

## FOOD, FREEDOM AND HEALTH IN JAINISM

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**ABSTRACT**

Food is essential for life. Without food human body cannot survive. But food is for life, not life is for food only. On a contrary note in the present scenario it is regrettable that food has become the sole aim of life and unfortunately all the ancient rules regarding food and drink have been totally forgotten. Good or bad whatever comes before a man he consumes it. It is remarkable to say that millions of years ago, the practice and concept of 'total health' has been given a place and pride in Jainism. Jain rituals and regulations regarding diet, work, rest, sleep exercise, recreation etc. have set apart the daily life of the people. The dispersal of information on health directly or indirectly has been woven in the fabric of the Jain religion and expressed through folk-lore and media such as *Kathas*, *Pravachanas* (religious texts Agamas). The Jain philosophy strongly believes in providing relief from pain and discomfort to every living organism of this universe. The preventive aspects of health has been given an important place in the practices of Jain religion. The social and cultural aspects of the diseases, to treat not only the disease but the patient, to recognize the patient as a person is the essence of the Jain religion. Health primitive measures to inculcate principles of a healthy life among people are essential activities of the Jain religion which are incorporated in the life-style of its people. The laws relate to fresh air, sunlight, vegetarian diet, exercise rest and relaxation, sleep, cleanliness, elimination, right attitudes of mind, good habits and above all the life style, health is viewed as a multi-dimensional process involving the well-being of the whole person in the context of his environment. Jainism emphasises a sound mind, body, character, family and environment. It is not only a religion but a science of health also.

**KEYWORDS :** World Health Organisation (WHO), Satvic Diet (SD)*Dharmartha Kammokshaman, Arogyam, Mulmuttman'***The Concept Of Health In Jainism :**

Health is man's natural condition, his birth right. It is a result of living in accordance with natural laws pertaining to the body, mind and environment. The World Health Organisation has defined health as a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being not merely an absence of disease or infirmity. It envisages three dimensions or components of health: - physical, mental and social, are closely related. A fourth dimension also have been suggested namely 'spiritual health'. It is the intangible something that transcends physiology. Plato lamented that 'this is the error of our day that physicians separate the body from soul'.

Jain philosophers contended that the emancipation of the soul that resides in the body, a synthesis of body and mind is necessary for with both should be kept in perfect condition. In fact Jain religion stressed mental and spiritual health as much or even more than physical health. The idea mode of life according to Jain religion is to devote oneself to the preservation and promotion of health in which nutrition, including simple 'satvic diet', vegetarian diet, evacuation exercise and the rest are perfectly balanced.

**Serving Food to Jain Sadhvis**

Health is a way of life. It is related deeply to a life-style which

includes ways of live personal hygiene, habits and behaviour. Currently the major health problems of developed and developing countries are significantly tied to life-style, viz., cardio-vascular diseases, hyper-tension, heart diseases, accidents, drugs and alcohol abuse, suicides, homicides, mental disorders and sexually transmitted diseases, etc. To alter for the better health we require education to change one's life-style and behavioural patterns and to accept moral ethics; the Jain religion has prescribed do's and don'ts in improving and maintaining the health. In the value system of ancient India arogyam, positive health occupied a very high place.

For the realisation of the aims of life, health was believed to be the very foundation. It was considered difficult, rather impossible for the sick to be virtuous acquire wealth, enjoy life and attain salvation. The life style was such that health was really a valuable community asset. The daily and seasonal regimen of life (*dinacharya* and *ritucharya*), prescribed practices of Jain religion which promoted health by the continuous tuning of man to function optimally and enjoy a better quality of life.

**Causes Of Diseases In The Jain Philosophy**

Ancient law-givers of India have prescribed highly useful rules in respect of food. In food, attention is to be paid to purity, sanctity, cleanliness and health, not to taste. One should totally avoid liquor and non-vegetarian diet which are not worth taking. Even whole some food is to be taken only when one feels hungry. In the absence of hunger eating even a single morsel of food is devouring sin. One should not eat more than twice or thrice a day. Taking food at night is improper from the point of view of religion as well as health.

Out of 32 Agamas (Texts of Jain Religion) in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Aang Sutra Shri Snthanang Sutra (Part ii, page 610) the nine causes of diseases have been described which include:

1. The overeating of food.
2. Taking food when there is indigestion in the body.
3. Not sleeping at all in the night.
4. Excess of sleep.
5. Excess of sitting or standing in one posture.
6. Controlling the natural pressure of urination, stool and other human excreta from the body.
7. Over walking and excess of travelling.

8. Excess of sexual exercises.
9. Eating food against nature.

All these nine causes are directly related to diet, personal and sex life for the prevention of diseases one should avoid these nine acts.

#### The Role Of Nirjara In Health :

According to the Jain philosophy, there are nine Tattvas (essential objects of knowledge) and out of these nine Nirjara the gradual removal of karmic matter is very important. It is very helpful in the maintenance of health of the people those who observe it.

- (a) **Anshana (fasting)**:-The frequent observance of which is well-calculated to purify the sense organs, on the one hand and to lessen the sense of attachment to objects of bodily enjoyment on the other hand. Fasting once or twice in a month helps in removing toxic products of the body and provides rest to various digestive organs and also helps in improving digestion. American Naturopath Dr Herbert M. Shelton has written book 'Fasting can save your life'.
- (b) **Rasa Parityaga (avoidance of tasty food)** :- Abstaining from one or more of different kinds of food such as clarified ghee and butter, honey, sugar, and sweets, salt and oil alcohol etc. are totally banned in Jain religion because of its doctrine of non-violence. Restriction in the use of fat can control cholesterol and thus prevent obesity, hypertension and heart diseases. Similarly salt and sugar and a sweet free diet can help in the prevention of kidney troubles, diabetes, arthritis etc. Modern medical science so agrees with this type of restriction in diet from the prevention of the above mentioned non-communicable diseases.
- (c) **Avamodaryaa (avoidance of full meal)**:- The habitual practice of this form of self-restraint would go a long way towards eradicating laziness from the system and would impart fresh energy to the mind and body.
- (d) **Kayaklesa**:-The practice of bodily austerities such as remaining in the sun, standing under a tree, living on the bank of the river, doing meditation, exercising, and avoiding over crowded places help nature to maintain the body and mind in a healthy condition. From the spiritual point of view, the object of the Kayaklesa is to get over the longing for bodily comfort and to prepare the system to bear the inclemencies of seasons without disquietude of mind.

According to Tolstoy vegetarian food is indispensable for mental purity. This is strongly propagated in the Jainism on the basis of the doctrine of 'Ahimsa'. Beside the above practices there are various other health promotive and disease preventive activities in the Jain religion such as-

1. In the Jain philosophy, the rules of sanitation and cleanliness from the prevention of diseases have been prescribed for example, keeping the surroundings and environment dry and clean and not allowing waste water to collect, this will help in the prevention of insects.
2. The prevention of respiratory diseases the Jain religion instructs to use a clean piece of cloth or a mask over the mouth while speaking, sneezing, coughing etc. and not to spit indiscriminately though this practice is based on the doctrine of Ahimsa, but it protects the inhalation of disease giving organism in the body.
3. There is a strong control over sex life the abstinence of sexual intercourse on some holy days. Prostitution and promiscuity are strictly banned in the Jain religion.
4. The use of alcohol intoxications smoking, drugs, etc. which are modern hazards of health are strictly prohibited in the Jain religion.
5. The use of filtering boiled water for drinking purposes is strongly advocated in Jainism which can prevent water borne diseases, like diarrhoea, dysentery, typhoid and guinea worm infection etc.

6. Food should be prepared in the sunlight but not in the open space, it should be kept well covered and should be eaten only in day light, because there are countless micro-organism which cannot be prevented from entering the human body along with food stuffs; even if high powered electric bulb are used, food eaten in the night may result in infection, disease etc.



<https://djsm.org.au/jainism/2020/jain-food-diet-restrictions-and-reasons%E2%80%8B/>

#### IDEAL FOOD :

In Jainism great stress has been laid on the prohibition of taking food at night. Not taking food at night is a distinctive mark of Jain. Jainism holds that taking food at night is violence. There are a number of such tiny insects as are visible only in the light of the sun and at night they are totally invisible. From the health point of view also taking food at night is to be given up. During the day heat of the sun helps in digesting the food. Further if we take food during the day there is a sufficient gap between taking food and going to bed, thus the food gets ample time to be digested. Those who consume food at night mostly suffer from indigestion and constipation and many other diseases.

The rule of Jainism is fully based on the spiritual as well as scientific point of view. In medical works also taking food at night has been said to be detrimental for health. At night heart and the navel lotus get shrunk and so the food is not well digested.

#### CONCLUSION :

Thus we can see that the Jain ethics are based on sound scientific reasoning and non-violence which is a primary principle of the Jain philosophy. By observing the principles of non-violence in the day to day life including diet, personal hygiene, sex i.e., smoking, drinking, the use of safe water etc. we can prevent food borne diseases, sexually transmitted diseases, mental disorders etc., and by applying the acts of Nirjara we can very well improve the spiritual health and establish harmonious healthy and happy relations in the family, in the society, in the nation and in the world itself. To sum up it can be said that Jain religion is not science, but science of positive health.

#### Recommendation:

It is naturally understood that one has to survive and enjoy the worldly life with good health, sound brain and social powers to enlist these powers. It is necessary to focus on the physical, mental and spiritual health. Know it appears the high time to adopt Jain ethics regarding health, herbal treatment and hygiene to attain sound health and longevity but for the indulgence Jain philosophy in our texts, human life would have become nature friendly and sound. To add more the proper use of herbs recommended by Jain philosophy is now globally proven treatment for several incurable diseases too. Hence Jain ethical theory regarding health must be read and propagated globally as an unavoidable part of human life.

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