

Prayer and practices: The sacred Jain prayer, called the Namokar Mantra, reveres the five types of great souls: Arihant (enlightened souls), Siddha (liberated souls), Acharya (heads of congregation), Upadhyaya (ascetic teachers), Sadhu (ascetics). Many Jains symbolically or ritually worship the Tirthankars. Such reverence is never geared for worldly favors or grace, but is rather a personal inspiration to actually follow the very same path shown by those spiritual exemplars.

Daily spiritual practices also include Samayik (meditation), Pratikraman (confessing past sins, bad thoughts and deeds; and seeking forgiveness), Svadhyaya (reading of Jain scriptures), and Pratyakhyan (taking vows renouncing certain activities to discipline oneself). Other practices include fasting, holding religious discourses, reciting sacred texts, alms giving, and singing prayer songs.

Scriptures: Lord Mahavir's teachings were orally compiled and passed on through the generations. Later, these teachings called Agam Sutras were recorded on leafs. Additional scriptures followed by Jains are: Shatkhand-Agam, Kasaya-Pahud, and Anuyogas.

Jainism worldwide: Jains are a distinguished minority in India. Jains also live in many countries around the world, with larger communities in North America, eastern Africa and UK. Over 100,000 followers of Jainism live in the USA and Canada. As of 2010, North America has been home to 67 Jain temples and centers.

More Information: Details on Jainism and its principles can be obtained from the Federation of Jain Associations in North America (JAINA)

web site: <http://www.jaina.org/>



Wisconsin Jain Temple is located in Pewaukee. The temple was built in 2001 next to the Hindu Temple of Wisconsin. There are about 100 Jain families in Wisconsin.



The center idol is of Lord Mahavir the twenty fourth and the last Tirthankar. The idol on the right is of Lord Parshvanath the twenty third Tirthankar. The idol on left is of Lord Rishabhdev or Adinath. Rishabhdev was the first Tirthankar of the present age. Because of this, he had the name of Ādināth - the original lord. According to Jain beliefs, Rishabhdev existed before civilization developed. He taught people agriculture, tending of animals, cooking, and more.



णमो अरिहंताणं (Namo Arihantānam)
णमो सिद्धाणं (Namo Siddhānam)
णमो आयरियाणं (Namo Āyariyānam)
णमो उवज्झायाणं (Namo Uvajjhāyanam)
णमो लोए सव्व साहूणं (Namo Loe Savva Sahūnam)
एसो पंच णमोक्कारो, सव्व पावप्प णासणो
(Eso Panch Namokkaro, Savva Pāvappanāsano)
मंगलाणं च सव्वेसिं, पडमम हवई मंगलं
(Mangalanam Cha Savvesim, Padhamam Havai Mangalam)



*Jain Religion
Center of
Wisconsin*

JAINISM



Live and Let Live
परस्परोग्रहो जीवानाम्

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Introduction to Jainism

Jainism is an ancient religion and philosophy. Its thorough emphasis on personal and societal nonviolence in thoughts, speech and actions has significantly influenced the world peace. Followers of Jainism share the world's primary gospel of unconditional love with a commitment to respect all forms of life. Its wisdom has inspired many peaceful revolutionaries including Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr. According to historians and archeological evidence, the Jain tradition has flourished within the Indian subcontinent for over 3500 years. Followers of Jainism point to evidence of it being much older.

The word "Jain" is derived from *Jina*, which means "spiritual conqueror". Followers of *Jina* are called Jains. Jinas are individuals who have overcome or conquered their own inner enemies, the flaws and weaknesses, attachments and aversions that stop one from realizing one's own infinite spiritual potential, and have realized their inherent supreme knowledge. Jains revere twenty-four *Jinas* called *Tirthankars* who taught the Jain message to the human race during various periods of antiquity. The last two *Tirthankars* were Lord Parshvanath (877-777 BC) and Lord Mahavir (599-527 BC).

Jain philosophy is based on the view that body and soul are different, and that souls and the physical universe are eternal. All souls have the same spiritual characteristics of infinite perception, potential and bliss. Since eternity, our souls have been cycling through various forms of life. The ultimate objective is to break free from the eternal cycle of birth, death and rebirth - a cycle in which living beings tend to suffer pain and misery - and achieve the permanent blissful state known as liberation, or *Moksha*.

This goal can be achieved only during human life, wherein a soul has the capability to understand and take necessary steps to achieve it.

The doctrine of karma is central to Jain philosophy. As individual souls, our karmas govern the successions of our lives. The actions of our body, mind, and speech bind us in the form of karma, which is a subtle form of physical energy that associates with the soul as a result of its conscious states and actions. Karma blocks us from our experience of the infinite knowledge, perception and potential which is our souls' true nature. The highest aim of our spiritual existence is to gradually purify our souls by getting rid of all karmas. A soul attains the ultimate freedom by simultaneously following the path of **right perception, right knowledge** and **right conduct**. Right conduct includes nonviolence, self-purification, penance, austerity and meditation. Right knowledge and right perception mean having a clear understanding and belief of the reality based on seven fundamental truths (the *Tatvas*), and six universal substances (the *Dravyas*).

The foremost principle of Jainism is *Ahimsa* (non-violence and non-harming). *Ahimsa* refers not only to refraining from visible physical acts of violence but also from thoughts of hurting any living being and from speech intended to harm or upset others. Because of their belief in *Ahimsa*, Jains are strict vegetarians. Their compassion for all living beings leads Jains to a long tradition of running sanctuaries dedicated to protecting and nurturing injured and starving animals.

Community service of providing free shelter, food, clothing, and health care to the under privileged is a well-known hallmark of Jains around the globe.

Lord Mahavir (599-527 BC) the last *Tirthankar* was born a prince with many worldly pleasures and services, at his command. But at the age of thirty, he left his family and royal household, gave up his worldly possessions, and became a monk in search of truth. He spent the next twelve and a half years in deep silence and meditation, and attained *Keval Gnyan* (the perfect enlightenment). Lord Mahavir spent the next thirty years preaching the

eternal truth he had realized. At the age of 72, Lord Mahavir attained *Nirvana* (salvation).

The most important teaching of Lord Mahavir is the reverence for all forms of life. He promoted the following five vows: Nonviolence, Truthfulness, Non-stealing, Chastity and Non-Possiveness. Monks and nuns follow these vows strictly and totally. The common people follow these vows as far as their worldly obligations will permit. Lord Mahavir emphasized that accumulation of possessions should be curbed and consumption levels be kept within reasonable limits. Using any resources beyond one's needs and misuse of any part of nature is considered unethical.

Another important teaching of Lord Mahavir is the theory of knowledge known as *Anekantavada*; the doctrine of multiplicity. It means that reality is multi-faceted and its perception changes depending on the time, place, nature and state of the viewer. What is true from one point of view can be open to question from another. Absolute truth cannot be grasped from any particular viewpoint alone, because absolute truth is the sum total of all different viewpoints. Such an approach encourages Jains to think in the most critical ways possible, to seek truth from different perspectives and to truly respect all belief systems.

Lord Mahavir's spiritual teachings and philosophy have always attracted people from all walks of life. He proclaimed that in their potential for spiritual advancement, all human beings are equal whether

