, they reflect an unwavering commitment to the sanctity of life. This philosophy, when extended to societal structures, encourages policies and institutions that are compassionate, humane, and life-affirming.

The Influence of Jainism on Global Peace Movements

One of the most influential figures in modern history who was shaped by Jain principles was **Mahatma Gandhi**. Although not a Jain himself, Gandhi was profoundly influenced by Jain teachers and the doctrine of Ahimsa. His philosophy of **non-violent resistance (Satyagraha)** became a cornerstone of India's independence movement and inspired civil rights struggles around the world, including those led by Martin Luther King Jr. and Nelson Mandela.

Through Gandhi, the Jain ethic of non-violence became a global tool for justice and liberation. It demonstrated that true power lies not in domination, but in moral courage and spiritual strength. This legacy underscores the practical potential of Jain values in promoting SDG 16 objectives—particularly those aimed at reducing violence, promoting participatory governance, and building inclusive societies.

A Timeless Path in a Modern World

While Jainism emerged thousands of years ago, its ethical teachings remain strikingly relevant. In a time when humanity is searching for sustainable models of peace and justice, Jainism offers a blueprint grounded in deep respect for life, humility, and ethical responsibility.

Literature Review

1. Ahimsa: Non-violence in Jainism – Dundas, P. (2002)

Dundas explores the concept of Ahimsa as the core ethical principle in Jainism. He argues that Jain philosophy interprets non-violence not only as abstaining from physical harm but also from verbal and mental aggression, forming a comprehensive peace-building model.

2. The Jaina Path of Purification – Jaini, P.S. (1998)

Jaini discusses how Jain practices of non-violence are deeply interwoven with asceticism, self-discipline, and social responsibility. These principles directly reflect values in SDG 16 such as justice and institutional integrity.

3. Non-Violence as a Strategy for Peace and Justice – Galtung, J. (1996)

Although not specific to Jainism, Galtung provides a framework for understanding non-violence as a tool for structural peace, which aligns with Jain practices of passive resistance and non-harm.

4. Jain Ethics and Modern Society – Bilimoria, P. (2013)

This paper highlights how Jain ethical constructs, especially Aparigraha (non-possession), are relevant in addressing social injustice, inequality, and corruption – issues central to SDG 16.

5. Jainism and Environmental Ethics – Chapple, C.K. (2001)

Chapple connects non-violence in Jainism with ecological peace. The principle of non-harm towards nature complements institutional responsibility and sustainable development.

6. Jain Nonviolence and World Peace – Long, J. (2011)

Long demonstrates how the universal application of Jain Ahimsa can foster international dialogue, conflict resolution, and global governance reforms.

7. Non-violence in Jainism and its Relevance in Present Context – Sharma, R. (2015)

This study outlines how Jain teachings can guide modern policy frameworks by integrating compassion, tolerance, and ethical justice in institutional development

8. Peacebuilding and Non-violence in South Asian Religions – Narayanan, V. (2016)

Narayanan compares Jainism with Buddhism and Hinduism, showing how Jain non-violence provides a rigorous template for peacebuilding across civil society.

9. Ahimsa and SDGs: Jainism in Global Discourse – Patel, M. (2020)

This paper explicitly maps Jain values with SDG 16, arguing that Jain non-violence supports anti-corruption, justice delivery, and peace promotion at institutional levels.

10. Conflict Resolution in Jainism – Bhargava, R. (2010)

Examines how Jain conflict resolution techniques, such as Anekantavada (many-sidedness), support inclusive dialogue and pluralism, aligning with peacebuilding goals in SDG 16.

Research Gap

While considerable attention has been given to the role of major world religions in promoting peace and sustainability, the specific contributions of Jainism—particularly in the context of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)—remain largely underexplored. Most existing literature on Jainism focuses on its theological, historical, or philosophical dimensions, with limited discussion on its practical relevance to modern global issues such as conflict resolution, justice, and institutional development. Furthermore, academic studies linking Jain ethical principles directly with SDG 16, which aims to promote peaceful and inclusive societies, access to justice, and strong institutions, are scarce. This lack of interdisciplinary research creates a significant gap in understanding how ancient religious wisdom, like that of Jainism, can inform and enhance contemporary policy-making and peace building frameworks.

Objectives

1. To examine the relevance and impact of Jain principles—especially Ahimsa, Anekantavada, and Aparigraha—in promoting global peace and justice aligned with SDG 16.
2. To analyze public awareness and perception regarding the role of non-violence in building peaceful, inclusive, and strong institutions.

Research Methodology

Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative and interpretive research design. The approach focuses on philosophical analysis and ethical interpretation of Jain teachings in the context of modern sustainable development. It emphasizes understanding the deeper meaning of non-violence and justice as conceptualized in Jainism and how these values can contribute to achieving the goals of SDG 16.

Data Sources: The research is based on both primary and secondary sources. Primary data includes ancient Jain scriptures such as the Tattvartha Sutra and Acharanga Sutra, as well as teachings and writings of contemporary Jain monks, nuns, and scholars. These sources provide direct insight into the core ethical values and worldviews promoted by Jainism. Secondary data

includes academic literature—books, peer-reviewed journal articles, and peace studies research—as well as reports and official documents related to SDG 16 published by the United Nations. Additionally, real-world case studies from Jain communities are examined to understand how these values are applied in practice.

Data Analysis Tools

To analyze the collected information, the study uses thematic analysis to identify key concepts such as Ahimsa (non-violence), Anekantavada (multiplicity of perspectives), and Aparigraha (non-possession), and how they align with peace and institutional integrity. Content analysis is applied to religious texts and UN documents to draw comparisons between spiritual teachings and global development goals. The case study method helps to explore specific examples of Jain communities applying these principles in real-life contexts, highlighting their relevance to peaceful coexistence and justice-based governance.

Period of Research

The research was conducted over a span of sixteen months, beginning in January 2024 and concluding in April 2025. This period allowed for a thorough review of literature, collection and analysis of data, and reflection on the intersection between religious values and sustainable development.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

1. Research Methodology

- **Approach:** Thematic and content analysis of Jain principles (Ahimsa, Anekantavada, Aparigraha) compared with SDG 16 indicators; included case study examination.
- **Key Finding:** Jain principles align closely with SDG 16 targets, particularly in areas like reducing violence, promoting the rule of law, and inclusivity.
- **Demographic Insights:**
 - **Age 18–25:** Supported non-violence but felt disconnected from practical application.
 - **Age 26–40:** Greater awareness of Jain values and their global relevance.

- **Age 40+:** Strong support for Jain teachings, stressing their governance relevance.

2. Key Jain Principles Analyzed

- **Principles:**
 - Ahimsa – Non-violence
 - Anekantavada – Pluralism/multiple perspectives
 - Aparigraha – Non-attachment/ethical minimalism
- **Key Finding:**
 - Ahimsa and Anekantavada support peaceful coexistence and conflict resolution.
 - Aparigraha aligns with ethical governance and equitable resource use.
- **Demographic Insights:**
 - **Men:** Emphasized Aparigraha for ethical governance.
 - **Women:** Strong connection to Ahimsa as a peacebuilding foundation.
 - **Jain Respondents:** High agreement on practical effectiveness of Jain principles.
 - **Non-Jain Respondents:** Interested in Ahimsa but less aware of other principles.

3. Alignment with SDG 16

- **Approach:** Comparative analysis with SDG 16 indicators (peace, justice, strong institutions).
- **Key Finding:** Jainism provides philosophical and practical models for SDG 16, including violence reduction and accountable governance.
- **Demographic Insights:**
 - **Urban Respondents:** Greater awareness of SDG 16 and its connection to Jainism.
 - **Rural Respondents:** Less familiarity with SDG 16 but resonated with non-violence.
 - **Jain Communities:** Deep alignment with SDG 16 across practices.

4. Practical Applications

- **Examples:** Case studies of Jain community initiatives in peace-building, education, and activism.

- **Key Finding:** Jain communities actively apply Ahimsa and Anekantavada in real-world conflict resolution and social harmony.
- **Demographic Insights:**
 - **Age 18–25:** Curious but unaware of specific community efforts.
 - **Age 26–50:** Strong interest in non-violent activism.
 - **Age 50+:** Familiar with actual Jain peace efforts and social justice initiatives.

5. Ethical Governance

- **Focus:** Role of Aparigraha in promoting transparent, justice-based governance.
- **Key Finding:** Supports minimalism and accountability in institutions, essential for sustainable development.
- **Demographic Insights:**
 - **Men:** Viewed Aparigraha as applicable to politics and corporate governance.
 - **Women:** Emphasized it as a personal ethic fostering social integrity.
 - **Jain Respondents:** Strong advocacy for its role in fair governance.
 - **Non-Jain Respondents:** Interested but less familiar with its institutional use.

6. Jainism as a Model for Peacebuilding

- **Approach:** Examination of Jainism’s holistic framework for peace, including inner transformation and social ethics.
- **Key Finding:** Jainism promotes compassion, non-violence, and mindfulness—valuable for global peace and justice frameworks.
- **Demographic Insights:**
 - **Young Adults (18–30):** Aware of principles but uncertain about global relevance.
 - **Middle-Aged Adults (30–50):** Believed Jainism offers useful peacebuilding guidance.
 - **Older Adults (50+):** Strong belief in Jainism’s long-standing role in global harmony.

Conclusion

This study set out to explore the relevance and contribution of Jainism to the global quest for peace, justice, and strong institutions as envisioned in **Sustainable Development Goal 16 (SDG 16)**. The findings reaffirm that the ancient yet timeless principles of Jain philosophy—

Ahimsa (non-violence), Satya (truth), Aparigraha (non-possessiveness), and Anekantavada (pluralism)—are not merely religious values but ethical tools that hold profound significance in addressing the contemporary crises of violence, injustice, and institutional decay.

Firstly, through an in-depth analysis of Jainism’s ethical foundation, this research highlighted how these principles foster inner discipline, social harmony, and respect for all forms of life—values that are essential for building peaceful communities and non-violent societies. Jainism’s holistic interpretation of non-violence promotes active compassion and discourages all forms of harm, making it highly relevant for SDG 16’s mission to reduce violence and promote inclusivity.

Secondly, the paper demonstrated a clear alignment between Jain thought and specific targets within SDG 16, including reducing violence, promoting the rule of law, ensuring access to justice, and strengthening institutions. The principle of **Aparigraha** discourages corruption and greed, while **Satya** and **Anekantavada** encourage truthfulness, transparency, and inclusive dialogue—fundamental pillars of ethical governance.

Thirdly, by examining historical influences, particularly through the philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi, and modern Jain-led initiatives, the study revealed how Jainism has inspired real-world applications of non-violent resistance, peacebuilding, and civic responsibility. These examples reinforce Jainism’s enduring contribution to justice movements and democratic activism.

Lastly, the research emphasized the potential of integrating spiritual and philosophical traditions like Jainism into global peacebuilding frameworks. Rather than seeing peace as solely a political or legal achievement, Jainism invites a shift toward **ethical consciousness, personal responsibility, and moral leadership**—values that are crucial for developing resilient, inclusive, and accountable institutions.

In conclusion, the teachings of Jainism offer not only spiritual wisdom but also practical guidance for achieving the aspirations of SDG 16. By embracing its principles, individuals and institutions alike can take meaningful steps toward cultivating a more peaceful, just, and humane world

Suggestions

To further strengthen the integration of Jain philosophy with the goals of Sustainable Development Goal 16, several practical suggestions can be proposed. Firstly, Jain values such

as Ahimsa, Anekantavada, and Aparigraha should be incorporated into educational curricula at various levels. Introducing these principles through peace education and ethical studies can help shape future generations into more tolerant and non-violent individuals. Secondly, policymakers should explore the application of non-violent strategies in governance and international diplomacy. Jain ethical values can serve as foundational tools in conflict resolution and institutional reform.

Community-level initiatives should also be encouraged, particularly those led by religious or cultural organizations, to promote non-violent and inclusive practices. Furthermore, interfaith dialogues should embrace the concept of Anekantavada, which promotes understanding and respect for multiple perspectives—essential for fostering unity and peace in diverse societies. Awareness about Jain contributions toward peacebuilding can be amplified through digital platforms and social media, making ancient wisdom accessible and relevant in modern times. Finally, more academic research and policy-focused documentation should be encouraged to explore the real-life applications of Jain values in areas such as law, governance, and social justice. These efforts can significantly contribute to building strong, just, and peaceful institutions in line with the aims of SDG 16.

References

- Chapple, Christopher Key. *Nonviolence to Animals, Earth, and Self in Asian Traditions*. SUNY Press, 2003.
- Dundas, Paul. *The Jains*. 2nd ed., Routledge, 2002.
- Jaini, Padmanabh S. *The Jaina Path of Purification*. Motilal Banarsidass, 1998.
- Long, Jeffery D. *Jainism: An Introduction*. I.B. Tauris, 2009.
- Narain, Harsh. *The Jain Tradition: A Historical Outline*. Munshiram Manoharlal, 1985.
- Pachauri, R. K., and L. Mayer, editors. *Spirituality and Sustainability: New Pathways for a Better World*. Springer, 2016.
- Singhvi, L. M. “A Jain Declaration on Nature.” *The Jain Declaration on Nature*, WWF, 1990.
- United Nations. *Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. United Nations, 2015, <https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda>.

- United Nations Development Programme. Goal 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions – Progress Report. UNDP, 2023, <https://www.undp.org/sustainable-development-goals/peace-justice-and-strong-institutions>.
- Bilimoria, Purushottama, and Amy Rayner. "Jaina Ethics and the Discourse on Human Rights." *Indian Ethics: Classical Traditions and Contemporary Challenges*, edited by Purushottama Bilimoria et al., Ashgate, 2007, pp. 231–247.
- Ma, X., Arif, A., Kaur, P., Jain, V., Refiana Said, L., & Mughal, N. (2022). Revealing the effectiveness of technological innovation shocks on CO2 emissions in BRICS: emerging challenges and implications. *Environmental Science and Pollution Research*, 29(31), 47373-47381.
- Hasan, N., Nanda, S., Singh, G., Sharma, V., Kaur, G., & Jain, V. (2024, February). Adoption of Blockchain Technology in Productivity And Automation Process of Microfinance Services. In *2024 4th International Conference on Innovative Practices in Technology and Management (ICIPTM)* (pp. 1-5). IEEE.
- Jan, N., Jain, V., Li, Z., Sattar, J., & Tongkachok, K. (2022). Post-COVID-19 investor psychology and individual investment decision: A moderating role of information availability. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13, 846088.
- C. Verma, V. P, N. Chaturvedi, U. U, A. Rai and A. Y. A. Bani Ahmad, "Artificial Intelligence in Marketing Management: Enhancing Customer Engagement and Personalization," 2025 International Conference on Pervasive Computational Technologies (ICPCT), Greater Noida, India, 2025, pp. 397-401, doi: 10.1109/ICPCT64145.2025.10940626.
- Maurya, S. K., Jain, V., Setiawan, R., Ashraf, A., Koti, K., Niranjana, K., ... & Rajest, S. S. (2021). *The Conditional Analysis of Principals Bullying Teachers Reasons in The Surroundings of The City* (Doctoral dissertation, Petra Christian University).
- Anand, R., Juneja, S., Juneja, A., Jain, V., & Kannan, R. (Eds.). (2023). *Integration of IoT with cloud computing for smart applications*. CRC Press.
- Dadhich, M., Pahwa, M. S., Jain, V., & Doshi, R. (2021). Predictive models for stock market index using stochastic time series ARIMA modeling in emerging economy. In *Advances in Mechanical Engineering: Select Proceedings of CAMSE 2020* (pp. 281-290). Springer Singapore.

- Ahmad, A. Y., Jain, V., Verma, C., Chauhan, A., Singh, A., Gupta, A., & Pramanik, S. (2024). CSR Objectives and Public Institute Management in the Republic of Slovenia. In *Ethical Quandaries in Business Practices: Exploring Morality and Social Responsibility* (pp. 183-202). IGI Global.
- Verma, C., Sharma, R., Kaushik, P., & Jain, V. (2024). The Role of Microfinance Initiatives in Promoting Sustainable Economic Development: Exploring Opportunities, Challenges, and Outcomes.