

## Practice of Nonviolence by Jain Householder (*Shrāvaka*)

Religion is as old as humanity and it has played a dominant role along the course of the history of human life and thought. Similarly, Jainism plays a significant role in guiding the living style of Jain householders and ascetics.

A special carefulness is observed by Jain householders (*Shrāvakas*) in his/her daily life so that *Himsā* (violence)<sup>1</sup> is minimized according to his/her strength, understanding, belief and willingness to put in practice. *Ahimsā* is the cardinal principle of Jainism and hence it is called the highest religious principle, or the cornerstone of Jainism. Nonviolence is the supreme religion (*Ahimsā parmo dharma*). According to Jainism all living beings, irrespective of their size, shape, or different spiritual developments are equal. Every living being has right to exist. Nonviolence includes amity and kindness to all living beings. Jainism explains that violence is not defined by actual harm, for this may be unintentional. It is the intention to harm, the absence of compassion, and the ignorance that makes an action violent. Without violent thought there can be no violent actions. Practically, it is impossible to survive without killing or injuring some of the smallest living beings. Some lives are killed even when we breathe, drink water, or eat food. Therefore, Jainism says that minimum killing of the lowest form of life should be our ideal for survival because it is more painful if a life of a higher form (more than one sense) is killed. All non-vegetarian food involves killing mobile living beings with two or more senses. Therefore, Jainism preaches strict vegetarianism, and prohibits non-vegetarian foods.

In Jainism, “our beliefs in *Ahimsā* supersedes all concepts, ideologies, rules, customs and practices, traditional or modern, eastern or western, political or economical, self-centered or social” (quoted by Jain scholar Dr. Nat Mal Tatia, Jain Study Circular, January 1991). Nonviolence in the center is guarded by practicing truthfulness, non-stealing, celibacy (or faithfulness to own spouse) and non-possessiveness.

*Himsā* (violence) is also marked in two forms: *sukshma himsā* (Subtle violence)- taking life of any living being and *sthula himsā* (gross violence) - taking life of living beings with two senses and onwards, which are also known as *trasa* (mobile) *jivas* (living beings). Both forms of *himsā* are obligatory for the Jain ascetics to abstain from. The second one is for the Jain householder to abstain from. The Jain householder is also expected to abstain from killing, injuring or eating living beings even with one sense (*ekendriyas*), where possible.

The practice of Jainism is based on the combination of right perception, right knowledge and right conduct. First comes the knowledge that helps the aspirant

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<sup>1</sup> The nature of nonviolence is judged by our intentions and actions. If a person deliberately and knowingly harms other living beings, it is violence. But if involuntarily or in unavoidable circumstances, some insects are killed, then it is an exceptional situation. Whether it is by our actions, or by our speech or by our thoughts, hurting others is *Himsā* - violence. Jains are realistic they recognize that the absolute nonviolence is not practical by a householder. For example, we have to cook (some of us have to), eat, earn, wear and travel. These activities involve certain amount of unintentional but necessary violence. However, while doing these necessary activities, we must minimize the violence.

in developing the understanding as to what is right and what is wrong. This helps him/her in developing the right faith, and the knowledge acquired becomes the right knowledge. Once the aspirant has the right perception and right knowledge, then his/her right conduct will be fruitful to liberate him/her from the misery of the material world and attain salvation, *Moksha*<sup>2</sup>.

The rules of the right conduct for householders (*shrāvaka* & *shrāvikā*) and ascetics (*sādhus* and *sādhvis*) provide the guidance on how one should conduct his/her day to day activities for all the days during his/her life span. The code of conduct for householders is called *Shrāvakadharmā* or *Shrāvakachāra*, and for the ascetics, it is *Yatiāchāra*.

*Shrāvakachāra* is for the householders who are not ready to adopt a discipline of complete self-control and harder modes of spiritual pursuit; and, hence, the life of the householder is designed as a stage preparatory to the ascetic life for the realization of the highest goal and, at the same time, making it complementary to the monastic life.

There has been a special emphasis given on the code of conduct of the *shrāvaka* (*shrāvakāchāra*) in the Jainism unlike any other religion. There are two *āgamas* (original Jain Scriptures), called "*Upāshakdashao Sutra*" and "*Dasāshrutskandh Sutra*" which provide the basis for the *shrāvakāchāra*. This work was further supplemented in the seventh chapter of *Tattvartha-Sutra* by the great Jain saint Umaswati. There are more than 40 Jain canonical books on *shrāvakāchāra*. In fact three-quarters of the works belongs to the eleventh and twelfth centuries. If any one book is to be taken as a standard it must be the *Yoga-Shastra* by the great *Āchārya* Hemchandra. Because of the special attention given to the *shrāvakas* and *shrāvikās* in the Jainism, there is an unmatched close relationship between *sādhus* and *shrāvakas*.

The complete renunciation of all worldly attachments is called *mahāvratā* [Complete (great) vows], practiced by Jain *sādhus* and *sādhvijis*, and the partial renunciation of worldly attachments is called *anuvratā*, practiced by *shrāvakas* and *shrāvikās*. There are twelve *anuvratas*, which provide the rules for practicing nonviolence in the daily life of Jain householders. It should be noted that there are very subtle and detailed rules as well as certain exceptions that are not included in this article. It should be further noted that a Jain householder may adopt to a varied degree of flexibility as to how much strict he/she wants to practice nonviolence according to his/her understanding, faith, capability and willingness to put in practice.

### **What to eat and what not to eat?**

The ideal situation for a Jain would be to eat the ripe fruit that has just fallen off a tree. However that is hardly practicable. It is true that vegetable plants and

<sup>2</sup> The right spiritual development resulting from annihilation of all karmas is called *moksha*. The state of the right knowledge, the right perception and the right conduct (the state without any passions) is *moksha*. *Moksha* is recommended because it yields everlasting happiness. The material life, on the other hand, yields happiness which is temporary. *Moksha* = *moha* + *kshaya*; *moha* means delusion and *kshaya* means eradication - this makes *moksha* as the state where there is no delusion (no delusion producing karmas).

animals both have lives. But eating vegetable is less violent because: 1) We do not kill the plant for vegetables. We take leaves, vegetables and fruits off the plants. By removing vegetables and fruits from a tree, we sometimes lengthen the life span of the tree. 2) Animals have more life-force, called *prān* and, much significant consciousness than the vegetables. Therefore, killing animals constitutes the higher level of violence. 3) Many other living organisms reside in an animal body and they get multiplied in a dead body. 4) Vegetables have less living cells and more water content. Also no blood, no ugly scene, no cruelty, no pain and no guilt feelings are involved.

Vegetables and fruits are one-sensed living beings. One-sensed living beings have only “touch” sense. Their development of consciousness (knowledge) is significantly less than the higher (two, three, four and five)-sensed living beings like us, animals, birds, etc. For example, the level of knowledge of one-sensed living beings is only a very small fraction of one latter.

In simple words, alcohol beverages, meat, seafood, poultry, eggs, honey and cream cheese are not permitted in any form. Also prohibited are root (tuberous) tuberous vegetable and eating after the sunset. Smoking, chewing tobacco and use of intoxicating drugs should also be avoided.

Eating *abhakshyas* (non-eatables) and *ananta-kāyas* (root or tuberous vegetables) are prohibited. The *ratri-bhojana* (eating at night - after sunset) is forbidden. Other food, when cooked properly are acceptable. However, depending up on the type of the day (for example: 8th and 14th day of the month per Lunar Calendar, and other auspicious days), *shrāvaka* may further restrict him/her self from in-taking certain kind of permissible food including skipping a meal or two and even choose to fast for a day or longer. Other attributes such as healthy and non-provocative foods are also considered in deciding what he/she should eat.

There are 22 *abhakshyas*:

- (1-4) alcohol<sup>3</sup>, meat<sup>4</sup>, honey<sup>5</sup> and cream cheese (*makkhan*)<sup>6</sup>,
- (5-9) five udumbaras<sup>7</sup> (milky fruits like figs),
- (10) water or other liquid in leather containers,
- (11) honey used as a collyrium,
- (12) asafoetida (hingū) in contact with leather,
- (13) flowers,
- (14) food eaten at night,
- (15) rice gruel that has fermented (*puspitakanjika*),
- (16) *ananta-kāyas* (root vegetables),
- (17) pickles (*sandhana*),
- (18) pods (*simbi*) such as *raja-masa*,
- (19) unsplit aubergines (and jujubes, betel-nuts),
- (20) unknown fruits,
- (21) curds kept for more than two days, and
- (22) tainted food (*vyapanna-bhojya*).

There is also an interdiction on eating mangoes, *ghee* (butter), and number of other foodstuffs in the last *muhurta* (48 minutes) before the sunset. Empty fruits (contains less to eat and more to throw), unfiltered water, snow and ice, poison and earth are also to be added as *abhakshya*.

*Ananta-kāyas* are the plants which are inhabited, not like the majority of the vegetable kingdom by individual *jivas* (living beings), but by an infinite number

<sup>3</sup> The pernicious effects of alcohol befuddle the mind of the drinker. There is an inevitable *himsā* involved in the process of fermentation. The immense number of *jivas* (living beings) transformed into a drop of alcohol and sometimes in the cycle of transmigration beings are metamorphosed into wine to bemuse the minds of who drink alcohol. Consumption of alcohol makes one careless (*pramada*) and blurs the distinction between what should be done and what should not be done.

<sup>4</sup> The eating of meat is, above all, a sin against compassion and the guilt belongs not only to the actual slaughterer but to anybody who buys or sells, cooks or carves, or gives or eats meat. To eat meat is to acknowledge vultures, wolves, and tigers as one's gurus. There is a sharp distinction between eating meat which contains *trasa-jivas* (mobile living beings) and fruits or vegetables in which there are present only *sthavara-jivas* (stationary living beings). Even where a bull or buffalo has not been slaughtered but has died a natural death, the consumption of its flesh involves the destruction of the minute living organisms (*nigodas*) that have found refuge there and these continue to come into existence in meat either raw or cooked or in process of cooking so that very great *himsā* is caused even by touching a peice of it. The eating of meat increases the lusts of the flesh and keeps a man wandering in the *samsāra*. *Samsār* means material world where *jiva* (living being) is subjected to birth and death.

<sup>5</sup> Honey is condemned because it is pressed out of the young eggs in the womb of bees and resembles the embryo in the first stage of its growth. To provide but a single drop, bees have to be killed and even if they have been driven by some artifice from the comb or if the honey has dripped down of its self, *himsā* will still occur since other living creatures find their way into it. This same honey is unclean because it is derived from the vomit or spittle of insects and even though it may possess medicinal properties it will still lead to hell. It is a false idea to think that use of hone is holy in religious rituals. No doubt because of the traditional method of honey-gathering which involves the destruction of the hive by smoking out the bees it has become a proverbial saying that he/she who eats honey takes on himself (herself) the sin of burning seven villages.

<sup>6</sup> Cream cheese (*Makkhan*) contains innumerable minute living beings.

<sup>7</sup> Five udumbaras: (i) umbara, udumbara- *Ficus glomerata* Roxb.; (ii) vata, nyagrodha- *Ficus bengalenis*; (iii) pippala, asvattha- *Ficus religiosa* Linn.; (iv) plaksa- *Ficus infectoria* Roxb.; (v) kamombari, guphala- *Ficus oppositifolia* Willd. The *udumbaras* are not *ananta-kāyas*. The reason for not eating them is that they are full of innumerable tiny insects and invisible living organisms.

of living organisms. Potatoes, onions, carrot, garlic, ginger, tuber and other root vegetables are included. Jain concept is based on a thorough insight into plant physiology and morphology as is shown by the recognition of the role of roots and stems is for future generations. It should be noted that use of dried ginger and dried turmeric is acceptable.

Prohibited are

- a) consuming sentient things (example: non-boiled water),
- b) consuming what is connected with sentient things,
- c) consuming uncooked vegetable products,
- d) consuming partly cooked vegetable products,
- e) consuming empty vegetable products (has more to throw away than eat),
- f) consuming what is mixed with sentient things,
- g) consuming what has been conserved by fermentation (*abhisava*).

The Jain aspirant should also drink boiled and filtered water.

There are three types of food: *Sātvik* (healthy, balanced diet), *Rājasik* (spicy, testy and delicious) and *Tāmasik* (provocative). The aspirant should consume *Sātvik* food when possible, minimize the *Rājasik* food and must avoid *Tāmasik* food.

Use of oil, butter, yogurt and sugar should be minimized, and avoided where possible. Also discouraged are snacks, sweets and fried foods. Sometimes the *trasa-jivas* (mobile living beings) are said to be present in the moist fruits, and even the eating of the dried fruits is sinful because of the *rāga* (attachment) involved. Flower (an *abhaksya*) contains minute living beings and mushroom (an *ananta-kaya*) has innumerable living organisms. Therefore, the consumption of flowers and mushroom is also forbidden. One should also avoid eating leftovers.

*Shrāvaka* should also avoid walking on grass or wet ground, and unnecessary use of soil, vegetation, water, fire and air.

### **We do not eat meat of cow, then how can we consume cow's milk?**

To eat cow's meat, the cow has to be killed. For cow's milk, we do not kill cow. But we must make sure the cow's milk is extracted without causing any pain to it and the milk was in excess, and we did not deprive the cow's off-springs from their mother's milk. If we do not remove the excess milk from cow, we may be doing more harm to it than help. When we use the butter and cheese, we should make sure that they (specially the cheese) do not contain any animal ingredients. Jainism considers that the use of milk and milk products, oil, etc., is not healthy for spiritual advancement. There are people in US who are called vegans. Vegans do not eat dairy products.

### **What is wrong in eating the meat of naturally died animal?**

Dead animal contains very high number of invisible living organisms and their number keeps on multiplying as time passes. Most organisms have the same

color as the meat's. Therefore, eating meat of naturally dead animal does involve a higher form of violence.

**What's wrong in buying readily available meat, when you haven't killed it yourself?**

Purchasing readily available meat creates demand and encourages others to kill. Thus it is equivalent to committing the deed. The 'neat' packaging of meat hides the pain that occurred before. It is unfortunate that packaging keeps scenes of slaughterhouses off the minds of the consumers. It is *himsā* (violence) - whether a person kills living beings himself/herself, or causes others to kill them, or gives consent to others to kill.

**But meat-eating makes people stronger and healthy. Is it true?**

No. It is a wrong belief that animal food makes us stronger and healthy. The human physiology is for eating and digesting vegetarian food and is significantly different than meat-eating animals. Animal food is laced with fat, cholesterol, pesticides, hormones, antibiotics and similar harmful ingredients. Meat eaters are more prone to heart failure, cancer and other killer diseases. Animal food transmits as many as 160 contagious diseases to human under natural conditions. Animal food also lowers the immune status. Vegetarianism increases endurance and stamina, and makes people healthy and smart. Vegetarian food prevents various cancers, hemorrhoids, constipation, ulcer and many diseases. Smart animals like elephants, cows, bulls, gorillas, horses, apes and chimpanzees are all vegetarians.

**But Non-vegetarians argue that the meat is the best source of protein. Is it true?**

No, it is not true. Meat provides much more protein than the daily need of an average person which is 10 to 15 grams. Excessive intake of protein is harmful. In addition, the meat protein is disease-prone. Protein from vegetarian foods (specially from grains) is very useful and quality-prone. Also it is not excessive. Similarly, vegetarians get their calcium, iron and other vitamin needs from various vegetables, dark and leafy greens, beans, cereals, nuts, fruits, juices, milk, yogurt and 15 to 20 minutes of sunlight daily. There are 120 million animals a week are killed for food in the United States. This is equivalent of one animal per person per year on Earth.

**Will my being vegetarian stop violence to animals?**

No, not totally but it will definitely decrease violence to animals to some extent. Being vegetarian is a right step in the direction of achieving the goal. In the beginning only one person takes the initiative for every cause, others follow him/her. Our example will encourage others. Some will renounce animal food, and so on it will go on multiplying.

**Then, why meat-eating Europeans and Americans are more civilized, learned and powerful?**

Their civilization, learning or power is not due to meat-eating. It is due to other fine qualities like discipline, hard work, self-effort, higher productivity and

quality, open-mindedness, adventurous nature, innovation, honesty, generosity, compassion, good *karma* and natural resources. They also realize that vegetarianism is good for health. There are already more than 10 million Americans who are vegetarians. Albert Einstein, Isaac Newton, George Bernard Shaw, Leo Tolstoy and Socrates were vegetarian. Michael Jackson, Madonna and ex-Beatle Paul McCartney are also vegetarian.

### **When to eat?**

Eating only during the daytime is permissible. Great importance has always been attached by Jain writers to the avoidance of taking food by night (*ratri-bhojana*). Abstention from *ratri-bhojana* is the abandonment of the fourfold ailments (solid food, *mukhavās* (mouth-fresher), tasty food and liquid) by night out of compassion for living beings. There exist many tiny insects barely discernible by day which are completely invisible by night even when a lamp is lit. *Rāga* (attachment) is always more intense in eating by night than in eating by day. At night almost anything including living organisms may fall into the bowl of food. Where food has to be cooked and the platters washed up there is even greater *himsā* (violence) by night. The digestive system is less active in the absence of the sun-light. Eating before sunset gives 3 to 4 hours to digest before one goes to sleep. It is also suggested that the aspirant should not eat until the previous meal is completely digested. There should be 5 to 6 hours between two meals. It is also important to eat at regular time every day. For certain situation, medicine and water at the night time are acceptable as an exception.

### **How much to eat?**

Always eat less than you are hungry for. If more than needed food is eaten, it will leave some food undigested for a long time, and will make the aspirant lazy to do any constructive activities including spiritual activities. If your hunger defines one unit (amount) of meal, then divide it into four equal portions. Eat equivalent of two portions, leave one portion for breathing and one for water. It is also suggested that the aspirant according to his/her capability do one or two fasts every month, or do one *āyambil* (takes food without spices, oil, butter, etc.) every month, or few *ekāsanās* (eating one meal a day) a month, or few *bekāsanās* (eating two meals a day) a month.

### **How to eat?**

Proper chewing of food and eating with proper affection are vital elements of proper eating for good health and spiritual advancement. Being unhappy, angry, worried, talkative, or in a hurry should be avoided while eating. Avoid or minimize drinking water while eating. If possible, drink water about 40 minutes after the meal. Rest is suggested for about 30 minutes after the meal.

### **How to prepare Jain Food?**

Utensils, spoons and tools used in cooking for Jain foods must not be used or shared for the preparation of the food that is prohibited. Water, gas, electricity and other resources should not be wasted. One should not cook more food than needed. Preparing less food is acceptable.

Fresh vegetables should be used in cooking. Frozen and canned foods, artificial color and flavoring, and use of chemicals should be avoided. Ingredients and grains used in cooking should not be tainted.

### **Ecology, Cosmetics, Silk Sārees, Leather, Animal Testing & Animals used for entertainment**

Vegetarianism promotes animal preservation and forestry, and thus ecology and environment. Few examples are: 1) one acre of trees is spared each year by every individual who switches to vegetarian diet, 2) it takes 55 square foot of rain-forest to produce one pound of hamburger 3) it requires 2500 gallons of water to produce one pound of meat (one pound of wheat requires only 50 to 75 gallons of water), 4) 85% of annual US top soil is lost due to raising livestock. Do you know that one pound of beef requires 16 pound of grains and soybeans. Do you know that 15 vegetarians can be fed if one person gives up eating meat.

Cosmetics look innocent and cool but there is lot of hidden violence. Cosmetics use many animal ingredients such as carminic acid, elastin, sperm oil and musk oil. To produce one pound of carminic acid, 70,000 insects are crushed. Another ingredient called “elastin” is obtained from neck ligaments and aorta of cattle. Sperm oil is the oil extracted from intelligent mammal, whale. Musk oil is extracted from musk of deers, beavers, civet cats and other genitals.

Make sure cosmetics such as soaps, detergents, shampoos, skin creams, oven cleaners and shaving creams have only alternative synthetics and plant tissues, no animal ingredients or have “Cruelty Free” logo on these products. Read the labels and avoid the products with ingredients like glycerides, gelatin, lecithin, stearates, enzymes, lard and tallow. An estimated 14 million animals die every year because of animal testing for cosmetics.

Some think that they look cool when they wear silk. The silk is made out of silkworms. To produce 100 grams of pure silk, 1500 silkworms (chrysalis) have to be killed. It is unnecessary to wear silk when we have other alternatives. If you want to look cool, wear artificial silk.

We wear leather belts, leather shoes. We use leather brief cases, we use leather purses. We have leather interior in our cars. We have leather furniture. Some people wear leather belt or carry leather purse when they go to temples. Leather is nothing but the skin of killed animal. Jain aspirant should avoid use of leather and use other alternatives.

Animal testing in medical fields can be minimized. Most of the medical testing does not require animals. Consuming a medicine that was tested on animal is a sinful act. Consult your doctor if there is an alternative medicine that was not tested on animal. We should also avoid seeing the entertainment programs that involve use of animals.

### **Violence of Speech and Thoughts**



Jains are very careful about physical *himsā* but they often commit violence of speech and thoughts since most of them do not fully understand what constitutes the violence of speech and thoughts. Without proper knowledge, we are like a blind person surrounded by fire. Few examples of what constitutes the violence of speech and thoughts are: presumptions, suspicion, anger, ego, deceit, greed, spiritual-laziness, lying, spreading unkind rumors, character assassination, deliberate mis-guidance, forgery, use of harsh language, giving wrong suggestions, hidden agenda, telling one's secrets to others, manipulation, desire for power, superiority complex, dishonesty, jealousy, causing fear in others, personal jokes, laughing at someone's failures or miseries and similar activities.

Hitler was a vegetarian. This means that being a vegetarian is not good enough. To be a truly nonviolent person, the aspirant must develop the virtues of forgiveness, tolerance, humility, straightforwardness and contentment. He/she must adopt *anekāntvād* (multiplicity of views) in thinking and *syādvād* (theory of "from certain point of view") in speaking. Without *anekāntvād* and *syādvād*, we can not be truly nonviolent. Also he/she puts four *bhāvanas* (contemplation)-*maitri* (Universal friendship), *pramoda* (Praising others good qualities), *karuna* (compassion) and *madhyastha* (neutrality) - in daily practice.

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