

## DIET AND DIETARY PRACTICES OF JAIN COMMUNITY

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### Abstract:

*Jains believe in leading a simple life. They are against rituals and animal sacrifice. They believe that every living being has a soul; and follow the principle of non-killing, non-violence, and non-injury to any living being. They treat even unconscious killing of an ant as sin, and discourage it. According to Jain literature, Jains are vegetarians; their diet is governed by certain principles. Jain diet practices are different than other religions. Important features of Jain diet include -They do not eat meat; eat vegetables, squash, beans, peas, tomatoes, and fruits; avoid eating root vegetables, such as onions, garlic, beets, etc; do not eat chicken, eggs, turkeys, or any poultry items; do not eat fish, lobsters, oysters, or any kind of seafood; do not drink beer, wine, liquor, whiskey, or any kind of alcohol; prefer to drink boiled water; do not eat honey; and do not eat food stored overnight etc. In this paper, the researcher has taken the review of the old Jain diet practices, compared it with modern Jain diet practices, to find out to what extent old Jain diet practices are perceived in the current age, by college and professional course students; and tested the hypothesis 'Current and old diet and dietary practices of Jain community are same.'. The findings include - (1) there is considerable change in diet and dietary practices of Jain community. (2) The old Jain strict dietary practices are not followed in current days. The researcher suggests adoption of 'balanced diet' i.e. a diet that contains adequate amounts of all the necessary nutrients required for healthy growth and activity, of a person depending on the age, height, build of the body, profession, exertion, illness etc which may, occasionally, violate the principle of non-killing, non-violence, and non-injury to any living being. The research ends with a conclusion that there is considerable change in current and old diet and dietary practices of Jain community.*

### INTRODUCTION:

Jain means honor to those who have conquered their inner impulses, whether good or evil, and who exemplify the path of self-conquest and happiness to all other living beings. The Sanskrit term 'ahimsa' appeared in the Upanishads in about 500 B.C.E., when Jains emphasized reverence for all life, rather than the sacrifice of animals. Mahavira revived and reorganized the Jain movement in the 6th or 5th century BCE and adopted 'Ahimsa' into his code of conduct. In the times of Mahavira and after, Jains criticized other religions for negligence and inconsistency in the implementation of ahimsa. In particular, they strongly objected to animal sacrifice with subsequent meat-eating. It was believed that if the world did not purchase and consume meat, no one would slaughter and offer meat for sale. According to Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Jainism is the originator of Ahimsa. He writes -In ancient times, innumerable animals were butchered in sacrifices. Evidence in support of this is found in various poetic compositions such as the Meghaduta. But the credit for the disappearance of this terrible massacre from the Brahminical religion goes to Jainism. Jain vegetarian diet is consumed by the followers of Jain culture and philosophy. It is one of the most rigorous forms of diet in India. The Jain diet is completely vegetarian and it also excludes onions and garlic. The strictest forms of Jain diet is practiced by the monastic ascetics, which exclude potatoes and other root vegetables. This food is called in Sanskrit as 'sattvic' food; it is based on the qualities of goodness, lightness and

happiness. On the other hand, onions and garlic are 'tamasic', as they have a quality of darkness, lethargy and indeed a putrid smell. Jain objections to eating of meat, fish and eggs are based on the principle of nonviolence (ahimsa, literally 'non-injuring'). Every act by which a person directly or indirectly supports killing or injury to any living thing is seen as act of violence (himsa). Jains consider nonviolence as religious duty for everyone (ahimsa paramo dharmah). Jains way of applying nonviolence to everyday activities, and especially to food, shapes their entire lives and is the most significant hallmark of Jain identity. According to L. P. Tassetori, Italy, Jainism is of a very high order. Its important teachings are based upon science. The more the scientific knowledge advances the more that Jain teaching will be proven. However, some western scholars have interpreted the texts in different way to show that ancient Jain ascetics accepted meat as diet if the animal had not been specifically killed for them. However, Jains, who are strict vegetarians, do not accept the interpretations of western scholars.

#### **RESEARCH HYPOTHESES:**

Ho: Current and old diet and dietary practices of Jain community are same. H1: Current and old diet and dietary practices of Jain community are different.

#### **OBJECTIVES OF STUDY:**

1. To study Jain literature related to diet and diet practices.
2. To compare old and new diet and diet practices of Jains.
3. To suggest the best diet and diet practices for Jain community.

#### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:**

1. **Population:** There are approximately 3000 Jain students studying in colleges around the Sangli, Miraj and Kupwad city.
2. **Sample Size:** For the purpose of the study, sample of 150 (5%) out of 3000, Jain students doing graduation in colleges situated in Sangli, Kupwad and Miraj area is taken.
3. **Sampling Unit:** Students of B. Com., BBA and BA studying in different colleges in SangliMiraj and Kupwad city area (India).
4. **Sampling Method:** For the purpose of the study, convenience sampling method was adopted.
5. **Data Source:** Primary as well as secondary data is used for the collection of information. Primary data is collected through questionnaire from the students and the secondary data is collected from the sources like books, Internet, Journals, etc.
6. **Research Instrument:** Primary data is collected with the help of a questionnaire, which included 10 close-ended questions.
7. **Tools for Analysis:** Tables and ratios are used as tools for analysis.

#### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE:**

The history of Jainism after Lord Mahavira is recorded in the Jain literature preserved in various Indian languages. The most momentous event, which occurred about 80 AD was the division of the Jain community into two sects: Svetambara (white-robed) and Digambara (sky robed). The split did not incur doctrinal or moral differences but only dissent on the basis of religious practices. In the year 453 AD, a major council was held at Vailabhi in order to establish Mahavira's teaching

which had been preserved through oral traditions. The outcome of this council was the writing of the Jain canon. The Svetambara sect approved it but the Digambara questioned its authenticity. Instead, the latter canonized the literature of AcaryaKundakunda. Today, Jain literature is a rich compendium of diverse interests and is written in several Indian languages so as to reach all people. The writings of these Acaryas as having 'manifold attractions' not only for those in Jain studies but for lovers of literature, history, 4 culture, philosophy, and comparative religion. Brief review of literature relating to Jain diet and dietary practices is given below.

**Manoj Jain, Laxmi Jain and Tarla Dalal (2012)**, wrote a book titled "Jain Food: Compassionate and Healthy Cooking", is a special book which includes color pictures and intricate art designs; Over 80 recipes by Tarla Dalal and Laxmi Jain; Simple Flow diagrams to assist first time cooks; and Detailed glossary of Hindi terms; A Jain Food pyramid; Health benefits of a Jain-vegetarian diet etc. This book enlightens about the unique way of life that has, for centuries, given its followers spiritual contentment and good health. This book also answers many questions about Jain food in the context of traditional practices and contemporary lifestyles. It also serves as a practical cooking and eating guide to those who wish to enjoy an abiding continuity with the wisdom of our forefathers. In nutshell, this book explains the importance of Jain philosophy of "Ahinsa" in day-to-day diet practices.

**Paul Dundas (b1952)** is a scholar and a senior lecturer in Sanskrit language and head of Asian Studies in the University of Edinburgh. His main areas of academic and research interest include Jainism, Buddhism, classical Sanskrit literature and Middle Indo-Aryan philology. He is regarded as one of the leading scholars of the world in Jain studies. He is currently a member of the Council of the Pali Text Society. He has written following four important books related to Jain diet –

- **The Jains**, published by The Library of religious beliefs and practices, London, in the year 1992.
- **The meat at the wedding feasts: Kṛṣṇa, vegetarianism and a Jain dispute**, published by Centre for South Asian Studies, University of Toronto in the year 1998.
- **Steps to liberation: 2500 years of Jain art and religion**, published by Antwerpen, Etnografisch Museum in 2000.
- **History**, scripture and controversy in a medieval Jain sect, published by Routledge advances in Jain studies. London in 2007.

**Natubhai Shah (1998) wrote a book 'Jainism: The World of Conquerors**, published by Sussex Academic Press includes two volumes. These two volumes provide an intimate vantage view of what the author calls "the world of conquerors" a world of inner and outer space waiting to be conquered not by warlike weapons unleashed by greed, malice, domination, violence and exploitation but by peaceful conquerors following principles and practice of Right Knowledge, Right Faith, and Right Austerities, based on reverence for life, compassion, non-violence, equanimity and a sense of mutual interdependence.

**Arun Kumar Jain's book (2012) 'Faith and Philosophy of Jainism'** covers all important standards of Jainism such as; basic teachings, life of all Tirthankaras, the main sects and lay practices, important Jain sculptures, influential Jain scholars, sacred Jain sites, Jain prayers and pilgrimages, believes, rituals and ceremonies. A detailed introduction provides a historic overview of Jainism. An extensive bibliography and references at the end of each chapter guides interested readers to in-depth resources and various topics. This volume is most interactive and highly educative.

**Jain, Jaishree and Jinger, Arvind (2011)** wrote a research paper titled “Stress And Life Satisfaction Impact of Food Habits” which is published in International Referred Research Journal, December, 2011 issue, (ISSN- 0975-3486) conclude that the relationship of stress and life satisfaction is determined by different factors but food habits, life style and quality of life also affect the relationship. Therefore, it is pertinent to study the relationship of stress and life in the group of vegetarian and non vegetarian.

#### TYPES OF DIET PRACTICES:

Jain vegetarians are of different types of diet practices. Most common of them are-

1. **Flexitarian:** Flexitarian eat a mostly vegetarian diet, but occasionally eat meat.
2. **Lacto-ovo- vegetarians:** Lacto-ovo- vegetarians consume both milk and eggs.
3. **Lacto vegetarians:** Lacto vegetarians eat milk and dairy products.
4. **Ovo vegetarians:** Ovo vegetarians are those who eat eggs.
5. **Pollo vegetarians :** Pollo vegetarians eat poultry products but not meat
6. **Pesco vegetarians:** Pesco vegetarians eat fish but refrain from eating other flesh
7. **Vegans vegetarians:** Vegans vegetarians do not eat all kind of animal products such as milk, dairy products, honey etc and meat.

**Table 1: Types of diet practices of Jains communities: Sample size=150**

Types of Jain Vegetarians	No. of respondents	%
1. Flexitarian (New)	20	13.33%
2. Lacto-ovo- vegetarians	41	27.33%
3. Lacto vegetarians	33	22.00%
4. Ovo vegetarians	21	14.00%
5. Pollo vegetarians	14	9.33%
6. Pesco vegetarians	9	6.00%
7. Vegans vegetarians		

**Source:** Primary data Note: The above table is based on very limited sample. The results may vary, if, the composition of respondents and sample size is changed.

#### DATA COLLECTION, PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS:

Primary data about current diet and dietary practices of Jain community is collected through questionnaire from the students and the secondary data were collected from the available sources like internet, journals, etc. According to Jain literature, Jains are vegetarians; they do not eat meat; eat vegetables, squash, beans, peas, tomatoes, and fruits; avoid eating root vegetables, such as onions, garlic, beets, etc; do not eat chicken, eggs, turkeys, or any poultry items; do not eat fish, lobsters, oysters, or any kind of seafood; do not drink beer, wine, liquor, whiskey, or any kind of alcohol; prefer to drink boiled water; do not eat honey; and do not eat food stored overnight etc. To confirm, whether same diet practices are still followed or there is some change in diet practices of Jain community, 10 questions based on above are asked to 150 (5%) Jain students doing graduation in the colleges situated in Sangli, Kupwad and Miraj area. Responses received from them are presented in the following table 2.

**Table 2: Survey on Current Diet and Dietary Practices of Jain community  
(Sample size = 150)**

Sr. No.	Questions	Responses										
		S D	%	D A	%	N T	%	A A	%	S A	%	To tal
1	All Jains are vegetarians	11	7.33	24	16.00	52	34.67	54	36.00	150		
2	All Jains do not eat meat	9	6.00	25	16.67	65	43.33	46	30.67	150		
3	Jains eat vegetables, squash, beans, peas, tomatoes, fruits, etc	2	1.33	3	2.00	76	50.70	66	44.00	150		
4	All Jains avoid eating root vegetables, such as onions, garlic, beets, etc	15	10.00	28	18.67	41	27.30	60	40.00	150		
5	Jains do not eat chicken, eggs, turkeys, or any poultry items	5	3.33	21	14.00	77	51.33	47	31.33	150		
6	Jains do not eat fish, lobsters, oysters, or any kind of seafood	15	10.00	28	18.67	41	27.30	60	40.00	150		
7	Jains do not drink beer, wine, liquor, whiskey, or any kind of alcohol	7	4.67	17	11.33	70	46.67	56	37.33	150		
8	Jains prefer to drink boiled water	2	1.33	8	5.33	70	46.67	70	46.67	150		
9	Jains do not eat Honey	1	0.67	3	2.00	66	44.00	80	53.33	150		
10	Jains do not eat food stored overnight	6	4.00	15	10.00	73	48.67	56	37.33	150		
	Total	11		24		52		54		150		

**Abbreviations:** SD-Strongly Agree, DA -Dis-Agree, NT - Neutral, A- Agree, SA-Strongly agree

**Source:** Primary data

#### INTERPRETATION AND ANALYSIS:

The responses presented in the table 2, are interpreted and analyzed as below.

**1. All Jains are vegetarians:** It is observed from table that 11 (7.33%) respondents strongly disagree, 24 (16%) disagree, 52(34.67%) agree and 54 (36%) strongly agree to the above statement. This shows that 67.67% of the Jains are pure vegetarians.

**2. All Jains do not eat meat:** It is observed from table that 9 (6%) respondents strongly disagree, 25 (16.67%) disagree, 65(43.33%) agree and 46 (30.67%) strongly agree to the above statement. It shows that 74% of the Jains do not eat meat. Remaining eat a mostly vegetarian diet, but occasionally eat meat or some kind of non-vegetarian food.

**3. Jains eat vegetables, squash, beans, peas, tomatoes, fruits, etc:** It is observed from table that 2 (1.33%) respondents strongly disagree, 3 (2%) disagree, 76 (50.7%) agree and 66 (44%) strongly agree to the statement. This shows, 96% of the Jains eat vegetarian food i.e. vegetables, squash, beans, peas, tomatoes, fruits, etc.

**4. All Jains avoid eating root vegetables, such as onions, garlic, beets, etc:** It is observed from table that 15 (10%) respondents strongly disagree, 28 (18.67%) disagree, 41 (27.3%) agree and 60 (40%) strongly agree to the above statement. It shows that 71.3% of the Jains avoid eating root vegetables, such as onions, garlic, beets, etc.

**5. Jains do not eat chicken, eggs, turkeys, or any poultry items:** It is observed from table that 5 (3.3%) respondents strongly disagree, 21 (14%) disagree, 60(40%) agree and 57 (38%) strongly agree to the above statement. The table shows that most of the Jains (82.67%) do not eat chicken, eggs, turkeys, or any poultry items.

**6. Jains do not eat fish, lobsters, oysters, or any kind of seafood:** It is observed from table that 15 (10%) respondents strongly disagree, 22 (14.67%) disagree, 56 (37.3%) agree and 49 (32.67%) strongly agree to the above statement. It shows that many of the Jains (70%) do not eat fish, lobsters, oysters, or any kind of seafood.

**7. Jains do not drink beer, wine, liquor, whiskey, or any kind of alcohol:** It is observed from table that 7 (4.67%) respondents strongly disagree, 10 (6.67%) disagree, 75 (50%) agree and 51 (34%) strongly agree to the above statement. It shows that most of the (89%) Jains do not drink beer, wine, liquor, whiskey, or any kind of alcohol.

**8. Jains prefer to drink boiled water:** It is observed from table that 22 (14.67%) respondents strongly disagree, 18 (12%) disagree, 62 (41.3%) agree and 45 (30%) strongly agree to the above statement. From this it can be concluded that many of the (73.3%) Jains prefer to drink boiled water.

**9. Jains do not eat Honey:** It is observed from table that 18 (12%) respondents strongly disagree, 30 (20%) disagree, 42 (28%) agree and 54 (36%) strongly agree to the above statement. From this it can be concluded that many of the Jains (68%) do not eat Honey.

**10. Jains do not eat food stored overnight:** It is observed from table that 6 (4%) respondents strongly disagree, 5 (3.33%) disagree, 78 (52%) agree and 57 (38%) strongly agree to the above statement. It shows that many of the Jains (90%) do not eat food stored overnight.

#### **HYPOTHESIS TESTING:**

Acceptance or rejection of hypothesis depends on the range of values. When the test statistic falls within the region of acceptance, the null hypothesis is accepted, otherwise rejected. In the present study the sample statistic falls within the region of acceptance as most of the i.e. 607 (40.5%) and 539 (35.9%) totaling 1743 (76.4%) respondents agree to the statement that "Current diet and dietary practices of Jain community are similar to olden days". 296 (19.73%) disagree this view and rest 58 (3.87%) are found neutral. It shows that there is considerable change in diet and dietary practices of Jain community, hence the  $H_0$  is rejected and  $H_1$  is accepted.

#### **CONCLUSION:**

There is considerable change in diet and dietary practices of Jain community. The old Jain strict dietary practices are not followed in current days. The research worldwide shows that vegetarian or non-vegetarian food alone is not sufficient for providing required calories to the persons of all ages. In India too, many of the Jains are endorsing this view. Therefore, adoption of "balanced diet" i.e. a diet that contains adequate amounts of all the necessary nutrients required for healthy growth and activity, of a person depending on the age, height, build of the body, type of work, etc is suggested, which may, occasionally, violate the principle of non-killing, non-violence, and non-injury to any living being. However, religious gurus and preachers may follow strict dietary practices, to control sudden de-gradation of Jain traditional values, relating to diet practices, in the name of balanced diet.

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