
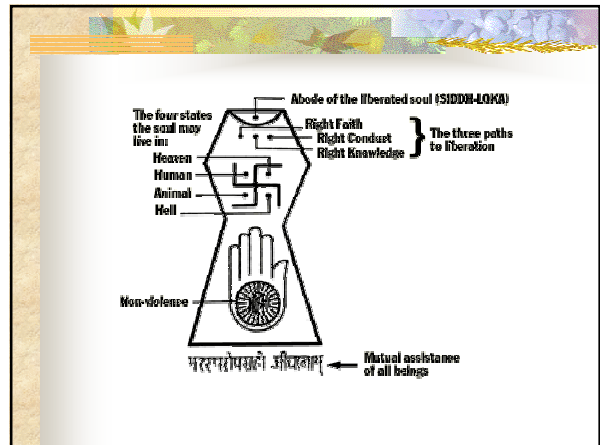




The swastika...

- 10,000 years old
- Found from Eurasia to America
- Honored by Buddhists, Jains and Hindus
 - Inscribed on deities, including the chest and footprints of the Buddha.
 - Symbolizes the sun's path through the sky, denotes the sudden leaps on the path to self-realization, and many other interpretations
- Sanskrit translation of swastika = it is well
- Buddhism sees the swastika as an endless knot with neither beginning nor end: the infinite peace of the balanced and enlightened mind.

What is Jainism?

- At least 2500+ years old
- Followed by about 4 million people, mostly in India
- Seeks to release the soul from the round of rebirth, to liberate spirit from matter




Three Main Beliefs

- Sacredness of all life, human or not
 - *Ahimsa* – non-violence
 - Causing pain or death causes suffering
- Spiritual life is superior to physical life
 - Should not embrace material things
- Humans have no proof that God actually exists
 - No creator god

The Founders of Jainism



- 24 *Tirthankaras*): great teachers, role models
- **Mahavira** (“great hero”) – the 24th and final *Tirthankara* – reformer of ancient Jainism
 - Jnatrputra Vardhamana
 - Lived 599 - 527 BCE in northeast India
 - 30 years as student (never married)
 - 12 years as ascetic renunciant
 - 30 years as spiritual teacher (*tirthankara*)



Mahavira

- Renounced world at age 30
 - Tore out his hair in 5 handfuls and became a naked wanderer
- Search for enlightenment lasted 12 years
 - Attacked by animals, humans to test his meditation
- Achieved **Nirvana**
 - Became a **Jina**
 - **Jain** means “follower of a Jina”

Jain Beliefs: Spiritual Beings

- **Jina**: (conqueror) an enlightened being who has conquered material existence and released the soul from the round of rebirth
- **Tirthankara**: a *jina* who is a great spiritual teacher
- **Siddha**: a liberated soul
- **The goal of Jainism**: to become a *Jina*, thus freeing one’s soul from the material realm
 - we can all become “gods” but these gods do not intervene or respond to petitionary prayer

Jain Beliefs: *Jiva* & *Ajiva*



- **Jiva** = life-giving spirit (soul)
- **Ajiva** = inert/non-living matter
- All living beings contain soul and are considered *Jiva* (soul trapped in matter):
 - Humans
 - Animals
 - Plants
 - Microscopic life-forms trapped in matter (water beings, rock beings, fire beings, air beings)

Jain Beliefs: *Karma* & Reincarnation



- **Karma**: impurity of the soul that keeps the soul bound to the cycle of rebirth into matter
 - **Karma** is built-up through actions in this world: thoughts, words, deeds, attitudes
 - Reduce and eliminate *karma* so as to achieve **moksha (nirvana)** – release of the soul from the cycles of rebirth
- How are we to do this? ...

Jain practices: Spiritual Discipline



- **Ahimsa**: non-violence to any and all life form
 - Intent to do no harm
 - Strict vegans--avoid all meat and animal products
- **Aparigraha**: non-attachment
- **Anekantvad**: non-hatred
- **Asceticism**: to live a monastic life, detached from this world and society – a life of poverty and chastity

Scripture

- The canon is the *Agamasi*
 - 3 categories: Purva, Anga, Angabahya
 - Only the Angas still exist
- Contain:
 - Basic teachings of Mahavira and his life story, rules of conduct for monks and nuns, explanation of karma, and other info

The Problem for Humans

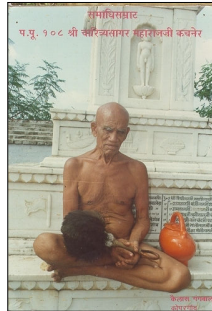
- The cycle of reincarnation
- Karma

The Solution?

- Comes through soul's active desire and labor for release
 - Only through own work without deceit

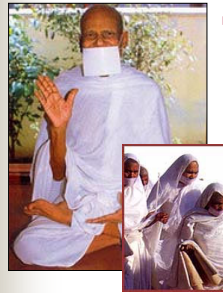
Jain Monastics: Two Major Sects

- *Digambara* ("sky clad")
 - More conservative monks
 - Wear no clothes (they are attachments to physical world)
 - Live alone or in small groups in the forests
 - Admit only men (only thru rebirth can women become Tirthankaras)



Jain Monastics: Two major sects

- *Svetambara* ("white clad")
 - Wear white robes (clothing is irrelevant to Nirvana)
 - Live in community
 - Admit both men and women
 - Some wear face masks to protect minute life forms from harm



Five Monastic Vows

- *Ahimsa*: non-violence (do not harm others)
- *Satya*: truth (do not lie)
- *Achaurya*: non-stealing
- *Brahmacharya*: celibacy & chastity
- *Aparigraha*: non-attachment/non-ownership (poverty)



Lay Jainism (non-monastic)

- Householders: marry and have children
- A simple life but not ascetic (may take temporary monastic vows)
- Modified vows (five plus seven more) to guide life in this world
- Maintain Vegan diet
- Do not expect to achieve moksha in this life (it takes full asceticism and monastic life to hope to become a Jina)



Lay Jainism: Religious Practices

- Make pilgrimages to sacred sites (related to the lives of the *Tirthankaras*)
- Attend temples
- Revere the *Tirthankaras*
- Observe holy days:



Mahavir Jayanti (April; commemorating the birth of Mahavira)

Paryushana Parva (Aug. – Sept.; a festival of fasting and forgiveness)

Mahavir Nirvan (Diwali) (Oct. – Nov.; commemorates the liberation [death] of Mahavira)



Jainism on the Web:

- Jainworld.com: <http://www.jainworld.com/>
- Jainism Literature Center (from Harvard University's "Pluralism Project"): <http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~pluralism/affiliates/jainism/>
- Fundamentals of Jainism: <http://www.angelfire.com/co/jainism/>
- Jainism4u.com: <http://www.marwaris.com/jain4u.htm>
- Jainism Heritage Centres, "your guide to Jain heritage centres across the globe": <http://www.jainheritagecentres.com/index/jainism.htm>