What are some Jain Festivals?

• Mahavir Jayanti is the birth anniversary of Mahavira, the last of 24 Jinas, (Spiritual Victors) who attained omniscience through meditation and asceticism. Mahavira was born in 599 BC and at the age of 30 he left his home on a spiritual quest.

• Diwali is the day on which Mahavira died and attained nirvana. Every Jain strives for nirvana which is the end of the Soul's cycle of life and death and ultimate peace.

• Paryushan means, literally, "abiding" or "coming together". It is a time when the"laity taken on vows of self-control and fasting for 8 -10 days with a spiritual intensity similar to temporary monasticism. Laities perform meditation and prayers and ask for forgiveness from all living beings. Also during this time Jains observe 10 virtues of Soul namely: forgiveness, humility, straight forwardness, truthfulness, purity, self-restraint, penance, renunciation, non-possessiveness, and celibacy.

Relevance of Jain Way of Life

Jain scriptures composed more than 2,000 years ago describe in great detail many of the facts that modern science has demonstrated. Plants as living being, vegetarian diet, meditation, yoga, existence of atoms and molecules, as well as physics, mathematics, and astronomy are elaborately discussed in the Jain scriptures.

In Jainism, it is essential to realize the distinction between soul (jeev) and non-soul (ajeev). Previously bound karmas come to fruition and cause existence of our circumstances. Our passions of attachment and hatred together with action of body, mind and speech bind us with karma and keep us embodied in the world. Liberation and unconditional eternal happiness occurs upon complete annihilation of karmas from soul.

PARASPAROPAGRAHO JIVANAM
Souls influence each other through service

Jainism is a religion and a way of life.
For thousands of years, Jains have been practicing non-violence, vegetarianism, yoga, meditation, and environmentalism.

JAINS HAVE THREE CORE PRACTICES

Non-Violence is compassion and forgiveness in thoughts, words, and deeds towards all living beings. For this reason, Jains are vegetarians.

Non-Absolutism is respecting views of others.
Jains encourage dialog and harmony with other faiths.

Non-Possessiveness is the balancing of needs and desires, while staying detached from our possessions.

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NON-VIOLENCE
LIVE AND HELP LIVE

JAINISM

A RELIGION AND A WAY OF LIFE

NON-VIOLENCE
NON-ABSOLUTISM
NON-POSSESSIVENESS

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What is Jainism?

Jainism constitutes one of India's classical religions. At the very heart of Jainism is an ethic of nonviolence, Ahimsa, which is respect for all living beings. Ahimsa continues to guide the daily lives of all Jains, who are vegetarians.

In the 6th century BCE the Jain Tirthankar, Mahavira, (a contemporary of Gautama Buddha), propagated Jainism. Today there are over 14 million Jains with 120,000 Jains in North America. In addition to non-violence, the central theme of Jainism is non-absolutism, which means that real truth has multiple facets and non-possessiveness, which means to balance our needs with our desires.

Like other Eastern religions, Jains believe in the existence of a permanent Soul, whose true nature is obscured by an individual's accumulated karma. The goal of Jain religious practices is to ultimately end the cycle of rebirths fueled by karma and to attain liberation, allowing the Soul to exist in its purest state. This can only be accomplished by managing one's anger, greed, ego, deceit and eventually by the practice of asceticism and meditation, which leads to the elimination of all the material passions.

Do Jains Believe in a God?

Yes, and no! The answer depends on our understanding of the term "god." Jains do not accept god as a 'Generator, Overseer, Destroyer' of the universe. In Jainism, god is the supreme manifestation of the Pure Soul. Every Soul has the potential of reaching a liberated state (moksha) where Soul is pure, free from the cycles of birth and death and has regained its natural qualities. To a Jain there is no god other than the Soul that has regained its four infinite qualities of unlimited perception, infinite knowledge, spiritual power, and ultimate bliss. Jains revere and worship such Souls as gods in the form of idols.

What Impact has Jainism Made in The Modern Age?

With its emphasis on the sanctity of all life, Jainism has influenced many including Mahatma Gandhi, the most revered nonviolent leader in the world. Though he was himself not a Jain, Gandhi imbibed the spirit of Jainism through his mother who practiced Jain values and sought guidance from Jain monks. In fact, in his own life Mahatma Gandhi learned the key practice of nonviolence, ahimsa, from Shrimad Rajchandra, a well respected Jain monk and Gandhi's friend for over ten years.

Jainism's Three Core Principles

• Non-Violence
(Ahimsa) promotes the autonomy and reverence of life for every living being. If one understands and believe that every Soul is autonomous and exists in every living being, then one will never trample on its right to live. The practice of vegetarianism/veganism and refraining from violence comes from this principle. Jains are vegetarians and sometimes, vegans.

• Non-Absolutism
(Anekantavaad) strengthens the autonomy of thought of every individual. If one perceives every human being as thinking individual, one will not trample on their thoughts and emotions. Non-absolutism bestows understanding and open-mindedness towards others and recognizes that the real truth has multiple facets and may have seemingly conflicting perspectives.

• Non-Possessiveness
(Aparigrah) supports the autonomy of self-control, of striving to balance our personal consumption of things by rationalizing between our needs and desires. If one ultimately feels that one owns nothing, then one will not trample on the ecology on which our survival depends.

What is Jain Path to Liberation?

Significant progress in the path of liberation begins with perception and realization that one is a Soul (Soul is intrinsically pure and has the attributes of knowledge and happiness) and that all accompaniments and circumstances are non-Soul, karma-determined, transitory and not real causes of happiness. The three-fold path to liberation includes:

Right Perception: Belief in Soul, separate existence of body and Soul and their temporary relationship through karma as described in Jainism.

Right Knowledge: Knowledge of the fundamentals of Soul, karma, and the process of purification

Right Conduct: Adherence to the five vows and practice to remain engrossed in Soul attributes though meditation.

Developed and Published by JAINA
Federation of Jain Associations in North America

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