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## Contemporary Jain Way of Compassionate and Ethical Living

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Item Type	Postprint
Authors	Shah, Pravin
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Download date	2026-07-01 06:08:04
Link to Item	<a href="http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12424/221008">http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12424/221008</a>

# Contemporary Jain Way of Compassionate and Ethical Living

Pravin K Shah  
Raleigh, NC USA

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## 1.0 Jain Ethics and Compassion

### Main Theme of Lord Mahāvīr's Teaching:

- Ahimsa (Non-violence) is respect for the life of all living beings.
- Aparigraha (Non-possession / Non-possessiveness) stems from respect for other lives as well as the environment.
- Anekāntavāda (Non-one-sidedness/ Open Mindedness) is respect for the views of others because the expression of truth is relative and hence it has many sides.

Lord Mahāvīr made the following profound statements of all times:

- "All lives are bound together by mutual support and interdependence". This is an ancient Jain scriptural aphorism of Tattvārtha sutra.
- "One who neglects or disregards the existence of earth, air, fire, water and vegetation, disregards one's own existence" (Āchārāṅga sutra).
- "We harm and kill other lives because of our greed and possessiveness" (Shrāvākāchār).

Since all lives are interconnected, one should realize that **"if we harm ONE we harm ALL Living Beings"** and "Greed, Possession and Possessiveness are the primary causes of all violence as well as imbalance in the environment".

These ancient statements form the basis of the modern science of ecology and are refreshingly contemporary in their promises.

Lord Mahāvīr's entire life was full of compassion. After attaining Kevaljñān, he travelled barefoot for 30 years to deliver the message of true compassion directly to the common people. He lived in perfect harmony with nature throughout his life and provided utmost respect for the environment.

He stated that earth, water, fire, air, and vegetation which constitute the five basic elements of our environment, possess life. They possess one sense which is the sense of touch.

Animals and human beings possess five senses and a mind. The five senses are: touch, taste, smell, sight, and hearing. Human beings are also blessed with advanced developed thinking as compared to animals. Hence they also have the responsibility for achieving oneness and harmony among all living beings, including the environment, through **compassionate living** and **disciplined conduct and behavior**.

## 2.0 Survival of Human Life and Ethical Living

It is not possible to sustain human life with absolute non-violence and absolute non-possession. **To sustain a human life one needs to eat plant base food which is a life by itself according to Jainism.** Also one may need minimum, clothes and shelter. **Hence the destruction of some form of life and limited possession are essential for human survival.**

The goal of Jainism is to minimize the violence and negative impact of our existence to other living beings and the environment.

In his book “**Jain Darshan**” Muni Shri Nyayvijaji explains very clearly the following definition of minimum violence which is to be used only for our existence/survival. This guideline applies to laypeople (Shravak and Shravika) only. Monks and nuns have to practice total non-violence.

### Definition of Minimum Violence

- Jainism believes that violence is proportional to the number of senses a living being possesses. For our survival, if **we hurt or kill even a single five sense living being it is considered higher violence compared to millions of one sense living beings.**
- A human being possesses all five senses and a very developed mind and hence to hurt, to exploit (slavery, child labor etc.), or kill any human being for our survival results in the highest form of a violent act.
- An animal also possesses all five senses but a less developed mind and hence to hurt, to exploit, or kill any animal for our survival results in the 2<sup>nd</sup> highest violent act.
- Similarly killing, exploiting, or hurting a living being with four, three, and two senses results in a lesser violent act.
- Since a human life can survive by consuming and using only one sense living beings (fruits, vegetables, air, water, earth, fire etc.), Jainism prohibits the destruction and exploitation of higher sense living beings for our survival.

Also the modern science quantified that, the killing or exploiting of higher (five, four, three etc.) sensed living beings has a much greater negative impact on the environment.

Hence, Jainism advocates strict vegetarianism and is against raising animals for food for ethical, spiritual, as well as environmental reasons.

To read/download Muni Shri Nyayvijaji’s original article in Gujarati and its Hindi and English translation go to this link: [http://www.jainelibrary.org/\\$Muni\\_Nyayvijayji\\_on\\_Himsa\\_and\\_Suvival/.index.php](http://www.jainelibrary.org/$Muni_Nyayvijayji_on_Himsa_and_Suvival/.index.php)

### **3.0 Universal Law of Mother Nature**

The following law of Mother Nature is true for mothers of human as well as for animal under natural healthy environment.

- No mother (cow and human) produces milk unless she delivers a baby.
- After the birth of a calf, the cow starts to produce milk only to feed her calf. She also produces just enough milk that is needed for her calf under natural healthy environment (same as human).
- The cow slowly stops producing milk after her calf reaches a weaning age (same as human).
- Nature has not made any provision for mother cows to produce more milk than the need of their calves under natural healthy environment.

However until a calf reaches to a weaning age:

If a mother cow becomes sick then she produces less milk. In this case her calf needs to feed substitute milk product for her proper growth.

If her calf becomes sick before weaning age, then temporarily she (the calf) consumes less milk. In this case:

Mother cow has left over milk in her udder. We need to remove the leftover milk so that she can continually produce the same quantity of milk. This way there will be enough milk when the calf recovers from the sickness.

If the leftover milk is not removed then on the next day mother cow will produce less milk and there will not be enough milk for the calf when she recovers from her sickness.

In conclusion from Jain principle point view, we can safely say that **any drop of milk that we drink or we use in dairy products is considered stolen from the mother cow that was meant for her baby calf under normal healthy environment.**

Any other reasons that we hear (we use excess milk of mother cow) from our religious leaders or from other sources are **totally incorrect under natural healthy environment.**

## ***4.0 Justification of Dairy Product Consumptions in the Past***

All Jains believe in vegetarianism and most Jains are vegetarians. However, a majority of Jains consume dairy products because animals are not directly killed during the milking operation and ancient Jain literature indicates the milk was consumed by our religious leaders including Lord Mahavir and other Tirthankars.

Hence most Jains and leaders believe that the dairy consumption is **not in violation of the fundamental principle of Ahimsa and non-stealing. Somehow they conveniently ignore the basic laws of Mother Nature.**

After the investigation of history of the Indian literature and culture, we can easily conclude the following reasons for the usage of dairy products in the past.

In olden times:

- The agricultural industry was not developed. India was not producing enough crops to feed the entire human population. (Even about 65 years ago India was heavily importing grains and other foods from America under the PL480 program and distributing it to common people through the ration system. I use to stand in line to receive some grains from rationing).
- The cow's milk provided additional food. The male calf (bull) was used to farm the land. The cow's dried dung was used for fire, to cook the family meal and its urine used for medicine. **Hence the usage of cow and their milk was essential for the survival of the large human population in India.**
- Since people were using a small portion of cow's milk (that was meant for her calf) for their survival they treated the cows as a member of the family (mother cow). After the delivery of a baby calf, they allowed the calf to consume entire mother's milk for about two weeks. Then they use a small portion of the total milk for their food. The majority of milk was consumed by the baby calves. They took care of cows with very minimum violence. Cows were useful not only for their milk but also for farming, for their dung and for their urine.

My grandmother (about 65 years ago) knew that cow's milk was for her baby calf and she allowed her calf to consume milk from 3 udders and only one udder of milk was consumed by the family. She indicated that the baby calf would have consumed all the milk if she would have allowed her. Even though my grandmother was not educated but she understood the basic laws of Mother Nature very well.

## ***5.0 Contemporary Dairy Product***

Today the output of modern agricultural production of the world is such that it can feed the world population several times over. Also heavy machinery replaced the bulls for farming, modern medicine replaced the usage of cow's urine, and natural gas and electricity replaced the usage of cow dung. **Agriculturally India is independent. Hence there is no need to consume dairy products and to raise cows and to torture them for our survival.**

### **5.1 Contemporary Dairy Industry**

In recent times, the demand of dairy products has increased significantly after the invention of refrigeration and improved packaging technology. To meet the increased demand, the dairy industry is commercialized. **The dairy cows are now treated as milk producing machines**, which inflict terrible pain. To maximize profit, animals are raised on a mass scale.

Raising large numbers of animals for food also creates an environmental imbalance because it involves a significantly greater use of natural resources than for the equivalent amount of plant food. The cruelty to animals and the impact on the environment by this industry are unimaginable.

The following list summarizes some of the violence (Himsa) inflicted on animals used in the production of dairy products. These problems exist in large factory farms in western countries as well as in the small dairy farms of India or anywhere else in the world. I have visited several dairy farms in USA and many small dairy farms in India and observed the following practices.

- To receive continuous supply of milk, the cows are kept pregnant all the time. They are subject to artificial insemination or some other practices that ensure the maximum production of milk. Artificial insemination is done within three months after delivery. In its natural course, a cow would get pregnant after her calf is weaned.
- Approximately 95% of male and 65% of female baby calves are sold to the veal or beef industry, where they are slaughtered between six months to three years of age. Sometimes, the farmers let the male calves die of hunger as practiced in several villages of India (I have observed this practice in our holy city of Palitana).

- Milk producing cows are sold to slaughterhouses at five to six years of age when their milk production yield drops more than 30% naturally, due to old age. This is also true in India more than 90% of the time. Even though the life expectancy of a dairy cow is 15 to 20 years.
- Hormones and antibiotics are fed or injected daily to increase the milk yield (except – in organic dairy farms). Almost all small dairies in India use hormones and antibiotics.

Because the cows are kept continually pregnant and are fed or injected daily with hormones and antibiotics, **they are forced to produce about three to six times more milk** than what they would produce normally and naturally for their baby calves. In this way, the dairy farmers try to meet the growing demand of dairy products without increasing the number of cows.

To produce very large quantity of milk in a day, the cow's body needs to work very hard. After about five years (3 deliveries) of this intense stress, the cow's body breaks down and her milk production yield drops significantly. At this time she is sent to a slaughterhouse legally in the western world and illegally in most states in India. There are many illegal slaughterhouses in India. I have visited a few of them in Ahmedabad and other places. Less than 0.1% of cows end-up in the cow shelter places called "Panjarapole" in India.

## 5.2 Organic Dairy Farm:

An organic dairy farm is generally smaller than a huge factory-style farm. It does not use antibiotics, pesticides, and hormones on the cows. They do not add any milk additives into the milk. However, these farms also keep the cows continually pregnant, sell approximately 80% of calves to the veal or beef industry, and the cows are sold to a slaughterhouse after five or six years of life. Therefore, organic milk is almost as cruel as regular milk.

## 6.0 Ecological Impact of the Dairy and Meat Industry

The following data summarizes the magnitude of cruelty and the impact on the environment. This data is taken from USDA.

### Waste Released in the Environment

The following table lists USDA (USA Gov. agency) slaughter statistics – **Animals killed in 2008 year in USA.**

Animal	Slaughtered in 2008 Year	Slaughtered/Day in 2008 year
Cattle:	35,507,500	97,281
Pigs:	116,558,900	319,339
Chickens:	9,075,261,000	24,863,729
Layer hens:	69,683,000	190,912
Broiler chickens:	9,005,578,000	24,672,816
Turkeys:	271,245,000	743,137

**In USA alone 400, 000 cows and pigs, and 50 million chicken and turkeys are slaughtered daily.** Waste released into the environment by the US meat and dairy industry is **230,000 pounds per second**, polluting our land, air and water systems.

### Greenhouse Effect

The world's 1.3 billion cows annually produce 100 million tons of methane, which is a powerful greenhouse gas and traps 25 times as much solar heat as carbon dioxide.

### Water Consumption

Livestock (cattle, calves, hogs or pigs) production accounts for more than half of all the water consumed in USA. To produce one pound of meat, an average of 2,500 gallons of water is used, while one pound of potatoes, wheat or rice requires an average of 50 to 250 gallons of water.

### Land Usage

A third of the surface of North America is devoted to grazing. Half of American croplands grow livestock feed for the dairy and meat industries. In USA, this represents 220 million acres of land, in Brazil 25 million acres, and half of the forests in Central America have been deforested for livestock production.

## Impact on Health

The past 25 to 50 years of medical study indicate that consumption of meat and dairy products is associated with the major causes of disease and death among middle and upper class people around the world: heart disease, diabetes, colon cancer, prostate cancer, and even fractures.

**“Not only meat, but also dairy foods, contribute to the high fat and cholesterol diets which are major causes for heart disease and type2 diabetes”. “Dairy foods are linked to prostate cancer and the development of type 1 diabetes”.**

Some medical studies have observed that as milk consumption increases, fractures actually increase, which shows, contrary to advertising, that consuming calcium in milk does not protect people.

## 7.0 Ecological Impact of Styrofoam and Plastics Materials

### Problems with Styrofoam

Styrofoam has become such an accepted everyday product that people often don't stop to realize that it is made from polystyrene which is a petroleum-based plastic.

It gained popularity because it is lightweight, offers good insulation properties that keep products cold or hot, and keeps things safe during the shipping process without adding weight. While there are some positive aspects of the material, the years have shown that Styrofoam also has harmful effects.

**It is Non-Biodegradable, appears to last forever and it is resistant to photolysis.**

It can be recycled but it is not cost effective and hence most of the recycling centers do not accept Styrofoam.

The EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) and the International Agency for Research on Cancer have established styrene as a possible human carcinogen.

When Styrofoam containers are used for food, chemicals can leach into the food, affecting human health and the reproductive systems.

### Problems with Plastics

We live in a very plastic world. Items like plastic packaging and bottles end up in many trash sites as well as in forests, creeks, rivers, seas, and oceans around the world.

While some of these items are recycled, the growth of plastic consumption and its improper disposal currently outpace efforts to recycle. Also to recycle plastic requires abundant amounts of energy.

**Plastic is not biodegradable, but photodegradable.** And in reality, most plastic does not ever disappear, but becomes long lasting "plastic dust" and readily soaks up and continually releases toxins that then contaminate soil and water, as well as harming animals that ingest plastic fragments.

Plastic is very dangerous to aquatic life. Every square mile of ocean has 46,000 pieces of plastic floating in it. That is why **over a million sea birds, whales, seals, dolphins, sea turtles, and so on die from plastic debris** that ends up in our oceans and seas. The impact of plastic pollution in our oceans and ecosystems creates chaos for the environment.

**The production of plastic in the U.S. alone uses 331 billion barrels of petroleum.** Petroleum production and its use play a harmful role in polluting the environment and also contaminate the water and air.

## 8.0 Conclusion

The Jain Way of Life is very ethical and compassionate and it also respects and honors the Earth and the Environment.

**Our scriptures strongly suggest that we need to live an ethical and compassionate life based on the time, place and the environment that we live in.**

In his book "Harmony-Of-All-Religions" ([www.jaineLibrary.org](http://www.jaineLibrary.org) Sr # 007668) Maharshri Santsevi Maharaj summarizes Lord Mahavir's teachings beautifully in the words of Lord Mahavir as follows:

**“Whatever I say, you must test this with your own reasoning and verify it through your own experience.**

Do not accept what I say blindly by faith alone until it passes the litmus test of intellection. Otherwise, it will never be yours.

If you accept what I teach on the basis of the sacred texts, or from my convincing reasoning, or even because of my radiant personality, but not by testing with your own reasoning, then in the end this will create only darkness (ignorance) in you and not light.”

Lord Mahavir

The cows are slaughtered immediately during meat production, while during commercial milk production cycle the cows are tortured and forced them to produce 3 to 6 times more milk for 5 years and then slaughtered even though their life expectancy is around 20 years. **This indicates that the cruelty in the production of milk is as bad as the cruelty associated with the production of meat.**

From an environmental point of view, all animal based products such as milk, leather, silk, and wool cause significant harm to the environment relative to plant based products. Various studies indicate that the degradation is 7 to 10 times higher.

Both the Shvetāmbar and Digambar sects use milk and milk products in temple rituals. This is an ancient tradition. Our scriptures indicate that no past tradition is to be followed blindly. **The highest Jain principle of nonviolence (exploiting, hurting, or killing of five sensed animals)** should not be compromised under today’s environment.

Milk and other products represent certain religious significance in Jain rituals. However, the product we use in the rituals must be of a non-violent source.

**The mechanical performance of a ritual is not a religion.** The intention of our rituals is to inspire us to grow spiritually. The net outcome of the rituals should result in the reduction of our ego, greed, anger, lust, and attachments. Milk, other dairy products, plastics, Styrofoam, silk, and wool which involve such extreme cruelty, cannot help us to grow spiritually. We should reevaluate the usage of dairy products (ghee for āratī, milk and sweets for puḷā etc.) in the temple rituals under the new technological environment.

In our rituals, we should substitute the regular milk with simple water or soya milk or almond milk, vegetable oil for ghee which is used in deevō or lamp, dry nuts for various types for sweets, and **we should serve only plant base pure vegetarian (vegan) healthy meals during any religious function.**

**Almost all Jain youth (YJA and YJP youth) of North America accept the fact that extreme cruelty to cows exists in the dairy industry and that the usage of dairy products in religious functions grossly violates our basic principles of Ahimsa, non-stealing, and compassion.** Our youth will greatly appreciate if we make the above changes in our rituals.

The New York Times reports that - mostly for ethical reasons, more than six million Americans are vegan. This is about 2% of the population. About 10% to 15% of Jain youths are vegan (strictly vegetarian) but not even 0.5% of Jain adults in North America are vegan. This indicates that our youth are more knowledgeable and spiritual than Jain scholars and adults with regards to the cruelty caused by dairy industries.

In conclusion we can safely say that more than 98% of milk production worldwide inflicts pain and sufferings to cows and slaughters them after 5 years of their productive life.

**Please reflect upon the “Laws of Mother Nature” and decide for yourself whether to consume or not to consume milk and other dairy products.**

Please provide your feedback to my e-mail address [jainaedu@gmail.com](mailto:jainaedu@gmail.com)

Or at my blog - <http://jainaedu.blogspot.com/2015/04/contemporary-jain-way-of-compassionate.html>

I sincerely apologize to the people whose feelings are hurt because of this article.

Michchhāmi Dukkadam,

Pravin K. Shah

919-859-4994

jainaedu@gmail.com, [www.jaineLibrary.org](http://www.jaineLibrary.org)



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**I CAN FEEL.**  
**I CAN TASTE.**  
**I CAN SMELL.**  
**I CAN HEAR.**  
**I CAN BREATHE.**  
**I CAN EAT.**  
**I CAN SLEEP.**  
**I CAN LOVE.**

**I AM AWARE.**