

# The Substantiation of Jain Beliefs through Scientific Advancement

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**Abstract:** The present study demonstrates the interdependence and compatibility between Jainism and science with respect to consumption of food. The study tries to illustrate the positive effect of such combination and how they can be used together in order to understand and live a healthy life.

**Keywords:** Jainism, teachings, liberation of the soul, non-violence

The present work is a brief study about the food beliefs followed in the Jain dharma. To begin with prior we need to understand what is Jainism? Well, Jainism is said to be one of the peaceful religions. The aim of Jainism is nothing but liberation of the soul. It believes that other living beings such as plants and animals also should be treated equally as well as with compassion. Mahavir Bhagwan, the 24th Tirthankara, has very well said that “everything in the world has life... this includes stones, sand, trees, and the other elements of nature.”

The Jain Dharma propagates the process of releasing the soul from the all the clutches of Karma. To attain such freedom is the supreme aim of life. Jainism believes that this Salvation can be achieved only by the human beings. No other living can achieve it completely. In order to achieve this there should be a proper balance between mind and body. It is of utmost importance to take care of one’s mind and body. Balancing of mind and soul is nothing but to take care that your body does not get weakened with hunger, thirst, fast and hardships nor will it be overwhelmed by enjoying eating and drinking various things. All the sense organs should be controlled. Our instincts and passions should be controlled. Therefore it can be concluded that Jainism emphasizes on the development of body and mind.

The five great teachings of Jainism are

1. Ahimsa
2. Satya
3. Achaurya or Asteya
4. Brahmacharya
5. Aparigraha

## 1. Ahimsa

Among the five vows, non-violence (Ahimsa) is the principle of primary importance. All living beings should be treated equally irrespective of their size and shape. No living creature has the right to hurt, injure, or kill any other living being, including animals, insects, and plants. Such an act is considered to be violence. Besides it also believes that even harsh words, thinking or speaking ill of somebody is also considered as violence.

## 2. Satya – Truth

Jainism talks about being truthful at all levels that is through speech, mind and deed. Those who speak the truth are the ones who have conquered greed, fear, anger, jealousy and ego.

## 3. Achaurya/Asteya – Refrain from Stealing

One should refrain from taking anything that does not belong to them specifically by any unfair methods. Asteya preaches that one should neither themselves steal nor ask others to do so, or give approval to any such activities.

## 4. Brahmacharya – Celibacy / Chastity

Jainism preaches abstinence from sensual pleasure or to any of the five senses. Jainism believes that sensual pleasure keeps apart all the virtues and reason. To achieve spiritual liberation strict celibacy has to be followed.

## 5. Aparigraha – Non-attachment / Non-possession

The more a person gets involved in possessing worldly wealth and possessions, the more he/she is likely to commit a sin. To achieve spiritual liberation one should get detached from all the worldly pleasures.

The present study focuses on the consuming of food and its scientific base. The researcher has selected this topic with a desire to create an awareness of consuming of food beliefs which have a scientific base with reference to Jain dharma. The rules and principles relating to food in the Jain dharma are based on considerations relating to health and non- violence (giving protection to creatures). The food that we consume definitely effects either in good terms or in bad terms, on our body and indirectly on the mind as well.

### Scientific reasons to avoid food at night

Jainism preaches to avoid food at night. Consumption of food, water and any other eatables at night is strictly prohibited in the Jain Dharma. There are many reasons for this prohibition. The harmful germs and microorganisms after sunset do not get destroyed because the absence of sunlight makes them alive in the night. They accommodate themselves in the shadowy places and permeate the atmosphere which gets into our food. Consumption of such food leads to killing of the germs and bacteria which in turn will lead to our ill health.

Human being's biological clock is fixed between the sunrise and sunset. When the sun is right above us, our digestive system performs at its peak. The food consumed after sunset does not get properly digested as our digestive system becomes inactive. The metabolism rate slows down during these hours as there is the absence or less of any sort of physical activity undertaken. Hence, the food consumed during night time does not get digested; and its "putrefaction in the body is harmful to health." In addition, it results into increase in weight as the undigested food gets stored in the form of fats, foul smell in one's breath, decaying of teeth, pain in knee joints, constipation as well as diseases related to throat.

Indian Science of health also says that one should avoid food at least 3-4 hours before sleeping, so that the food gets digested properly before one goes to bed. A recent research in Hong Kong has proven that people who have the habit of eating food early evening are less prone to heart diseases. According to experts, eating food late at night and going to sleep shortly after is a key contributor to acid reflux.

### Scientific reasons to avoid non vegetarian food

Jain objections to avoiding of non-vegetarian food are based on the principle of non-violence. Every act of a person who directly or indirectly supports killing of living beings is considered as violence in Jain dharma which further leads to harmful karma. Though this practice has a spiritual base but research says that there are valid and various health benefits of vegetarianism. Consumption of vegetarian food results into decreased risks of cancer, diabetes and other chronic illness among human beings. "Professional associations such as the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics and Dietitians of Canada have formally stated that a properly planned vegetarian diet is "healthful, nutritionally adequate, and provides health benefits in the prevention and treatment of certain diseases" in all stages of life."

"The World Health Organization has stated that the avian flu can spread simply by consuming undercooked meat or eggs or by consuming the food prepared on the same cutting board in which infected meat was present, and just touching the egg shells with the virus."

Research also says that vegetarian people's life span increases from 6 to 10 years than the people who consume non-vegetarian food. Vegetarian diet reduces risk of cancer, heart diseases and strokes. The risk of heart diseases is 50% more among non-vegetarian people. "The Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine has confirmed that vegetarians have 40% lesser risk of getting cancer provided the other risk factors like smoking and body size are taken care."

Though the reasons behind consumption of food in Jain dharma is connected to attainment of liberation of the soul, the scientific facts behind the beliefs cannot be neglected. The scientific base behind the food beliefs of Jain dharma is just one aspect of Jain beliefs or Principles. There are other aspects of Jainism which if studied and followed would definitely have a positive effect on the environment, ecology and public health.

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