Paryushan is an eternal festival relating neither to people nor to any historical event. It is a time to celebrate the natural qualities of the Soul. Just as the Soul does not have a beginning or an end, Paryushan does not have a beginning or an end. It falls three times a year but is only celebrated once, around August/September because at this time, business is slow (in India), businessmen can take time off for spiritual pursuit. Also, it is the time of the monsoon retreat for monks and nuns in India. During this time when insects flourish, the monks and nuns reside in one city or community to avoid long distance travel so as to minimize trampling or harming living beings.

Eating, drinking and being merry are normally associated with festivals, but Paryushan is the festival for spiritual upliftment. During Paryushan, Jains practice penances, vows, fasts, scriptural studies, and Pratikraman. If not fasting, they refrain from eating green vegetables. The reason for these practices is to have the mind and body focus more on the inner qualities and virtues of the Soul and cleanse the body.

In North America, there are 18 days of celebration, in which the first 8 days are Paruyshan Parv celebration and the next 10 days are Das Lakshan (Festival of the Ten Virtues) celebration. After the celebration, Jains ask for forgiveness from each other, their friends, co-workers, and most importantly, their enemies. This asking for forgiveness is made easier after the 8/10/18 days of cleansing of our Mind and Soul such that our hearts become “soft” and we become mentally strong to ask for forgiveness. First we forgive others, and then we ask for forgiveness.

**Ten Supreme Dharmas (Das Lakshan)**

The ten Dharmas, as also described in Tattvarth Sutra, are better understood in context of two common viewpoints found in the scriptures.

- **Vyavahar (External) view** This view helps us live more easily and peacefully with the outside world. It also builds up a reserve of good deeds (punya Karmas). In Jainism, the Vyavahar view is considered a temporary view and a path towards Nischay view.

- **Nischay (Internal) view** This view helps to enhance and blossom the Soul’s natural qualities. The Nischay view is considered to be the most important as it leads to contemplation and understanding of the true nature of the Soul with the aim of its purification, the ultimate goal of practicing Paryushan.

Each of the ten Dharmas are all prefixed by the word ‘Uttam’ (Supreme) to signify that they are practiced at the highest level...
by the Jain monks. The householder practices them to a lesser extent. It lasts over a period of ten days, each day being dedicated to one of the ten Dharmas. These Dharmas are outlined below from both External View (Vyavahar View) and Internal View (Nischay) View.

1) Forgiveness – UTTAM KSHAMA

External View: We forgive those who have wronged us and seek forgiveness from them. Forgiveness is sought not just from human colleagues, but from all living beings ranging from one sense to five senses. If we do not forgive or seek forgiveness but instead harbor resentment, we bring misery and unhappiness on ourselves and in the process shatter our peace of mind and make enemies. Forgiving and seeking forgiveness oils the wheel of life, allowing us to live in harmony with our fellow beings.

Internal View: Forgiveness here is directed toward oneself. The Soul, in a state of mistaken identity or false belief, assumes that it consists of the body, the Karmas and the emotions, likes, dislikes, anger, pride, etc. As a result of this incorrect belief, it inflicts pain upon itself and is thus the cause of its own misery. Nischay Kshamā (forgiveness) Dharma teaches the Soul to correctly identify itself by encouraging it to contemplate its true nature and hence achieve the state of right belief or Samyak Darshan. It is only by achieving Samyak Darshan that the Soul ceases to inflict pain on itself and attains supreme happiness.

2) Modesty/Humility – UTTAM MARDAV

External View: Wealth, good looks, reputable family or intelligence often lead to pride. Pride means to believe one to be superior to others and to look down on others. By being proud you are measuring your worth by temporary material objects. These objects will either leave you or you will be forced to leave them when you die. These eventualities will cause you unhappiness as a result of the ‘dent’ caused to your self-worth. Being humble will prevent this.

Internal View: All souls are equal, none being superior or inferior to another. In the words of Srimad Rajchandra: “Sarva Jeev Che Sidh Sum, Je Samje Te Thai – All souls are akin to the Siddha (liberated souls); those who understand this principle will achieve that state.” This view encourages you to understand your true nature. All souls have the potential to be liberated souls. The only difference between the liberated souls and those in bondage is that the former have attained liberation as a result of their “effort.” With effort, even the latter can achieve liberation.

3) Straightforwardness – UTTAM AARJAV

External View: The action of a deceitful person is to think one thing, speak something else and do something entirely different. There is no harmony in his thought, speech and actions. Such a person loses credibility very quickly and lives in constant anxiety and fear of his deception being exposed. Being straightforward or honest oils the wheel of life. You will be seen to be reliable and trustworthy.

Internal View: Delusion about one’s identity is the root cause of unhappiness. Be straightforward to yourself and recognize your true nature. The Soul is made up of countless qualities like knowledge, happiness, effort, faith, and conduct. It has the potential to achieve omniscience (Keval Jnān) and reach a state of supreme bliss. Again, the body, the Karmas, the thoughts and all the emotions are separate from the true nature of the Soul. Only by practicing Nischay Aarjav Dharma will one taste the true happiness that comes from within.

4) Contentment – UTTAM SHAUCH

External View: Be content with the material gains that you have accomplished thus far. Contrary to popular belief, striving for greater material wealth and pleasure will not lead to happiness. Desire for more is a sign that we do not have all that
we want. Reducing this desire and being content with what we have leads to satisfaction. Accumulating material objects merely fuels the fire of desire.

Internal View: Contentment or happiness, derived from material objects, is only perceived to be so by a Soul in a state of false belief. The fact is that material objects do not have a quality of happiness and therefore happiness cannot be obtained from them. The perception of “enjoying” material objects is only a temporary perception. This perception rewards the Soul with only misery and nothing else. Real happiness comes from within, as it is the Soul that possesses the quality of happiness.

5) Truth – UTTAM SATYA

External View: If talking is not required, then do not talk. If it is required then only use the minimum number of words, and all must be absolutely true. Talking disturbs the stillness of the mind. Consider the person who lies and lives in fear of being exposed. To support one lie he has to utter a hundred more. He becomes caught up in a tangled web of lies and is seen as untrustworthy and unreliable.

Internal View: Satya comes from the word Sat, which means existence. Existence is a quality of the Soul. Recognizing the Soul’s true nature as it really exists and taking shelter in the Soul is practising Nischay Satya Dharma.

6) Self-Restraint – UTTAM SANYAM

External View: Restraining from injury to life. Jains go to great lengths, compared to other world religions, to protect life. This encompasses all living beings, from one-sensed onward. The purpose of not eating root vegetables is that they contain countless one-sensed beings termed “nigod.” During Paryushan the Jains also do not eat green vegetables to reduce harm to the lower sensed beings. Also, self-restraint from desires or passions which can lead to pain, and therefore should be avoided.

Internal View:
   i) Restraining injury to the self. This has been elaborated upon in Forgiveness (Kshamā) Dharma.
   ii) Self restraint from desires or passions. Emotions, e.g. likes, dislikes or anger, lead to misery and need to be eradicated. They are not part of the true nature of the Soul and only arise when the Soul is in a state of false belief. The only method to free oneself from these is to contemplate on the true nature of the Soul and in the process commence the journey to liberation or moksha.

7) Penance – UTTAM TAP

External View: This does not only mean fasting but also includes a reduced diet, restriction of certain types of foods, avoiding tasty foods, etc. The purpose of penance is to keep desires and passions in control. Over-indulgence inevitably leads to misery. Penance leads to an influx of positive Karmas.

Internal View: Meditation prevents the rise of desires and passions in the Soul. In a deep state of meditation the desire to intake food does not arise. The first Tirthankar, Adinath Bhagwan was in such a meditative state for six months, during which he observed Nischay Uttam Tap. Only from the meditative energy from within, he went on for six months with no food.

8) Renunciation – UTTAM TYÄG

External View: Contrary to popular belief, renouncing worldly possessions leads to a life of contentment and assists in keeping desires in check. Renunciation is done at the highest level by monks who renounce not only the household but also their clothes. A person’s strength is measured not by the amount of wealth he accumulates but by the amount of wealth he renounces. By this measure the monks and laypeople living balanced, Non-Possessive lives are the richest.
Internal View: Renouncing the emotions, the root cause of misery, is Nischay Uttam Tyag, which is only possible by contemplating on the true nature of the Soul.

9) Non-attachment – UTTAM ÄKINCHANYA

External View: This assists us in detaching from external possessions. Historically, ten possessions are listed in scriptures: land, house, silver, gold, wealth, grain, female servants, male servants, garments and utensils. Of course in today’s world, money, investments, car, and clothes are part of our possessions as well. Remaining unattached from these helps control our desires and leads to an influx of punya Karmas.

Internal View: This assists us in being unattached from our internal attachments: false belief, anger, pride, deceit, greed, laughter, liking, disliking, lamentation, fear, disgust, and sexual desire.

10) Supreme Celibacy – UTTAM BRAHMCHARYA

External View: This means not only refraining from sexual intercourse but also includes all pleasures associated with the sense of touch, e.g. desiring for a cool breeze on a hot summer’s day or using a cushion for a hard surface. Again this dharma is practiced to keep our desires in check. The monks practice this to the highest degree with all their body, speech and mind. The householder refrains from sexual intercourse with anyone except his or her spouse.

Internal View: Brahmacharya is derived from the words Brahma (Soul) and charya (to dwell). Nischay Brahmacharya means to dwell in your Soul. Only by residing in the Soul you are the master of the Universe. Residing outside your Soul makes you a slave to desires.

Kshamä Väni Parva

This is celebrated two days after the end of the Das Lakshan Parva. With mindful and genuine practice over these 8/10/18 days, our mind, heart, and intellect are strengthened and ready to ask for forgiveness.

On this day we have the courage to meet our friends and relatives (or call them), especially people you have had disagreements, fights, and miscommunication with and ask for forgiveness.

On this day we have the courage to say:

*Please forgive me if I have hurt you or have done wrong toward you intentionally or unintentionally (Micchami Dukkadam)*

- with elders: touch their feet and ask for forgiveness
- with youngsters: embrace them and ask for forgiveness
- with friends: embrace them and ask for forgiveness
- with enemies: meet them or call them and ask for forgiveness
- with all living beings and our planet: mentally ask for forgiveness as you may have hurt them in the process of living a Jain Way of Life.

“Conquer anger by forgiveness, pride by humility and deceit by straight-forwardness and greed by contentment.” — Mahävir