



# GAZİANTEP UNIVERSITY JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

Journal homepage: <http://dergipark.org.tr/tr/pub/jss>



## Araştırma Makalesi • Research Article

### Reflections of Deep Ecology Approach in the Ahimsa Doctrine

*Derin Ekoloji Yaklaşımının Ahimsa Öğretisi'ndeki Yansımaları*

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#### MAKALE BİLGİSİ

*Makale Geçmişi:*

Başvuru tarihi: 27 Kasım 2020

Kabul tarihi: 24 Nisan 2021

*Anahtar Kelimeler:*

Ahimsa,

Caynizm,

Doğa,

Derin ekoloji,

Dünya dinleri

#### ARTICLE INFO

*Article History:*

Received November 27, 2020

Accepted April 24, 2021

*Keywords:*

Ahimsa,

Jainism,

Nature,

Deep ecology,

World religions

#### ÖZ

Çevresel krizlerin yaşanması ve doğanın tahrip edilmesi, doğa ve insan ilişkilerinin yeniden düzenlenmesini ve sorgulanmasını beraberinde getirmiştir. Kaynakların aşırı tüketimi, doğal kaynakların tükenmesi, insan olmayan canlı ve/veya cansız varlıkların geri planda bırakılması gibi durumlar insanlığın doğayla uyum içinde yaşaması gerekliliğini tartışmaya açmıştır. İnsan ve doğa arasındaki ilişkinin karşılıklılık ilkesiyle ilerlemesi gerektiğine vurgu yapan derin ekoloji hareketi, ekolojik yıkımdan tüm insanlığın sorumlu olduğunu belirtmektedir. Bütüncül bir bakış açısıyla derin ekoloji, canlı ve/veya cansız tüm varlıkların doğuştan gelen bir öz değeri olduğunu savunmaktadır. Caynizm inancının merkezinde yer alan ahimsa prensibi, derin ekoloji yaklaşımıyla birçok ortak yönü paylaşmaktadır. Ahimsa prensibi özellikle şiddetsiz bir yaşamın benimsenmesi, hiçbir canlı ve/veya cansız varlığa zarar verilmemesi üzerine kurulmuştur. Caynizm inancında yer alan, doğa ile olan her türlü ilişki biçimine özen gösterilmesi ve şiddetsiz bir yaşamı savunan Ahimsa öğretisinde derin ekolojinin izleri görülmektedir. Bu çalışmada da derin ekoloji yaklaşımı ekseninde Caynizm'deki Ahimsa Öğretisi'ne yer verilmesi amaçlanmaktadır.

#### ABSTRACT

Experiencing environmental crises and destruction of nature brought along the reorganization and questioning of nature and human relations. Conditions such as excessive consumption of resources, depletion of natural resources, leaving non-human living and / or inanimate beings in the background have opened the way for humanity to be in harmony with nature. Emphasizing that the relationship between human and nature should proceed with the principle of reciprocity, the deep ecology movement states that all humanity is responsible for ecological destruction. From a holistic point of view, deep ecology advocates that all living and/or inanimate beings have an innate core value. The principle of Ahimsa, which is at the center of the belief of Jainism, shares many common aspects with its deep ecology approach. The principle of Ahimsa is based on the adoption of a nonviolent life and no harm to any living and/or inanimate being. The traces of deep ecology are seen in Ahimsa teachings, which are in the belief of Jainism, paying attention to every kind of relationship with nature and advocating a life without violence. In this study, it is aimed to include Ahimsa doctrine in Jainism on the axis of the deep ecology approach.

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## Introduction

Human interaction with nature has been continuing since the beginning of human history. Humanity's conception of sovereignty has caused it to use the environment at its capacity and change or destroy the untouched nature for its own interests. The fact that people use nature as a tool to survive, exploit or try to tame has started to damage the basic elements of life such as water, air, and soil and to cause nature to become unable to renew itself.

Religious beliefs that bring different perspectives to the solution of the problems in nature argue that the main problem is the change in the nature-human relationship. Religions and beliefs enable people to recognize their own self and carry out special practices to influence communal harmony in a cosmological context. Thus, the views and phenomena of cosmological stories, different symbols and rituals, ethical norms, historical processes and human search for a meaning and responsibility emerge. Religion, which may have the ability to integrate people with divine or dignified being(s) or other human societies, also connects individuals to the mystery matrix in which life originated, emerged and developed. In this context, the relationship of people with nature is a process that can be considered in the context of religion and belief and can include different experiences.

The problems related to nature and the environment have brought interest of many disciplines to the subject. In this context, it is possible to say that especially religions and belief systems enter with other disciplines (e.g., psychology, sociology, economics, education, public policy) to find comprehensive solutions to both global and local ecological problems. Since the 1960's, there has been an increasing interest in the relationships between human cultures, religions and their environments, not only in the field of ecology but also by theologians (Benson, 2000; Deane-Drummond and Strohm, 2011; Ronan, 2017; Taylor, 2005). Because of this interest, researchers examine the ecological effects of the beliefs, attitudes, rituals and doctrines of various world religions in order to reveal the pragmatic aspects regarding public policy and the environment.

The concept of ecology, derived from the Greek word "oikos", meaning "house", has evolved to the present day, when the relationships of living things with their environment, unlike the environment, have been examined, and have become a comprehensive and interdisciplinary field of research (Maltaş, 2015, s. 2). As a result of encountering the fact that the resources in the world are not unlimited and the principle of reciprocity between man and nature has been disrupted, ecological movements such as deep ecology, social ecology and eco-feminism have emerged, emphasizing that environmental crises should be sought in the relationship between man and nature. These movements put forward different perspectives by addressing the effects of nature-human relationship on biopsychosocial, moral and religious structures on human life. Social ecology offers an approach to restructure society's perspective on ecology. This approach involves re-questioning and transforming existing perspectives on both social problems and environmental factors while promoting direct democracy (Bookchin, 1964, s. 5). On the other hand, eco-feminism, focusing on the relationship between the environment and the women's movement, argues that women have an important role in ensuring environmental justice (Plumwood, 1986, s. 120). At the same time, it draws attention to the need for an egalitarian, collaborative society in which there is not a single dominant group. The deep ecology approach is a movement that radically denies the superiority of human over nature (Smith and Gough, 2015, s. 39). This approach attributes a special value to nature and supports individuals, groups and societies to respect nature. In this article, it is aimed to include the Ahimsa doctrine in Jainism on the axis of the deep ecology approach, supporting ecological

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balance, aiming to realize common life and existence, and stating that all humanity is responsible for ecological destruction.

### **Religion and Environment**

People have to live in a place. This fact is in a constant interaction with the place in which people live. For this reason, the environment in various ways affects human beings. Religion has had a significant impact on people's understanding of nature and the environment. Paradise designs in many religions have been formed in relation to nature and have become important elements (Görmez, 2020). The influence of the environment on religion also depends on the conditions and needs of human communities, because one should not think independently of religious beliefs, institutions, practices, attitudes and behaviors, social conditions and geographical environment. In fact, religious elements related to economic and social factors such as Mother Earth, the God of Fertility, female goddesses and male gods are also encountered in many societies (Canlı, 2017; Ünal, 2010).

The socio-cultural environment in which a person is born and lives forms them memory and personality, and plays a guiding role in human-society, human-nature relations. At the same time, the environment gives people diverse world views. Religion, which is one of the basic elements of culture, is one of the pivotal elements in human relations with their social and physical environment, their interpretation and definition. Therefore, it does not seem possible to think and try to understand human relations with the environment independently from religion. Religion and belief systems, as social and cultural institutions that affect both individuals and societies, are one of the factors that directs the behaviors of people in their daily activities. Religion and belief systems provide their members with a worldview and understanding of life that enables them to see the world through a special lens and affect human behavior.

Ecological problems caused or will be caused by humans may be related to their ideas about the natural world. The socio-cultural, economic, political and social conditions in which people are born and live and the beliefs they adopt or belong to determine the ecological perspective. The mental world that determines the attitude of the human being in the absolute interaction between human and the environment is his belief, in other words. Therefore, which religion people belong to is one of the factors that determines the ecological deterioration they may cause.

Religion is an important phenomenon that continues its existence in parallel to the historicity of humanity. Religion and belief systems have been encountered in almost every period of human history. This relationship between humanity and belief systems shows that religion and belief are a human need. Religion is first affected by the conditions required by the society in which it flourishes. Religion, associated with the social structure, is an effective factor in changing social organization and social actions. Religion offers people a way of life within a certain understanding of the world and develops people's sense of believing in certain things. Displaying a social character in the historical process, religion has tried to give people a mentality by means of certain values and symbols. Religion shows its presence in society by setting rules in order to regulate the social structure and shape collective actions.

Each religious structure brings with it a different model of society, causing a change in individuals' lives and perceptions of the world. Not only does religion affect the behavior of people in line with the beliefs it contains, but it also affects the meanings attributed to social events and not only does it offer a system of thinking and behavior to its members, but also it includes some social tasks such as bringing a new mentality to the society and structuring the society. The perception of the natural environment that religion, which is the determinant of the

social structure and undertakes important roles in many changes in the social structure, is also the determinant of the environmental problems that may arise due to religion.

### **Deep Ecology Approach**

Based on the historical records, it is stated that the homo sapiens species is at the forefront of ecological destruction and is the biggest factor in both the extinction of huge animal species in Australia and the complete change of ecology in a large part of Australia (Harari, 2015).

In Western societies, the discoveries in the 17th century following the Renaissance and Reform movements, the enlightenment movements and political revolutions in the 18th century, the industrial revolution in the 19th century and its continuation are considered as the first stages of modernization (Giddens, 2010, s. 9; Ünal, 2010, s. 18). In this process, the individual has come to the forefront, and the fact that individualization and individual's thoughts have a vital place has brought the nature-centered understanding in the environmental understanding of modern life into a human-centered understanding. Anthropocentric approaches place human at the center of the universe by distinguishing between human and nature. According to this approach, human beings are separated from all beings due to their characteristics such as consciousness, sense of responsibility, and self-sufficiency, and they have the right to rule over them. This approach, which holds human beings superior to all living beings, considers human beings as having the right to use the universe and all living things in it according to their own interests and desires, because it accepts that human beings have an inner value. The fact that the anthropocentric approach considers human beings only valuable for themselves and attributes this to the qualitative and quantitative characteristics of human beings, other living beings (especially animals) other than human beings have been seen as valuable to the benefit of human beings and living things have an instrumental meaning for humans.

Environmental problems and orientation towards the environment have become crucial with the modern age. This period was the years of awakening to the environment and the realization of the problems, as well as the years when environmental problems were dealt with in a multi-dimensional way. Although the orientation to the environment and the interest of people in the environment reached its peak in the late modern age, the history of people's interest in the environment is as old as the history of humanity, because the human has always been in an environment and transformed it from time to time. For example, in the 3rd century B.C., in a document found in the Egyptian pyramids, there is information on how to use the soil, how and when the fields should be irrigated in the most efficient way. The first developments related to protecting the environment in the modern sense emerged towards the end of the 19th century, especially in England and the USA. In this context, Alpine Club, Royal Bird Conservation Association in England, Apalachian Mountaineering Club and Sierra Club were established in USA. These early movements are about conservation of nature rather than an ecological environmental movement. Environmental problems reached their highest levels, especially between the 1950s and 1970s, with the society breaking off from nature and alienating and destroying it. However, intellectual studies that can be summarized as "return to nature" or "rediscovery of nature" aimed at eliminating environmental problems and solving environmental crises started to emerge in the same period.

The deep ecology approach, which dates back to the 18th and 19th centuries and emerged as anti-industrialization in Europe and America, sees human actions as the cause of ecological destruction. The deep ecology approach defends a "nature-centered" thought and opposes a "human-centered" system (Kırışık, 2013, s. 280; Tamkoç, 1994, s. 87). This movement, centering on the untouched nature, finds a place for itself in Buddhism, Taoism and

especially other eastern religions and beliefs with the phenomenon of integration in a mystical dimension (Elkins, 1994, s. 85). Deep ecology, by offering a holistic approach, advocates that all living and/or non-living beings have an innate intrinsic value. It also states that all life forms have the right to live and self-realization equally, and that they constitute all parts of humans and non-human nature. The goal of deep ecology is to achieve a radical change in socio-economic and political structures and has eight basic principles (Naess, 1986, s. 14). These principles:

- To present a relational and holistic framework regarding human and nature,
- To accept biospheric equality, which states that all life forms, including humans, are of equal importance.
- To realize common life and existence between human and other life forms,
- Establishing a classless and equal social structure,
- To combat environmental pollution, depletion of natural resources and ecological destruction,
- To develop economic, cultural and technological diversity by providing a division of labor,
- Strengthening local mechanisms and ensuring that these mechanisms become self-sufficient,
- To develop ecological knowledge based on intuitive knowledge

Through this fact, these principles emphasize that people take responsibility and focus on individual change. Deep ecology opposes the exploitation of nature and non-human beings and proposes that people should live a simple life by limiting themselves.

According to Naess, who can be considered the pioneer of the deep ecology approach, there is an amazing order in the universe. This order and balance in the universe should not be disrupted by human intervention. People must learn to live with other creatures and maintain this order. Every living thing has a unique value. Even the most primitive living things are valuable because they maintain the diversity and order in the universe. People should not interfere with this order except from continuing their lives. However, human intervention in nature is extreme. For this reason, new policies should be developed, and economic, technological and ideological structures should be changed in this way. People should act with a sense of responsibility towards nature.

Deep ecology deals with all living things as a whole. It looks after the interests of not only a group or a species, but all living things, and evaluates events in the context of the idea of equality and because deep ecology uses a holistic approach, it looks at ecological problems in terms of the interest of the biosphere and living life. Deep ecology evaluates environmental pollution not only in the context of its effects on human health, but also in terms of the living conditions of the whole life, species and systems, fighting the deep causes of pollution. The deep ecology movement gives intrinsic value to existing resources, taking into account the needs of all life forms. It doesn't look only at any object as a resource. Therefore, it critically evaluates the production and consumption patterns, acknowledging that the extreme pressure on life on the planet is due to the influx in the human population. According to the deep ecology approach, the earth does not belong to humans. For example, Norway's natural landscapes, rivers, flora and fauna, and neighboring seas are not owned by Norwegians. Likewise, oil under the North Sea or elsewhere does not belong to a state or humanity. People only sit on land and use resources to meet their vital needs.

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The deep ecology movement offers an approach from scientific and philosophical-religious perspectives (Montano, 2006, s. 189). This movement, which offers an ecologically centered approach, argues that simple environmental reforms are not enough. It expresses the necessity of limiting population growth, abandoning high energy consumption and changing the use of resources. According to the deep ecology approach, from the philosophical and religious perspectives, the human-centered approach should evolve towards the environment-centered approach, and the relevant fields should question their own approaches and teachings. At this point, the belief in Jainism, which takes the environment and all living things at its center, shows the principles of the deep ecology approach and forms the basis of belief according to these principles.

### **Jainism**

Jainism is a belief system that emerged in the state of Bihar in the Ganges Basin in the Indian subcontinent in the 6th century B.C. (Bronkhorst, 2010, s. 10). It displays a different view from other beliefs with its point of view that overly values living things and prohibits harming them, and with its unique features such as death fast (Kumar, 2017).

Jainism, like other Indian religions, was born as a reaction to Hinduism and opposed the caste system, polytheism and bloody sacrifice ceremonies (Cort, 2010; Flügel, 2006, s. 108). This belief system is similar in some ways to Buddhism, which again emerged as a reaction to Hinduism. The emergence of both in the same time period and region, their rejection of the caste system, their disregard for the role of God in the creation of the world, their use of concepts such as Arhat (dignified, selfish, decent person) and Mukti (freedom, salvation) in the same sense for those who attained enlightenment. They are the common features of Buddhism (Yitik, 2007, s. 358).

The founder of Jainism is considered to be Vardhamana (better known as Mahavira - Great Hero), who lived from 540 to 468 B.C. (Dundas, 2002). He was born in Vaisali, North India, to a family of Kshatria class. He went to the monastery outside the city from an early age but avoided living among priests. Vardhamana, who moved away from his family, friends and environment, lived without anything of his own. In order not to harm living things, he swept the roads he walked and filtered the water he drank. He also avoided eating meat and eggs.

In Jainism, it is accepted that the world and the phenomena in the realm have a real reality (Sharma, 2001). According to this belief, the physical world was formed by the contact of an unlimited number of pudgala and jiva atoms. Pudgala to the material; the soul is called jiva. Existence started with the movement of jiva atoms. Jiva is an element that gives life to everything found in all living things. In terms of Jainism, the vitality caused by the jiv is found not only in living things but also in inanimate objects. Seas, rivers, mountains, plains, water, fire and wind are the phenomena in which jiva is present and vitality is felt (Dundas, 2005).

Regardless of the stratum, every Jainist has to obey the rules known as “the five basic moral principles” and accept in all Indian religions (Flügel, 2005, s. 5). These rules; ahimsa (not to kill), satya (not to lie), asteya (not to steal), brahmacari (to avoid sexual intercourse) and aparigraha (to be content). In the next section, Ahimsa doctrine, one of the five basic moral principles, will be included and the reflections of the deep ecology approach in this doctrine will be examined.

### **Ecological Reflections in the Ahimsa Doctrine**

Historically, it is possible to say that various belief systems have teachings about the human capacity to manipulate the natural environment, and that religions can shape people's behavior, survival skills and adaptation to nature (Lowie, 1970; Radin, 1957; Reynolds and

Tanner, 1995; Veldman et al., 2014). In addition, it is worth noting that numerous religions see the degradation of the natural environment as a moral collapse and failure, and the protection of the world with an understanding of ecological consciousness is a sacred necessity (Kanagy and Willits, 1993; Shaiko, 1987; Shibley and Wiggins, 1997; Wilkinson, 2012).

In the Ahimsa doctrine, which is at the center of the belief in Jainism, there are principles such as not harming, not-hurting, not-violating, not killing any living and/or inanimate creatures (Malik et al., 2011, s. 114). Jainists seriously evaluated these principles and made it one of the foremost of their teachings and organized their lifestyle according to these. According to Jainism, the main task of human beings is to develop, support, and mature their own soul and the living creatures around them. In order for this main task, it is necessary to comply with the principles of Ahimsa as the highest code of conduct.

A Jainist is obliged not to harm any living thing (Bhaneja, 2007, s. 217). According to Jainism, "himsa" (violence) is expressed as the worst of eighteen basic sins (Bondurant, 1965). Jainists believe that the life of even the smallest creature is sacred because all creatures' lives are based on the past life of people and are eternal. Living beings in Jain zoology are classified in harmony with the number of sensory organs they have. In this classification, there are five sensory organs; taste, smell, touch, sight and hearing. While there are plants that have only the sense of touch under the ranking of Jainists, the number of sensory organs owned increases as you move up to the top of the list. In the classification, creatures such as sheep, fish, and poultry are seen as having not only the sense of touch but also the first steps of thought. According to Jainists, it is believed that if creatures with more than one sense organ are harmed, this is even worse (Prana, 2003). As a result of this understanding, "vegetarianism" emerged and foods with less sense organs were preferred, and fruit was avoided. It is pointed out that all non-vegetarian foods lead people to kill creatures with two or more sensory organs.

It is possible to say that the Ahimsa doctrine covers all living beings (Kovan, 2009, s. 53). It doesn't matter whether the living thing is small or large. All living beings are considered equal, not depending on their size and shape, but according to their various spiritual formations. Therefore, no living creature has the right to harm, hurt or kill another living being. Every living thing has the right to exist and all living beings must live in perfect harmony with each other.

The Ahimsa doctrine in Jainism is composed of positive forces of love and compassion by adopting the perspective of universality (Bush, 2017; Temesgen and Ahmed, 2017, s. 158). All forms and appearances of violence are completely prohibited. According to Jainism, violence exists in different forms. In addition to physical violence (dravya-himsa), there is also a form of thought-indicated violence (bhava-himsa), and this form of violence is a deeper and more dangerous form of violence and precedes physical violence because Jainists see thoughts as a cause of actions, and so even thinking evil about a living being means violence. It does not seem practically possible to live without killing or hurting very small creatures. Some creatures die while we breathe, drink water or even eat. Therefore, according to Jainism, it should be the main goal of life to cause the least damage to the simplest forms of life. In the universe, there are animals, especially humans, insects, plants, bacteria and very small creatures that even the most powerful microscope cannot see. In order not to harm these living beings, it is necessary to obey the Ahimsa principle with extreme care. In line with this understanding, some extreme rules have emerged that the priests of two separate sects (Digambara and Shvetambara) in Jainism had to obey. For example, Digambaras (they argue that a saint should have nothing, including clothes, and according to them, any property increases dependence and desire for material things, and desire for anything eventually leads to misery and grief) monks have a meal once a day (Cort, 2002; Sin, 2007). Shvetambaras (the priests of this sect wear white robes, believing that the wearing of clothing is not prohibited in the Jain scriptures, and unlike

Digambara, in this tradition, it is believed that the woman can also achieve salvation) do not eat at night, worrying that small creatures will not be seen after dark (Chapple, 2003). A truly devout monk strains and drinks water even while drinking for fear of swallowing a mosquito, and while talking, they cover their mouth with a piece of cloth so as not to accidentally kill very small insects (Jaini, 2000). Again, one of the underlying reasons for the Digambara monks to go naked is their desire not to harm small creatures that might get in between clothes (Dundas, 2007; Long, 2009). Again, in line with the belief of the Ahimsa doctrine, Jainists not only built excellent hospitals in India where sick and injured animals were cared for, but also shelters and nursing homes where the needs of old animals were met until they naturally die (Wiley, 2009).

### **Conclusion**

Religion and belief, which are the basic elements of culture, are essential in human relations with their social and physical environment, in their interpretation and definition. Therefore, it does not seem plausible to think and try to understand human's relations with the environment independently of religion and belief. Human-centered approaches that can take place in belief systems situates human at the center of the universe by distinguishing between human and nature. According to this approach, human beings are separated from all beings due to their characteristics such as consciousness, sense of responsibility and self-sufficiency, and they have the right to rule over them. This approach, which holds human beings superior to all living beings, considers human beings as having the right to use the universe and all living things in this universe according to their own interests and desires. The deep ecology approach, which defends the opposite of these approaches, sees human actions as the cause of ecological destruction. The deep ecology movement defends a "nature-centered" thought and opposes a "human-centered" system. Deep ecology, by offering a holistic approach, advocates that all living and/or non-living beings have an innate intrinsic value. It also states that all life forms have the right to live and have self-realization equally, and that they constitute all parts of humans and non-human nature. This movement, focusing on untouched nature, finds a place for itself in Buddhism, Taoism and especially other eastern religions and beliefs with the phenomenon of integration in a mystical dimension. Jainism, in which the reflections of the deep ecology approach are seen, displays a different view from other beliefs with its perspective that over-values living things and prohibits harming them. The doctrine of "ahimsa", which is at the center of the belief of Jainism, adopts a deep ecology approach by incorporating principles such as not harming, not hurting any living and/or inanimate creature. Ahimsa is one of the foremost teachings for Jainists, and they organized their way of life according to this doctrine. The main duty of the human according to Jainism is to develop, support and mature their own soul and the living creatures around them. In order for these to happen, it is necessary to comply with the Ahimsa principle as the highest code of conduct. It is possible to say that the Ahimsa principle covers all living things. It doesn't matter whether the living thing is small or large. All living beings are considered equal, not depending on their size and shape, but according to their various spiritual formations. Therefore, no living creature has the right to harm, hurt or kill another living being. Every living thing has the right to exist, and all living beings must live in perfect harmony with each other.

It is necessary to investigate whether many religions and beliefs have an ecological approach and consider the ability of religions to influence climate and ecology policies for global change. All the peoples of the world should make a very comprehensive contract that includes future generations, and the purpose of this contract should be to leave the world in a livable, clean and sufficient way for the next generations.

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