

# **JAINISM**

## **Religion of Ecology and Compassion**

Compiled by

**Pravin K. Shah**

JAINA Education Committee, Federation of JAINA and  
Jain Study Center of North Carolina (Raleigh)

509 Carriage Woods Circle,

Raleigh NC USA 27607-3969

Tele and Fax - 919-859-4994

Website - [www.jainism.org](http://www.jainism.org)

Email - [pkshah1@attglobal.net](mailto:pkshah1@attglobal.net)

***Dedicated to  
All Jain Vegans inspiring us to see the  
true connection between our belief  
and our choices***

***A vegan lifestyle seeks to avoid all harm to animals  
and to avoid the use of animal products such as  
Milk, Cheese, Butter, Ghee, Ice-cream, Silk, Wool,  
Pearls, Leather, Meat, Fish, Chicken, Eggs etc.***

***For more information about veganism, visit  
[www.veganoutreach.org](http://www.veganoutreach.org)***

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509 Carriage Woods Circle,  
Raleigh NC USA 27607-3969  
Tele and Fax - 919-859-4994  
Website - [www.jainism.org](http://www.jainism.org)  
Email - [pkshah1@attglobal.net](mailto:pkshah1@attglobal.net)

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## **PREFACE:**

Founded and nurtured over the centuries in India, Jainism is a rich and profound way of life embraced by a strong and affluent minority. Though the religion has produced world class leaders and propagated philosophies for the human family, it is little known about outside the South Asian continent. The Jain community consisting of 8 to 10 million Jains or approximately 1% of the Indian population has produced successful men and women in all fields including, academics, government, medicine and the arts.

In North America, there are an estimated 10,000 Jain families practicing the ancient traditions of the religion. While some of these people living in foreign nations have a solid foundation in the religion and it's philosophies, many, unfortunately, lack knowledge of the basic principles at the heart of the religion. This is to no fault of theirs. While the structure of the Jain community is a symbiotic relationship between the lay and the monastic segments, the heavy restrictions on travel forced upon Jain ascetics hinder the perpetual flow of knowledge between the two groups. Thus, we are left with an educational divide – on the one hand there are the erudite monks and few scholar house-holders that possess the true working knowledge of scriptures and philosophies of Jainism, and on the other a global community of Jains lacking access to teachers and spiritual guidance. Since the majority of the Jain publications are written in South Asian languages, Jains worldwide lack easy access to Jain literature as well. It is mandatory that we fill this void and produce Jain literature in contemporary, easy to understand English.

The primary purpose of this article is to provide a basic introduction of the Jain religion to English speaking Jain youth of North America and other countries. The article briefly covers Jain philosophy, ethics, scriptures, religious holidays, prayers, symbols, and the life of Lord Mahavir. Since the younger Jain generations growing up in America have shown a sincere interest in understanding the proper roots of Jain principles, ethics, and religion, I hope to serve that curiosity and provide information to other interested Jains and non-Jains as well.

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Pravin K. Shah

JAINA Education Committee, Federation of JAINA and  
Jain Study Center of North Carolina

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## **1. Introduction**

The subcontinent of India has been the birthplace of three great religious traditions of the world, Hinduism Buddhism and Jainism. The Jain religion and its philosophy, though concocted in response to the elaborate hierarchical Vedic practices, has become one of the essential spiritual traditions in the South Asian religious fabric. Jainism is one of the oldest living religions of India, predating recorded history as referenced in Hindu scriptures. It is an original system, quite distinct and independent from other systems of all other Indian philosophies.

Jains believe in reincarnation of worldly (impure) soul, the philosophy of karma, hell and heaven as a punishment or reward for one's deeds, liberation (Nirvan or Moksha) of the self from life's misery of birth and death in a way similar to the Hindu and Buddhist beliefs. Though there are multiple similarities in these South Asian religions, there are some major portions of the belief system that remain unique to each religion. For instance, the Jain philosophy believes that the universe and all its entities such as soul and matter are eternal (there is no beginning or end). From eternity, the soul is ignorant of its true nature and thus bounded with karma which in turn attracts and binds new karma. It is due to karma soul migrates from one life cycle to another.

Jainism also addresses the path of liberation in a unique way. It provides a logical explanation of our sufferings on Earth and illustrates a rational path to overcome and end this suffering. It states that the Right Faith and Right Knowledge of reality, the realization of the true self, when combined with Right Conduct lead the worldly soul to liberation (Moksha or Nirvan).

In the Jain path of spiritual progress, the whole truth cannot be observed from a single viewpoint. To understand the true nature of reality, it is essential to acknowledge the multiple perspectives of each entity, situation or idea. We must strive to be open-minded and embrace the thoughts and vantage points of other human beings, religions, and philosophies. This concept is called Anekantwad.

The ultimate goal of Jainism is for the soul to achieve liberation through understanding and realization. This is accomplished

through the supreme ideals in the Jain religion of nonviolence, equal kindness, reverence for all forms of life, non possessiveness, and through the philosophy of non-absolutism (Anekantvad). Above all, these ideals translate into a religion of love and compassion not only towards human beings but also towards all other forms of life.

## **2. Concept of God**

Jainism is a religion of purely human origin. It is propagated by self realized individuals who have attained perfect knowledge, omniscience, and self-control by personal effort and have been liberated from the bonds of worldly existence, and the cycles of all future life and death.

In ancient times Jainism was known by many names such as the Saman tradition, the religion of Nirgantha, or the religion of Jina. Jina is one, who has conquered the inner enemies of worldly passions such as desire, hatred, anger, greed, and pride by personal effort. By definition, a Jina is a human being, like one of us and not a supernatural immortal or an incarnation of an almighty God. Jinas are popularly viewed as Gods in Jainism. There are an infinite number of Jinas existed in the past. All human beings have the potential to become a Jina.

The Jinas are not Gods in the sense of being the creators of the universe, but rather as those who have accomplished the ultimate goal of liberation through the true understanding of self and other realities. The concept of God as a creator, protector, and destroyer of the universe does not exist in Jainism. The concept of God's descent into a human form to destroy evil is also not applicable in Jainism.

The Jinas that have established the religious order and revived the Jain philosophy at various times in the history of mankind are known as Tirthankars. The ascetic sage, Rishabhadev was the first Tirthankar and Mahavir was the last Tirthankar of the spiritual lineage of the twenty-four Tirthankars in the current era.

In summary, Jainism does not believe in a creator God, however this does not mean that Jainism is an atheistic religion. Jains believe in an infinite number of Jinas (Gods) who are self realized

omniscient individuals who have attained liberation from birth, death, and suffering.

### **3. Founders**

Approximately 2600 years ago Lord Mahavir or Vardhaman (599 to 527 BC), the twenty-fourth and last Tirthankar of this era, expounded the Jain philosophy which had been previously preached by his predecessor Tirthankar Parshva (about 950 to 850 BC). Lord Mahavir expanded the code of conduct and introduced daily observances for his followers. He felt that such changes were essential for proper spiritual advancement. Thus Mahavir, like other Tirthankars was more of a reformer of an existing religious order than the founder of a new faith. The present Jain scriptures are compilation of Lord Mahavir's teachings. In summary, the Jain philosophy is eternal and Jains believe that the philosophy behind the teachings of all Tirthankars is based on those of their predecessors.

### **4. Philosophy**

In essence, Jainism addresses the true nature of reality. Mahavir explained that all souls are equal in their potential for infinite knowledge, power and bliss. However from eternity the soul is ignorant of its true nature and due to its ignorance, is in bondage of karmic particles of matters. It is due to karma that the soul migrates from one life cycle to another and suffers.

The soul continuously accumulates karma as it feeds the passions such as greed, ego, lust, and anger. On account of its interactions with karma, the soul seeks pleasure in materialistic belongings and possessions. This is the deep-rooted cause of greed, deeds, anger, hatred, and self-centered violent thoughts that result in further accumulation of karma.

One can detach from karma and attain liberation by following the path of **Right Faith** (Samyak-darshan), **Right Knowledge** (Samyak-jnan), and **Right Conduct** (Samyak-charitra). Right Knowledge includes the proper knowledge of reality, which includes the six universal substances (six Dravyas - see 4.1) and the nine fundamental principles (nine Tattvas - see 4.2). True faith in this knowledge is called Right Faith. Both Right Faith and Right Knowledge lead to Right Conduct that includes nonviolence, self

purification, compassion, austerity, penance, non-possessiveness, non-absolutism, and meditation.

### 4.1 The Jain Reality

Jainism states that the universe is without a beginning or an end, and is everlasting and eternal. Six fundamental entities (known as Dravya) constitute the universe. Although all six entities are eternal, they continuously undergo countless changes (known as Paryaya). In these transformations nothing is lost or destroyed. Lord Mahavir explained this phenomena in his Three Pronouncements known as **Tripadi** and proclaimed that Existence or reality (also known as Sat) is a combination of appearance (Utpada), disappearance (Vyaya), and persistence (Dhrauvya).

<u>Scriptural Name</u>	<u>Meaning</u>	<u>Characteristics</u>
Utpada	Origination of a state	Mode (Paryay)
Vyaya	Cessation of a state	Mode (Paryay)
Dhrauvya	Permanence	Substance (Dravya)

While Jainism does not believe in the concept of God as a creator, protector, and destroyer of the universe, the philosophical concepts of Utpada, Vyaya, and Dhrauvya are consistent with the Trinity concepts of those religions believing in God. This indicates that Jainism is not an atheistic religion, rather it emphasizes freedom of the soul from karma and the potential to gain liberation through self-effort and not the "grace" of a Supreme Being.

### The Six Universal Substances or Entities (Dravyas)

	<u>Scriptural Name</u>	<u>English Name</u>	<u>Characteristics</u>
1	Jiva	Soul or Consciousness	Living substance
2	Pudgal	Matter	Nonliving substance
3	Dharma	Medium of motion	Nonliving substance
4	Adharma	Medium of rest	Nonliving substance
5	Akasa	Space	Nonliving substance
6	Kal	Time	Nonliving substance

The soul is the only living substance, which possesses knowledge. Similar to energy, the soul is invisible. An infinite number of souls exist in the universe. In its pure form (a soul without attached karma particles), each soul possesses infinite knowledge, vision,

power, and bliss. In its impure form (a soul with attached karma particles) each soul possesses limited knowledge, vision, power, and bliss.

Matter is a nonliving substance, and possesses the characteristics such as touch, taste, smell, and color. Karma is considered matter in Jainism. Extremely minute particles constitute karma. These particles can not be seen even by any microscopic equipment (similar to electrons). The entire universe is filled with such particles.

The medium of motion helps the soul and matter to migrate from one place to another in the universe. The medium of rest helps them to rest. The space is divided into two parts. The space that provides the room to all substances is called Lokakash, and the remaining limitless space is called Alokakash, which is empty or void.

Time measures the changes in soul and matter. The wheel of time incessantly rolls on in a circular fashion. In the first half circle it revolves from the descending to the ascending stage (Utsarpini) where human prosperity, happiness, and life span increases. In the second half circle it proceeds from the ascending stage to the descending stage (Avasarpini) where prosperity, happiness, and life span decreases. Each half circle is further sub-divided into six-zone known as six eras.

## **4.2 Theory of Karma (Seven or Nine Tattvas)**

The doctrine of karma occupies a significant position in Jain philosophy. It provides a rational and satisfying explanation to the apparently inexplicable phenomena of birth and death, happiness and misery, inequalities in mental and physical attainments, and the existence of different species of living beings. It explains that the principle governing the successions of life is karma. The karma that bind our soul are due not only to the actions of our body, mind, and speech but more importantly, to the *intentions* behind them. Jainism strives for the realization of the highest perfection of the soul, which in its original purity is free from all pain, suffering, and the bondage of the cycle of birth and death.

The seven or nine tattvas or principles are the single most important subject of Jain philosophy. They deal with the theory of karma, which provides the basis for the path of liberation. Without

proper knowledge of these tattvas, a person can not progress spiritually.

#### The Seven or Nine Tattvas (Principles)

	<u>Scriptural Name</u>	<u>Meaning</u>
1	Jiva	Soul or living being (Consciousness)
2	Ajiva	Non-living substances
3	Asrava	Cause of the influx of karma
4	Bandha	Bondage of karma
5	Punya*	Virtue
6	Papa*	Sin
7	Samvara	Stoppage of the influx of karma
8	Nirjara	Partial exhaustion of the accumulated karma
9	Moksha	Total liberation from karma

\*Some scriptures define Punya and Papa as separate tattvas while others include them in Asrava. In reality Punya and Papa are the result of Asrava. Hence truly there exist on seven tattvas.

The first two tattvas Jiva and Ajiva comprise the physical reality of the universe. Jiva tattva refers to the soul. However in this section Ajiva tattva refers to karma or karmic matter only. The remaining five or seven tattvas explain the relationship between soul and karma.

A person's ignorance or wrong belief (Mithyatva), lack of self-restraint (Avirati), unawareness (Pramada), and passions (Kasaya) like anger, conceit, deceit, and lust are the primary causes of the influx of karma. Collectively, these causes are called Asrava.

When karma attaches to the soul (Bandha or bondage), it obscures the soul's essential nature of infinite knowledge, infinite vision, infinite power, total bliss, eternal existence, non-corporeal form, and equanimity. The duration, intensity, and quantity of karma attached to the soul are determined at time of bondage.

All actions result in the accumulation of karma. The karma due to pious activities (charity, providing shelters to needy, truthfulness, purifying thoughts etc.) is called Punya or virtue. Conversely, the accumulation of karma due to evil activities (violence, theft, unchastity, anger, and attachments to various objects) is called

Pap or sin. Both Punya and Pap karma are manifested in the future in ways that the soul perceives as pleasure or pain (reward or punishment).

Samvara or the stoppage of new karma is accomplished by right belief, observance of vows, awareness, and control of passions. Jain literature explains 57 practical ways a person can stop the influx of karma.

<u>Scriptural Name</u>	<u>Meaning</u>	<u>Different Types</u>
Samitis	Carefulness	5
Guptis	Preservation	3
Yati Dharma	Religious Virtues	10
Bhavna	Reflections or Thoughts	12
Parishaha	Subduing of Suffering	22
Charitra	Conduct	5

Nirjara or partial removal of old karma is done by rigorous penance (fasting, avoiding tasty food etc.) and austerities (repentance, selfless service, religious study, and meditation). Nirjara partially removes old karma before their maturity. The removal of all past accumulated karma is called Moksha and as a result the soul gains its original nature of total bliss. This is also known as liberation.

## 5. Ethical Code

The supreme ideals of the Jain religion are nonviolence (Ahimsa), equal kindness, reverence for all forms of life, no possessiveness, and non-absolutism (Anekantvad) in speech, thought, and action. Above all it is a religion of love and compassion to all living beings. At the heart of Right Conduct for Jains are the following five great vows:

<u>Scriptural Name</u>	<u>English Name</u>	<u>Meaning</u>
Ahimsa	Nonviolence / Compassion	Not to cause harm to any living beings
Satya	Truthfulness	To speak harmless truth only
Asteya	Non-stealing	Not to take anything not properly given
Brahmacharya	Chastity	Not to indulge in sensual pleasure

Aparigraha	Non-possession / Non-attachment	Complete detachment from people, places, and material things
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These vows can not be fully implemented without the acceptance of a philosophy of non-absolutism (Anekantvad) and the theory of relativity (Syadvad). These concepts are fundamental to understanding the true nature of the universe, life, and reality. Monks and nuns practice these vows with utmost dedication (it is known as Mahavrat), while lay people follow the vows as far as their life styles and personal commitments permit (it is called Anuvrata).

### 5.1 Ahimsa (Compassion / Non-violence)

The basic tenet of Jainism is "Ahimsa Parmo Dharmah". From an ethical point of view Dharma means duty - **compassion is the supreme duty of an individual**. From a religious point of view, Dharma means the true nature of a substance - **compassion is the true nature of a human being**. Also the Jain dictum "Parasparopagraho jivanam" means, **"Living beings (Souls) render service to one another"**.

Ahimsa is a principle that Jains teach and strive to practice not only towards human beings but also towards all nature. The scriptures tell us: "Do not injure, abuse, oppress, enslave, insult, torment, torture, or kill any living being including plant and vegetables." The teaching of ahimsa refers not only to the avoidance of wars and physical acts of violence but also to the avoidance of violence in the hearts and minds of human beings. Ahimsa also refers to an active concern and compassion for fellow humans and other living beings. Ancient Jain texts explain that the intention to harm and the **absence of compassion is what makes actions violent**.

Ahimsa also has a deeper meaning in the context of one's spiritual advancement. Violence imposed upon others in any form by our body, mind, or speech leads to the acquisition of new karma, which hinders the soul's spiritual progress. In other words, violence towards others is violence to one's own soul because it impedes one's spiritual progress. The path of non-violence leads to one's spiritual progress and liberation from karma.

In a positive sense, ahimsa means caring for and sharing with all

living beings as well as tending to, protecting and serving them. It entails universal friendliness (maitri), universal forgiveness (kshama), and universal fearlessness (abhaya).

## **5.2 Anekantavada (Doctrine of many Viewpoints)**

The concept of universal interdependence underpins the Jain theory of knowledge, known as Anekantavada or the doctrine of many aspects. In this ever-changing universe an infinite number of viewpoints exist. These viewpoints depend on the time, place, circumstances, and nature of individuals. Anekantavada means acceptance of all viewpoints, which are positive in nature. This is known as non-absolutism.

This leads to the doctrine of Syadvad or relativity, which states that expression of truth is relative to different viewpoints (nayas). What is true from one point of view is open to question from another. Absolute truth cannot be grasped from any particular viewpoint. Absolute truth is the total sum of individual truths from many different viewpoints, even if they seem to contradict each other.

Because it is rooted in the doctrines of Anekantavada and Syadvad, Jainism does not look upon the universe from an anthropocentric, ethnocentric or egocentric viewpoint. It takes into account the positive viewpoints of other human beings, other communities, and other nations.

A deeper understanding of Anekantavada and Syadvad provides great insight into the problems of human interactions that cause conflict, grief, envy, and hatred. Similarly it is highly applicable in understanding social problems and national strife. More importantly these doctrines also provide ways of resolving global differences and conflicts.

## **5.3 Non Possessions and Non-acquisitiveness**

Jain ascetics have no possessions. Similarly, Jainism advocates that lay followers should minimize their desire for accumulation of possessions and enjoyment for personal ends. Generously giving charitable donations and one's own time for community projects are a part of a Jain householder's obligations. This sense of social obligation cultivated from religious teachings has led Jains to establish and maintain innumerable schools, colleges, hospitals, clinics, orphanages, relief and rehabilitation camps for the handicapped, old, sick and disadvantaged as well as hospitals for

ailing birds and animals.

Wants should be reduced, desires curbed and consumption levels kept within reasonable limits. Using any resource beyond one's needs and misuse of any part of nature is considered a form of theft. The Jain faith goes one radical step further and declares unequivocally that **waste and creating pollution are acts of violence.**

#### **5.4 Relevance to Modern Times**

The principles of Jainism if properly understood in their right perspective and faithfully adhered to, have great relevance for modern times. They establish universal friendship and peace through nonviolence and true social equity based on non-acquisitiveness. They reconcile diverse religious faiths, political parties, and communal and racial factions through the philosophies of non-absolutism and relativism. They promote ecological conservation through the values of self-restraint, an austere life-style, non-possessiveness, and kindness towards all beings. These principles can bring contentment, inner happiness and joy in the present life through spiritual development based on freedom from passions.

This elevates the soul to a higher spiritual level, ultimately achieving perfect enlightenment, reaching its final destination of eternal bliss, and ending all cycles of birth and death.

#### **5.5 The Holy Death (Sallekhana)**

Jainism believes that one should meet death in a state of complete awareness. Hence it allows the very spiritually advanced person (who possessed right conduct) to gradually terminate his or her life by certain practices (principally fasting) under specified circumstances and under the supervision of an ascetic. This is sanctioned only when a person strongly feels that he or she is a burden to society and can no longer progress further spiritually due to health reasons. Jainism does not advocate suicide, assisted suicide, mercy killing, or the removal of life-support devices.

### **6. Jain Scriptures**

Lord Mahavir's preachings were orally compiled into many texts (scriptures) by his disciples. These scriptures are known as Jain Agam or Agam Sutras. The Agam Sutras teach great reverence for

all forms of life, strict codes of vegetarianism, asceticism, compassion, nonviolence, and opposition to war. The scriptures were not documented in any form but were memorized by ascetics and passed on by oral tradition to future generations of ascetics. The memorized Sutras were divided into two major groups:

### **Ang Agam Sutras**

Which consist of 12 texts that were originally compiled by immediate disciples of Lord Mahavir known as Ganadhars. The twelfth text is called Drstiwad, which includes 14 Purvas.

### **Angbahya Agam Sutras**

Which consist of 14 texts according to the Digambar sect, 34 texts according to the Swetambar Murtipujak sect, and 21 texts according to the Sthanakvasi and Terapanthi sects. They were originally compiled by Shrut Kevali monks, who possessed total knowledge of 12 Ang Agams.

Ang Agam Sutras contain direct preaching of Lord Mahavir. They were compiled immediately after Lord Mahavir's Nirvan (death). Angbahya Agam Sutras provide further explanation of Ang Agams and they were compiled within 160 years after Lord Mahavir's Nirvan.

In the course of time, many of the Agam Sutras were not remembered, some were modified, and new Sutras were added. About one thousand years after Lord Mahavir's Nirvan the memorized Agam Sutras were recorded on leafy papers (Tadpatris). At that time Drstiwad, the twelfth Ang Agam text was lost as no monk had memory of this Agam.

Swetambar Jains have accepted the recorded Agam Sutras (11 Ang Agams and all Angbahya Sutras) as an authentic version of Lord Mahavir's teachings, while Digambar Jains have not. They concluded that one thousand years later, no monks remembered the true original Agam Sutras (which includes all Ang and Angbahya Agam Sutras). In the absence of authentic Agam Sutras, Digambers follow Shatkhand Agam and Kasay Pahud as their main texts and four Anuyogs (which includes about 20 texts) written by great ascetics from 100 BC to 900 AD as their basis to follow and practice the Jain religion.

## **7. Followers and Major Sects**

Mahavir attracted people from all walks of life: rich and poor, kings and commoners, men and women, princes and priests, touchables and untouchables. Mahavir proclaimed that in matters of spiritual advancement, both men and women are equal. Many women followed Mahavir's path and renounced the world in search of ultimate truth and happiness. The most significant contribution of Jainism in the social field was the establishment of social equality among the four classes (Brahman, Kshatriya, Vaishya, and Shudra) including untouchables prevalent in society.

Mahavir organized his followers, into a four-fold order, namely monks (Sadhu), nuns (Sadhvi), laymen (Shravak), and laywomen (Shravika). This order is known as Jain Chatuvidha Sangh. A few centuries after Mahavir's Nirvan, the Jain religious order grew more and more complex. Eventually two major sects were established. In the Digambar sect monks wear no clothes, while the Svetambar monks wear white clothes. The fundamental views on ethics and philosophy are identical in both sects.

Each major sect has many sub-sects including those who emphasize worshipping the image symbols of Jinas (Murtipujak), while other sects emphasize meditation and self-study practices (Non-murtipujak). Later on some followers have introduced ritualistic complexities that almost place Lord Mahavir and other Tirthankars closely parallel the worship of Hindu religious deities.

## **8. Spiritual Practices and Religious Holidays**

Spiritual practices and religious holidays are observed by celebrating the lives of Tirthankar (Jinas), reciting sacred texts, holding religious discourses, taking certain vows to control senses, giving alms, and realizing other acts of compassion.

Annual holidays are observed based on the lunar calendar (354 days in a year). The most important religious holidays are:

- **Mahavir Jayanti (Janma Kalyanak)**: the birthday celebration of Lord Mahavir in April.
- **Paryushan**: *An annual eight-day celebration by the Svetambar sect in August-September.*
- **Das Lakshan**: *An annual ten-day celebration by Digambar sect in August-September.*

Both Paryushan and Das Lakshan celebrations conclude with a period of self-reflection, granting forgiveness to others, and requesting forgiveness from others for any pain that may have been caused intentionally or unintentionally.

Jainism advocates the performance of six essential daily observances by its followers:

### **Six essential Observances of Svetambar-Tradition**

Samayik	To remain calm and undisturbed in the state of equanimity for 48 minutes.
Chauvisattho	To pray and appreciate the qualities of the twenty-four Tirthankars.
Vandana	Devotion and service to ascetics
Pratikraman	To repent, reproach, and reflect upon past wrong thoughts and deeds.
Kayotsarg	Non-attachments to the body (standing or sitting motionless for various length of time)
Pratyakhan or Pachchhakhan	Taking religious vows renouncing certain activities and certain foods for some time to discipline one's self

### **Six essential Observances of Digambar-Tradition**

Devapuja	To pray and appreciate the qualities of the twenty-four Tirthankars
Gurupasti	Devotion and service to ascetics
Swadhyay	Studying of Scriptures
Samyam	Self restraint – to carry out the householder vows ( <i>anuvrata</i> ) with complete self discipline
Tap	Penance or austerities which includes <i>Pratikraman</i> , <i>Pratyākhyāna</i> , and <i>Kayotsarga</i>
Dana	Charity – giving alms to mandicants and needy

### **Six essential Observances of Svetambar-Tradition**

Samayik	To remain calm and undisturbed in meditation for 48 minutes.
Chauvisattho	To pray and appreciate the qualities of the twenty-four Tirthankars.

Vandana	Devotion and service to ascetics
Pratikraman	To repent, reproach, and reflect upon past wrong thoughts and deeds.
Kayotsarg	Non-attachments to the body
Pratyakhan or Pachchhakhan	Taking religious vows renouncing certain activities for some time to discipline one's self

## **Six essential Observances of Digambar-Tradition**

Devapuja	Prayer to Tirthankars
Gurupasti	Devotion and service to ascetics
Swadhyay	Studying of Scriptures
Samyam	Self restraint
Tap	Penance
Dana	Charity

Furthermore, some Jains observe certain practices that involve special rituals, dietary restrictions, and fasting to develop self control and detachment from worldly matters.

## **9. Jain Temples**

More than 80% of Jains from both the Svetambar and Digambar sects believe in worshiping Tirthankar images in temples. Primarily two types of Tirthankar images exist in the Jain temples. The meditative image (in which the eyes are depicted as semi-closed) is adopted by the Digambar sect and the preaching image (in which the eyes are depicted as open) is adopted by the Svetambar sect. Svetambars also decorate the Tirthankar images luxuriously. This symbolizes Tirthankars were kings possessed such royal wealth, yet did not find happiness in such material possessions. They renounced all their wealth for the benefit of society, and took vows of complete non-possession. Both Digambar and Svetambar Jain temples are known famous for their unique intricate art and elaborate architecture.

## **10. Jain Symbols**

The comprehensive Jain symbol consists of a crescent of the moon, three dots, the Swastika or Om, the palm of a hand with the wheel (Chakra) inset, and an outline figure encompassing all symbols. Each individual symbol is also separately used in Jainism.

The three dots represent the Jain path of liberation (Jain trinity): Right Faith (Samyak Darshan), Right Knowledge (Samyak Jnana), and Right Conduct (Samyak Charitra), which together lead to liberation. These dots also represent the three worlds: hell, heaven, and earth. All worldly (non-liberated) souls born, live, die, and suffer in these three worlds.

The crescent of the moon represents the region known as Moksha. This region is beyond the three worlds and it is the permanent place where the liberated souls reside.

The Swastika is a sacred symbol in Jainism. The four sides of Swastika symbolize the four forms of the existence of worldly (non-liberated) souls. The four forms are; heaven, human, tiryanch (which includes animals, birds, and plants), and hell. It reminds us that worldly souls undergo a continuous cycle of birth, suffering, and death in these four forms. Hence one should follow the true religion and be liberated from suffering.

The Sanskrit word Om is made up of five sounds and letters; a, a, aa, u, and m:

- The first letter "a" represents Arihant (human being who has realized the true nature of reality and conquered the worldly passions)
- The second "a" represents A-shareeri (A-shareeri means without physical body, liberated soul or Siddha or perfected being)
- The third letters "aa" represents Acharya (Ascetic who is the head of congregation)
- The fourth letter "u" represents Upadhyay (Ascetic teacher)
- The fifth letter "m" represents Muni (Sadhu or monks who practices Jain principles).

Hence the Om represents the salutation to the five revered personalities in the Jain religion. Om is a short form of the Namokar Mantra.

The palm of the hand signifies the assurance; 'do not be afraid', indicating that human beings, suffering due to karmic bondage do not need to be disheartened.

The wheel of dharma (Chakra) with 24 spokes represents the religion preached by the 24 Tirthankars consisting of nonviolence (Ahimsa), compassion, Anekantwad and other virtues.

The outline figure looks like a person standing with their feet apart and arms resting on both hips. This represents the Jain description of the shape of the universe. The text underneath the symbol, "Parasparopagraho Jivanam" translates as "Living beings (souls) render services to one another".

The overall symbol depicts the belief that living beings of all the three worlds (heaven, hell, and earth) suffer from the miseries of transmigratory existence. They can follow the path of religion, which is Right Faith, Right Knowledge, and Right Conduct shown by the Tirthankars. This will bring auspiciousness to themselves, minimize suffering to others, and help them to obtain perfection, after which they will live forever in the world of perfected beings.

## 11. Greetings

The usual greeting is **Jai Jinendra** meaning Honor to the Supreme Jina. **Michhami Dukkadam** is a request for forgiveness usually spoken after performing the annual forgiveness and repentance day (*Samavantsari* pratikraman) ritual.

## 12. Jain Prayer

The sacred prayer is the **Namaskar or Namokar Mantra** in which homage is paid to the five worshipful personalities: **Arihanta** (enlightened human beings), **Siddha** (liberated souls), **Acharya** (head of Jain congregation), **Upadhyaya** (ascetic teachers), and all **Sadhu** (all ascetics).

Namo Arihantanam  
Namo Siddhanam  
Namo Airiyanam  
Namo Uvajjhayanam  
Namo Loe Savva Sahunam

Eso Panch Namokaro  
Savva Pavap Panasano  
Mangala-nam-cha Savvesim  
Padhamam Havai Mangalam

Namo Arihantanam

I bow to Arihants (Tirthankars) who have reached enlightenment by overcoming inner weaknesses, who have attained infinite knowledge, vision, bliss, and power and have shown the path which brings an end to the cycle of life, death and suffering.

Namo Siddhanam

I bow to Siddhas or liberated souls who have attained the state of perfection and immortality by liberating themselves of all karma.

Namo Airiyanam

I bow to Acharyas, who are the head of Jain congregations, and who preach the principles of religion and show the path of liberation, which is the unity of Right Faith, Right Knowledge, and Right Conduct.

Namo Uvajjhayanam

I bow to Upadhyayas who are the ascetic teachers. They explain Jain scriptures and show us the importance of the spiritual life over the material life.

Namo Loe Savva Sahunam

I bow to all æcetics who strictly follow the five great vows of conduct and inspire us to live a simple life.

Eso Panch Namokaro

To these five types of great souls I offer my praise.

Savva Pava Panasano

Such praise will help diminish my negative vibrations and sins.

Mangala namcha Savvesim

Padhamam Havai Mangalam

Offering this praise is most auspicious of all benedictions.

### ***13. Universal Forgiveness and Friendship Sutras***

Jains recite the following Sutras for confession of their sins, requesting forgiveness from others, and desiring peace over entire universe to all living beings.

#### **Khamemi Savve Jiva Sutra**

Khamemi Savve Jiva, Savve Jiva Khamantu Me,  
Metti Me Savve Bhuyesu, Veram Majham Na Kenai.

I ask forgiveness of all living beings,  
May all living beings grant me forgiveness.

My friendship is with all living beings,  
My enmity is totally nonexistent.

### **Jam Jam Manen Baddham Sutra:**

Jam Jam Manen Baddham,  
Jam Jam Vayen Bhasiyam Pavam,  
Jam Jam Kayen Kayam,  
Tass Michami Dukkaram.

Whatever wrong I have done by thought,  
Whatever wrong I have done by word,  
Whatever wrong I have done by deed,  
I ask for forgiveness.

### **Khamiya Khama Via Sutra:**

Khamiya Khama Via, Mai Khamaha Savva Jiva Ni Kaya  
Siddha Sakha Aloyena, Mujja Vaira Na Bhava

I forgive all Souls, may they forgive me. Let the perfect souls  
witness that I truly bear no animosity toward any living being.

### **Shivmastu Sarva Jagatah Sutra:**

Shivmastu Sarva Jagatah,  
Par-hit-nirata bhavantu bhutaganah,  
Doshah Prayantu Nasham,  
Sarvatra Sukhi bhavantu lokah.

May the whole Cosmos be blessed,  
May all beings engage in each other's well being,  
May all weaknesses, sicknesses and faults diminish and vanish,  
May everyone and everywhere be healthy, prosper, blissful, and  
peaceful.

### **Upsargah Kshayam Yanti Sutra:**

Upsargah Kshayam yanti,  
Chhidhyante Vighna-vallayah,  
Manah prasann tameti,

Pujya mahne jineshware.

All problems get resolved,  
All obstacles get removed,  
The heart becomes full of joy,  
Who has got in touch with inner higher self.

## **14. Life of Lord Mahavir**

Mahavir was a prince whose childhood name was Vardhaman. As the son of a king, he had many worldly pleasures, comforts, and services at his command. However at the age of thirty he left his family and the royal household, gave up his worldly possessions, and become a monk in search of a solution to eliminate pain, sorrow, and suffering from life of all beings.

Mahavir spent the following twelve and one half years in deep silence and meditation to conquer his desires, feelings, and attachments. He carefully avoided harming other living beings including animals, birds, insects, and plants. He also went without food for long periods of time. He remained calm and peaceful against all unbearable hardships. During this period, his spiritual powers developed fully and he realized perfect perception, perfect knowledge, perfect power, and total bliss. This realization is known as keval-jnan or the perfect enlightenment.

Mahavir spent the next thirty years travelling barefoot through India preaching the eternal truth he had realized. The ultimate objective of his teaching is how one can attain total freedom from the cycle of birth, life, pain, misery, and death, and achieve the permanent blissful state of one's self. This is also known as liberation, Nirvan, absolute freedom, or Moksha.

At the age of 72 (527 BC), Lord Mahavir attained Nirvan (death) and his purified soul left his body and achieved complete liberation. He became a Siddha, a pure consciousness, a liberated soul, living forever in a state of complete bliss. On the evening of his Nirvan, people celebrated the Festival of Lights (Dipavali) in his honor. This is the last day of the Jain calendar year.

## **15. Significant points from the Teachings of Lord Mahavir**

Mahavir made religion simple and natural, free from elaborate rituals. His teachings reflect the internal beauty and harmony of the soul.

Mahavir taught the idea of supremacy of human life and stressed the importance of a positive attitude towards life.

Mahavir's message of nonviolence (Ahimsa), truth (Satya), non-stealing (Achaurya), celibacy (Brahma-charya), and non-possession (Aparigraha) is full of universal compassion.

Mahavir said that, "A living body is not merely an integration of limbs and flesh but it is the abode of the soul which potentially has infinite perception (Anant-darshana), infinite knowledge (Anant-jnana), infinite power (Anant-virya), and infinite bliss (Anant-sukha). Mahavir's message reflects freedom and spiritual joy of the living being.

Mahavir emphasized that all-living beings, irrespective of their size, shape, form, and how spiritually developed or undeveloped, are equal and we should love and respect them. In this way, he preached the universal love.

Mahavir taught that the true nature of reality is timeless, with no beginning or end and rejected the concept of God as a creator, a protector, and a destroyer of the universe. He also taught that worshiping heavenly gods and goddesses, as a means of material gain and personal benefits is contrary to the path of liberation.

## **16. Jain Websites**

[www.cs.colostate.edu/~malaiya/jainlinks.html](http://www.cs.colostate.edu/~malaiya/jainlinks.html)

[www.jainworld.com](http://www.jainworld.com)

[www.sunsite.unc.edu/jainism](http://www.sunsite.unc.edu/jainism)

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[www.jcnc.org/](http://www.jcnc.org/)  
[www.yja.org/](http://www.yja.org/)  
[www.terapanth.com/](http://www.terapanth.com/)  
[www.veg.org/veg/Guide/](http://www.veg.org/veg/Guide/)  
[www.jainmeditation.org](http://www.jainmeditation.org)

## **Quotes**

- Compassion is the true nature of human beings.
- Waste and creating pollution are acts of violence.
- Absence of compassion makes all actions violent.
- Non-violence and kindness to other living beings is kindness to oneself.
- Sharing is the most precious religion.
- Here and now is the only existence.
- The spiritual pilgrimage is a flight from alone to alone.
- Prayer is the fragrance of a silent heart.
- Meditation is neither a journey in space nor a journey in time but an instantaneous awakening.
- Be true to your inner being and all religions are fulfilled.

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Jaina Education Committee, Federation of Jaina  
Jain Study Center of North Carolina (Raleigh)  
509 Carriage Woods Circle  
Raleigh, NC 27607-3969 USA  
Tele – 919-859-4994 and fax  
E-mail – pkshah1@attglobal.net  
Website – www.jainism.org