

## **Eradication of seven types of Addiction to achieve Sustainable Development and Peace**

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### **Abstract**

Jain philosophy, with its core tenets of Ahimsa (non-violence), Aparigraha (non-possessiveness), and Satya (truth), offers a time-honored ethical framework to address the modern world's most pressing challenges—addiction, ecological imbalance, and societal unrest. Rooted in the teachings of Tirthankara Mahavira, Jainism identifies seven destructive addictions (Vyasans)—gambling, alcohol consumption, meat eating, infidelity, theft, hunting, and association with prostitutes—as impediments to both individual spiritual progress and collective societal harmony. This paper explores the profound consequences of these addictions not only on personal well-being but also on families, communities, ecosystems, and the spiritual fabric of society. Drawing from Jain scriptures, the study categorizes these Vyasans into behavioral and substance addictions and illustrates how their eradication directly aligns with the ideals of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 16: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions. Each addiction is examined in light of its social, moral, psychological, and environmental consequences, showcasing how Jain ethical living can promote sustainable behavior, reduce ecological harm, and foster a peaceful co-existence. The call to eliminate these addictions is not merely a religious or spiritual injunction but a universal imperative—essential for securing global peace, sustainable resource management, and holistic human development.

**Keywords:** Jainism and Ethics, Addiction and Vyasan, Ahimsa and Sustainable Development, Peace and Spiritual Discipline

### **Introduction**

Jainism is one of the oldest and comprehensive philosophies in the world and is known for its disciplined lifestyle and unwavering commitment to Non-violence or Ahimsa. Tirthankara Mahavira the 24<sup>th</sup> Tirthankara of the Jain tradition redefined the social and moral fabric of the society. He called attachment and violence as bondage and anyone indulging in them will

continue to suffer.<sup>1</sup> He laid down ethical principles based on compassion that will help man overcome attachment. The ethical values in Jainism are well defined to ensure the seeker progresses well on the spiritual path and seeks the highest goal of Avyabadha Sukh (Un-obstructed happiness).

Tirthankara Mahavira called violence, speaking un-truth, stealing, infidelity and attachment as the five great sins and propagated two paths to overcome them. One for ascetics which called for complete cessation of all the five sins and the other for house-holders in which partial violence is permitted. The Sravaka or house-holder in samsara partially indulges in the above five sins to sustain his life and perform his duties towards his family and society. But it must be kept in mind that though Jainism gives the House-holder some laxity, some form of repentance also must be taken up by him and He must also remain judicious while conducting himself so as to avoid over-indulgences. Meanwhile, certain behaviours are completely prohibited and they are called Vyasans or bad habits which can lead to addictions and eventually destroy this precious Human birth.

Vyasan or addiction is a neuropsychological disorder which leads to long term harm and negative consequences. There is a strong urge to indulge in gratification of the senses and as time goes the small dose of gratification is not sufficient and it has to be increased gradually. The intense cravings blind the addict, who is ready to do unimaginable things to satisfy his cravings. The seven addictions mentioned in Jain scriptures are gambling, eating meat, drinking alcohol, enjoyment of prostitutes, hunting, stealing and indulgence in other women.<sup>2</sup> Some Vyasans are related to sense pleasures while some are related to passions.<sup>3</sup> Of these stealing, hunting, gambling, enjoyment of prostitutes and indulgence in other women can be classified under Behavioral addiction; alcohol and meat eating come under substance addiction.

Jainism identifies these seven Vyasans (addictions or vices) that lead to personal and societal harm. Some of these Vyasans have direct impact on the environment and all of them have

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<sup>1</sup> Citamantamacitam va, parigijjha kisamavi| Annam va anujanai, evam dukkha na mucchai ||1/1 Sutakrtanga Sutra

Sayam tivayae pane, aduvannehim gayae| hanantam vanujanai veram vaddhai appano|| 1/3 Sutakrtanga Sutra

<sup>2</sup> Itti juyam majjam migavva vayane taha pharusaya ya| Dandapharusattamatthassa dusanam satta Vasanaim|| Brahaddkalpa Bhasya 940

<sup>3</sup> Muni Pretheshchandra Vijayji, Hemendra Jyothi, p.no 257

indirect impact on the environment. These addictions perpetuate cycles of violence (Himsa), undermining the principles of Ahimsa (non-violence) and Aparigraha (non-possessiveness). This paper explores how the Jain ethical framework addresses these Vyasans and their broader implications for global peace, aligning with United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16—Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions.

We look at each of these Vyasans and their impact on the over-all well-being.

### **1. Gambling**

Gambling means that one is willing to risk something they value in the hope of getting something of even greater value. Keeping defeat and victory in sight, to stake money or other items of wealth in games is also gambling. Gambling comes in many different forms. Commercial gambling includes lotteries, number games (such as Lotto and Keno), sports betting, poker and other card games, casino table games (such as roulette and craps), bingo, and electronic gaming machines (EGMs).<sup>4</sup>

Compulsive gambling can have deep and life altering consequences, such as:

- Relationship problems - The first negative impact is faced by the family. It leads to mistrust and other emotional issues which effect the psychology of the family members. Children from broken homes are more vulnerable to crimes.
- Financial problems, including bankruptcy – this leads to greater mental stress and stigma. The gambler falls into the debt trap. He is caught in the vicious cycle which can easily break him leading to suicidal thoughts.
- Legal problems or imprisonment – when one is unable to re-pay his loans and debts, he faces legal problems. His vulnerability makes him more susceptible to criminal activities.
- Poor work performance or job loss - A loss of confidence reflects on the work and professional life. Every aspect of life is inter-twined and a problem in one sphere eventually shows in the other.

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<sup>4</sup> [https://www.greo.ca/en/frameworks/gambling-types.aspx#:~:text=Gambling%20comes%20in%20many%20different,electronic%20gaming%20machines%20\(EGMs\).](https://www.greo.ca/en/frameworks/gambling-types.aspx#:~:text=Gambling%20comes%20in%20many%20different,electronic%20gaming%20machines%20(EGMs).)

- Poor general health – An addict suffers from depression, anxiety and other mental health issues.
- Suicide, suicide attempts or suicidal thoughts – unable to bear the pressures, an addict thinks of the easy way out by having suicidal thoughts.

By rejecting gambling, Jains promote a mindset of contentment and simplicity, which helps reduce the demand for such resource-heavy industries. The principle of non-possessiveness (Aparigraha) in Jainism teaches individuals to minimize their material desires and live sustainably. Avoiding gambling aligns with this ethic, reducing unnecessary consumption and promoting environmental conservation.

## **2. Alcohol Consumption**

In Jainism, alcohol consumption is condemned due to its detrimental effects on both the individual and society. A person loses control over himself by drinking intoxicating liquors and commits censurable deeds. He experiences endless miseries both in this world and in the next.<sup>5</sup> Explaining the evils of drinking, Acarya Haribhadra Suri states that as far as liquor is concerned, it causes carelessness, destroys good and auspicious feelings and has all the defects which arises in many of the substances mixed with water (micro-organisms are born in such substances). Acharya Haribhadra opines that ‘to say that there is no harm in drinking liquor is just outrageous.’<sup>6</sup>

From an environmental perspective, the production of alcohol has significant ecological costs. The farming of crops for alcohol production, such as grapes for wine or barley for beer, often involves the overuse of water, pesticides, and fertilizers, leading to soil degradation, water depletion, and pollution of ecosystems. Additionally, alcohol production generates large amounts of waste and emissions, contributing to environmental degradation.

By refraining from alcohol consumption, Jains not only uphold the value of mental clarity and self-discipline but also reduce the demand for environmentally harmful practices associated with alcohol production. This aligns with the Jain principle of minimizing harm to all forms of

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<sup>5</sup> Majjena naro avaso kunei kamani nindanijjim | Ihaloe paraloe anuhavai anantayam dukkam ||- Vasunandi Sravakacara 70

<sup>6</sup> Astaka Prakarna, Acarya Haribhadrasuri, L.D. Institute of Indology, 1<sup>st</sup> edition. P.63

life. The environmental damage caused by alcohol production indirectly harms countless organisms and ecosystems.

### **3. Meat Eating**

The prohibition of meat eating in Jainism is rooted in the principle of Ahimsa (non-violence). Meat eating increases pride, pride creates a desire for intoxicating drinks and pleasures in gambling; and thus, said springs up all aforesaid vices.<sup>7</sup> From an environmental perspective, the meat industry is one of the leading contributors to environmental degradation. Livestock farming is a major driver of deforestation, greenhouse gas emissions, water pollution, and biodiversity loss. According to global environmental studies, meat production requires significantly more water, land, and energy than plant-based diets, leading to overexploitation of natural resources and increased pollution.

Jainism promotes compassion for all living beings and selective compassion must not be practiced. Acharya Hemachandra says that once the Jiva is killed infinite microbes begin to grow in it and eating meat is great violence and will result in birth in hell.<sup>8</sup> Scriptures of other religions have described that sages moving in the air have fallen to ground on eating meat; therefore, meat-eating should be avoided<sup>9</sup>. Adopting a vegetarian diet has numerous benefits for the environment due to its lower impact on natural resources, greenhouse gas emissions, and ecosystems. Here are the key environmental advantages:

- **Reduced Greenhouse Gas Emissions** - Livestock farming is a significant contributor to greenhouse gases such as methane and nitrous oxide, which have a higher warming potential than carbon dioxide.<sup>10</sup> A vegetarian diet reduces reliance on animal agriculture, leading to lower emissions associated with raising animals for meat.
- **Lower Water Usage** - Meat production requires significantly more water than growing vegetables, fruits, grains, and legumes. For example: Producing 1 kg of beef can require up to 15,000 litres of water.<sup>11</sup> While producing 1 kg of vegetables requires only a

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<sup>7</sup> Mamsanena Vaddhai dappo dappena majjamahilasai | Juyam pi ramai to tam pi vannie paunai dase|| Vasunandi -Sravakacara 86

<sup>8</sup> Acarya Ratnasensurishvarji M.S., Vyasan Mukti, p.no 17

<sup>9</sup> Samana Suttam 87

<sup>10</sup> <https://academic.oup.com/af/article/9/1/69/5173494>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.weforum.org/stories/2021/06/water-footprint-food-sustainability/#:~:text=Bovine%20meat%20requires%20over%2015%2C000%20litres%20of%20water%20for>

fraction of that amount. A vegetarian diet conserves water resources, especially in water-scarce regions.

- Less land degradation - Livestock farming requires vast amounts of land for grazing and growing feed crops. This leads to deforestation, particularly in tropical regions like the Amazon. Soil degradation due to overgrazing and monoculture practices. A plant-based diet requires less land, allowing for preservation of forests and biodiversity.
- Reduced pollution - Animal farming contributes to pollution through runoff of manure and fertilizers into water bodies, causing issues like algal blooms and dead zones<sup>12</sup>. Plant-based agriculture produces fewer pollutants, leading to healthier aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems.
- Protection of biodiversity - Expanding livestock farming often involves clearing forests and grasslands, threatening wildlife habitats. Shifting to a vegetarian diet reduces the demand for land conversion, helping protect species and maintain ecological balance.
- Lower energy use - Producing plant-based foods is generally more energy-efficient than raising animals for meat, which involves feeding, housing, and processing livestock.
- Climate Resilience - Plant-based diets are less resource-intensive and more adaptable to a changing climate, making them a sustainable choice for food security in the future.

Tirthankara Mahavira says that all creatures wish to live and none want to die. Hence don't kill any Jiva.<sup>13</sup> Acharya Vasunandi in his text Vasunandi Sravakacara states that eating meat causes vanity, this vanity gives birth to the desire of drinking liquor and then that vain person starts gambling also. Thus, such a person gradually comes to perform all the evil deeds. The gist is that one addiction leads to all seven and the person addicted to them loses all peace and happiness in the family and comes to live a hellish life. The essence of teachings of all the learned is that no animal life should be destroyed. Non-violence is the gist of all shastras. This is the only real knowledge.<sup>14</sup>

#### **4. Infidelity or Adultery**

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%201kg%20of%20food.&text=If%20you%20buy%201kg%20of%20beef%20for,water%20needed%20to%20pr  
oduce%20the%20average%20kilo.

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.nrdc.org/stories/freshwater-harmful-algal-blooms-101#:~:text=Nutrient%20pollution,of%20all%20rivers%20and%20streams.>

<sup>13</sup> Saavesim jiviyam piyam naivaejja kimchanam – Acaranga Sutra

<sup>14</sup> Acarya Ratnasensurishvarji M.S., Vyasan Mukti, p.no 17

Infidelity or Adultery is irresponsible sexual behaviour and condemned in Jainism, it is seen as distractions that lead to moral decay and a loss of focus on spiritual growth. While adultery may not seem directly connected to physical environmental issues, its link to emotional, mental and spiritual environment is significant. Various reasons are given for condemnation of infidelity; in moral sense increase in passions disturb the serenity of the self, from the physical perspective, the unhealthy sexual act results in loss of bodily strength and socially it disturbs the code of common ethics so essential for peace in domestic life.<sup>15</sup> Today it is one the gravest challenges the society is facing.

By promoting chastity (brahmacharya) and responsible sexual conduct, Jainism supports the idea of maintaining balance and harmony within human communities and with the environment. Mahavira advocated Brahmacharya to protect women and give her an equal footing with man in society.<sup>16</sup> Although Brahmacharya is linked with sexual restraint, the principles of Brahmacharya are not restricted to this aspect solely. It encompasses the general management of keeping control and balance in everything - in thought, speech, action. The key to Brahmacharya practice is the training of one's mind and channelizing thoughts towards constructive and useful activities instead of being lost over fruitless distractions. It is also concerned with maintaining physical health by inculcating moderate habits in terms of diet and exercise, and the restraint from excess indulgence in material pleasures. Brahmacharya fosters emotional balance. Anger, jealousy, and greed are redirected into compassion, patience, and selflessness.<sup>17</sup>

Infidelity and visiting sex workers are looked at separately in Jainism because in infidelity is a violation of martial vows whereas prostitution is a commercial exchange for sexual activity. We will look at prostitution from the perspective of the sex workers.

## **5. Stealing**

Stealing, or theft, is a major Vyasan in Jainism, as it involves taking something that does not belong to you, leading to dishonesty, greed, and harm to others. From an environmental perspective, theft can be seen as a metaphor for the unsustainable exploitation of natural

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<sup>15</sup> Dr. Geetha Ramanujam, Environmental awareness in Jainism. University of Madras p.no 53

<sup>16</sup> Ibid p.no 52

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.yogkulam.org/blog/brahmacharya-for-moder-life-meaning-benefits-and-how-to-practice-it>

resources. When humans overexploit forests, water bodies, minerals, and other resources, they are essentially "stealing" from nature and future generations, leaving behind environmental degradation and scarcity.

The rich and developed countries exploiting the poor un-developed countries for profit too can be categorised as stealing.

The resources are limited and are depleting at an alarming rate and this will create shortage of resources for the future generations. Depleted resources will lead to greater inequality and result in conflicts.

Jainism teaches contentment and honesty, encouraging individuals to live within their means and avoid the desire for excessive material wealth. By practicing non-stealing (*asteya*), Jains contribute to a culture of sustainability, where resources are used responsibly and equitably. This principle encourages mindful consumption, which is essential for environmental conservation.

## **6. Hunting**

Jainism gives equal importance to the life of an insect, animal or a plant as it does to a Man. It calls for equal treatment of all beings. Hunting is one of the most explicit forms of violence against animals, and Jainism strictly forbids it as it violates the principle of *ahimsa*. From an environmental standpoint, hunting disrupts ecosystems, leads to the extinction of species, and upsets the natural balance of wildlife populations. The overhunting of animals, whether for sport, trade, or food, has caused the decline and extinction of many species, leading to a loss of biodiversity.

Unsustainable hunting, especially poaching or illegal hunting, can drive species to extinction. For example, the overhunting of passenger pigeons in the 19th century led to their extinction<sup>18</sup>. The removal of apex predators or keystone species disrupts the food web, potentially causing ripple effects across ecosystems. Noise, habitat intrusion, and accidental killing of non-target species can disrupt ecosystems.<sup>19</sup> When species decline due to overhunting, industries

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<sup>18</sup> <https://www.environmentandsociety.org/tools/keywords/extinction-passenger-pigeon#:~:text=The%20passenger%20pigeon%2C%20once%20one,the%20Cincinnati%20Zoo%20in%201914.>

<sup>19</sup> Framing ecologically sound policy on linear intrusions affecting wildlife habitats



dependent on these animals, such as ecotourism may suffer. Illegal hunting or poaching can fuel black markets, undermining sustainable economic practices. Improper hunting techniques or unethical practices can lead to unnecessary suffering for animals. Hunting for sport raises ethical questions about animal rights and respect for wildlife.

‘Paraspoaropagraha Jivanam’ in Tattvārtha Sutra states that all life is bound together by mutual support and interdependence.<sup>20</sup> Hurting and killing any life form is similar to hurting and killing oneself. The Jain commitment to non-violence extends not only to avoiding the direct killing of animals but also to supporting broader efforts to protect habitats and preserve biodiversity.

## **7. Associating with Prostitutes / Sex Workers**

Engaging with sex workers is often shrouded in controversy and moral judgments. It raises questions about ethics, legality, consent, and the broader societal attitudes toward sexuality.<sup>21</sup> While its impacts vary depending on context, and societal norms, the following are some commonly cited harmful effects: The Addiction to visit sex workers can have harmful effects on one’s physical, emotional, and mental well-being. Breaking free from this addiction requires determination, support, and a commitment to personal growth. The risk of sexually transmitted diseases is high and transmitting the disease to one’s spouse is also most likely.

In most cases the women are forced to become sex workers and it leads to exploitation and abuse. Prostitution frequently involves exploitation, particularly of vulnerable individuals. Many sex workers enter the trade due to poverty, lack of education, or coercion by traffickers. This exploitation often leads to physical, emotional, and psychological abuse, creating a cycle of victimization that is difficult to escape. Prostitution is often linked to human trafficking, where individuals, especially women and children, are forced into sex work against their will. Trafficking networks profit from the exploitation of individuals, contributing to organized crime and perpetuating modern slavery. Sex workers face significant health risks, including exposure to sexually transmitted infections (STIs) such as HIV/AIDS. Pornography and paedophile are other major challenges associated with prostitution.

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<sup>20</sup> Ed by Sukhlal Sanghvi, Umaswati’s Tattvartha Sutra p. no 126

<sup>21</sup> <https://drnehamehta.com/is-going-to-a-sex-worker-a-wrong-thing/>

The proliferation of prostitution can strain family structures, leading to broken marriages, neglected children, and domestic violence. Communities may also experience moral and social degradation, with areas known for prostitution often becoming hotspots for crime and substance abuse. Many sex workers experience profound psychological effects, including depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and a diminished sense of self-worth. The stigma associated with prostitution further isolates individuals, compounding their mental health challenges. Prostitution perpetuates gender inequality by commodifying bodies, particularly those of women and girls. It often reinforces harmful stereotypes about gender roles and power dynamics, undermining efforts to promote equality and respect in society.

Prostitution raises complex moral and ethical issues. Critics argue that it undermines societal values by normalizing the commodification of human intimacy and degrading the sanctity of relationships, contributing to a culture of objectification and dehumanization. Again, here the importance of Brahmacharya is highlighted to curb the evil effects of prostitution.

Brahmacharya is placed very high not only in Jain philosophy but also in all Indian traditions. Complete or partial practice of Brahmacharya is essential for higher spiritual pursuits. It can eradicate many vices that are plaguing the society today. Brahmacharya means self-control in modern life, a guide for curbing distractions, desires, and over-indulgences. With check in technology, consumption, or personal relationships, individuals can develop awareness, efficiency, and overall well-being. This makes Brahmacharya highly pertinent in today's chaotic and fast-paced life. With so many distractions around, and the need to balance is more critical than ever.<sup>22</sup>

## Conclusion

Thus, we see that the Sapta Vyasana or seven addictions have grave implications all round. They impact the individual and also the environment. The below table shows the social and the environmental impact corresponding violation of SDGs.

In a world facing ecological crises such as climate change, deforestation, and biodiversity loss, embracing a disciplined lifestyle by avoiding the Vyasanas, individuals can uplift their physical, mental and emotional personalities and also reduce their environmental footprint, protect

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<sup>22</sup> <https://www.yogkulam.org/blog/brahmacharya-for-moder-life-meaning-benefits-and-how-to-practice-it>

S.No	Vyasan (Addictions)	Modern Societal Impact	Violation of SDG 16
1	Gambling	Family morality issue and break up, and economic instability.	Corruption.
2	Eating Meat	Deforestation and vulnerable diseases.	Ecological violence & illegal animal/ bird / creature trade
3	Drinking Alcohol	Family morality issue and break up, accidents, and health crises.	Public safety
4	Infidelity	Gender-based violence.	Conflicts with gender equality & abuse
5	Hunting	Species extinction and disrupts ecosystems.	Environmental justice
6	Stealing	Corruption and social affect safety, unrest.	Bribery and theft.
7	Adultery	Increase emotional / physiological crises in family	Community peace

ecosystems, and contribute to the overall health of the planet for future generations. Vyasan free life is paramount if one wants to cultivate virtues.<sup>23</sup> It is important to note that overcoming addiction is a personal journey and an individual responsibility; it is essential as it builds the moral fabric of the society. An ethical society is an empowered society that looks after the well-being of all and fosters trust and respect. One must always remember that change begins with Me.

<sup>23</sup> Acarya Ratnasensurishvarji M.S., Vyasan Mukti, p.no 9