

Jainism

"Jain" and "Jaina" redirect here. For other uses, see [Jain \(disambiguation\)](#) and [Jaina \(disambiguation\)](#).

Jainism, traditionally known as **Jain Dharma**, is one of the oldest religions in the world. It is a [religion](#) and [philosophy](#) originating in [ancient India](#). The Jains follow the teachings of the 24 Jinas (conquerors) who are also known as [Tirthankars](#). The 24th Tirthankar, Lord [Mahavira](#) lived in ca. 6th century BC. One of the main characteristics of Jain belief is the emphasis on the immediate consequences of one's behavior.^[1]

Jains are a small but influential religious minority with at least 4.2 million practitioners in modern [India](#) and more in growing immigrant communities in the [United States](#), [Western Europe](#), [Africa](#), the [Far East](#) and elsewhere. Jains continue to sustain the ancient [Shraman](#) (□□□□□) or [ascetic](#) tradition.

Jains have significantly influenced the religious, [ethical](#), [political](#) and economic spheres in India for over two millennia. Jainism stresses [spiritual](#) independence and [equality](#) of all life with particular emphasis on [non-violence](#). [Self-control](#), *vratae*) is vital for attaining omniscience (*kevala jnana*) and eventually [moksha](#), or realization of the soul's true nature.

Jains have an ancient tradition of scholarship. The [Jain community](#) is the most literate religious community in India, and the Jain libraries are India's oldest.

Sources of history

Kalinga (Modern [Orissa](#)) was home to many Jains in the past. [Rushabh](#), the first [Tirthankar](#), was revered and worshipped in the ancient city Pithunda, which was destroyed by [Mahapadma Nanda](#) when he conquered Kalinga and brought the statue of [Rushabhnath](#) to his capital in Magadh. Rushabhnath is revered as the 'Kalinga Jina'. [Ashoka](#)'s invasion and his Buddhist policy also subjugated Jains greatly in Kalinga. However, in the 1st century BC Emperor Kharvela conquered Magadha and brought Rushabhnath's statue back and installed it in Udaygiri, near his capital, Shishupalgarh. The [Khandagiri](#) and [Udaygiri](#) caves near [Bhubaneswar](#) are the only stone monuments dedicated to Jainism surviving in Orissa. Many of the earlier buildings were made of wood, and were destroyed.

Deciphering of the [Brahmi](#) script, India's oldest script, believed to have been created by the first Tirthankara Rushabhnath, by [James Prinsep](#) in 1788 enabled the reading of ancient inscriptions in India and established the antiquity of Jainism. Discovery of Jain manuscripts, a process that continues today, has added significantly to retracing the history of Jainism. Jain archaeological findings are often from Maurya, Sunga, Kushan, Gupta, Kalachuries, Rashtrakut, Chalukya, Chandel and Rajput and later periods. Several western and Indian scholars have contributed to the reconstruction of Jain history. They include western historians like Bühler, Jacobi, and Indian scholars like Iravatham Mahadevan, who has worked on Tamil Brahmi inscriptions.

Geographical spread and influence



Jain temple in [Ranakpur](#)

Jainism has been a major cultural, philosophical, social and political force since the dawn of civilization in Asia, and its ancient influence has been traced beyond the borders of modern [India](#) into the [Middle Eastern](#) and [Mediterranean](#) regions. At various times, Jainism was found all over South Asia including [Sri Lanka](#) and what are now [Pakistan](#), [Bangladesh](#), [Myanmar](#) and [Afghanistan](#).

The pervasive influence of Jain culture and philosophy in ancient [Bihar](#) possibly gave rise to [Buddhism](#). The Buddhists have always maintained that during the time of [Buddha](#) and [Mahavira](#), Jainism was already an ancient and deeply entrenched faith and culture in the region. For a discussion about the connections between Buddhism and Jainism see [Buddhism and Jainism](#). Over several thousand years, Jain influence on Hindu philosophy and religion has been considerable, while Hindu influence on Jain rituals may be observed in certain Jain sects.

For instance, the very concept of Puja is Jain. The Vedic Religion prescribed yajnas and havanas for pleasing god. Puja is a specifically Jain concept, arising from the Tamil words, "pu" (flower) and "ja" (offering). Please refer to "Jaya Gommatesh" for more details on this topic. {Patil, Bal. "Jaya Gommatesha". Foreword by Prof. Dr. Colette Caillat. Mumbai: Hindi Granth Karyalay, 2006}

Jainism is rapidly expanding in the West as non-Indians follow this religion. With 10 to 12 million followers,^[5] Jainism is among the smallest of the [major world religions](#), but in India its influence is much more than these numbers would suggest. Jains live throughout India; [Maharashtra](#), [Rajasthan](#) and [Gujarat](#) have the largest Jain population among Indian states. [Karnataka](#) and [Bundelkhand Madhya Pradesh](#) have relatively large Jain populations. There is a large following in [Punjab](#), especially in [Ludhiana](#) and [Patiala](#), and there were many Jains in [Lahore](#) (Punjab's historic capital) and other cities before the [Partition](#) of 1947, after which many fled to India. There are many [Jain communities](#) in different parts of India and around the world. They may speak local languages or follow different rituals but essentially follow the same principles.

Outside India, the [United States](#), [United Kingdom](#), [Canada](#) and [East Africa](#) ([Kenya](#), [Tanzania](#) and [Uganda](#)) have large Jain communities today. Jainism is presently a strong faith in the United States and several Jain temples have been built there. [American Jainism](#) accommodates all the sects. Smaller Jain communities exist in [Nepal](#), [South Africa](#), [Japan](#), [Singapore](#), [Malaysia](#), [Australia](#), [Fiji](#), and [Suriname](#). In Belgium the very successful Indian diamond community, almost all of which are Jain are also establishing a temple to strengthen Jain values in and across Western Europe.

Beliefs

Tirthankaras



The statue of [Gomateshwara](#) of Digambar tradition in [Shravanabelagola, Karnataka](#) is the tallest monolith of its kind in the world

Jainism doesn't have a single founder and the truth is said to have been revealed at different times by a [Tirthankara](#) (a teacher who 'makes a ford' i.e., shows the way). A *tirthankar* is considered omniscient, a role model, not a god. There have been 24 tirthankars in what the Jains call the 'present age'. Historical records about only the last two Tirthankars remain: Parshvanath and Mahavir (the 23rd and 24th).

The [24 tirthankaras](#) in chronological order are - [Adinath](#) (or Rishabhath), Ajitanath, Sambhavanath, Abhinandanath, Sumatinath, Padmaprabh, Suparshvanath, Chandraprabhu, Pushpadantanath (or Suvidhinath), Sheetalanath, Shreyansanath, Vasupujya, Vimalanath, Anantanath, Dharmanath, Shantinath, Kunthunath, Aranath, Mallinath, Munisuvratanath, Naminath, Neminath, [Parshvanath](#) and [Mahavir](#) (or Vardhamana).

Beliefs



Pre-Kushana [Ayagapatta](#) from [Mathura](#)

Jains believe that every human is responsible for his/her actions and all living beings have an eternal [soul](#), [jiva](#). Jains believe all souls are equal because they all possess the potential of being liberated and attaining [Moksha](#). Tirthankaras are role models only because they have attained [Moksha](#). Jains insist that we live, think and act respectfully and honor the spiritual nature of all life. Jains view [God](#) as the unchanging traits of the pure soul of each living being, chiefly described as Infinite Knowledge, Perception, Consciousness, and Happiness (Ananta Jnāna, Ananta Darshana, Ananta Cāritra, and Ananta Sukha). Jains do not believe in an omnipotent supreme being, creator or manager (*kartā*), but rather in an eternal universe governed by natural laws.

Jains hold that this temporal world is full of miseries and sorrow and hence in order to attain lasting bliss one must transcend the cycle of transmigration. Otherwise, one will remain eternally caught up in the never-ending cycle of transmigration. The only way to break out of this cycle is to practise detachment through rational perception, rational knowledge and rational conduct.

Jain scriptures were written over a long period of time, but the most cited is the [Tattvartha Sutra](#), or Book of Reality written by the monk-scholar, [Umasvati](#) (aka Umāsvāmi) almost 1800 years ago. The primary figures are [Tirthankaras](#). There are two main sects called [Digambar](#) and [Svetambar](#), and both believe in [ahimsa](#) (or *ahinsā*), [asceticism](#), [karma](#), [sanskār](#), and [jiva](#).

Differences between the two main sects are mainly conduct related. Doctrinally, Jainism is uniform with great emphasis placed on rational perception, rational knowledge and rational conduct. {"samyagdarśanajñānacāritrāṇimokṣamārgaḥ", Tattvārthasūtra, 1.1}

Compassion for all life, human and non-human, is central to Jainism. Human life is valued as a unique, rare opportunity to reach enlightenment. To kill any person, no matter what crime they

committed, is considered unimaginably abhorrent. It is the only religion that requires monks and laity, from all its sects and traditions, to be vegetarian. Some Indian regions have been strongly influenced by Jains and often the majority of the local non-Jain population has also become vegetarian.

History suggests that various strains of [Hinduism](#) became vegetarian due to strong Jain influences. Jains run animal shelters all over India. For example, Delhi has a bird hospital run by Jains. Every city and town in Bundelkhand has animal shelters run by Jains where all manner of animals are sheltered, even though the shelter is generally known as a Goshala.

Jainism's stance on [nonviolence](#) goes far beyond [vegetarianism](#). Jains refuse food obtained with unnecessary cruelty. Many practice a lifestyle similar to [Veganism](#) due to the violence of modern dairy farms, and others exclude [root vegetables](#) from their diets in order to preserve the lives of the plants from which they eat.^[6] Potatoes, garlic and onions in particular are avoided by Jains.^[7] Devout Jains do not eat, drink, or travel after sunset and prefer to drink water that is first boiled and then cooled to room temperature. Many Jains do not eat green vegetables and root vegetables once a week. The particular day is determined by the lunar calendar and is Ashtami (eighth day of the lunar month) and New Moon and followed by the second Ashtami and Full Moon night.

[Anekantavada](#), a foundation of Jain philosophy, literally means "The Multiplicity of Reality", or equivalently, "Non-one-endedness". Anekantavada consists of tools for overcoming inherent biases in any one perspective on any topic or in reality in general. Another tool is The Doctrine of Postulation, [Syādvāda](#). Anekantavada is defined as a multiplicity of viewpoints, for it stresses looking at things from others' perspectives.

Jains are usually very welcoming and friendly toward other faiths and often help with interfaith functions. Several non-Jain temples in India are administered by Jains. A palpable presence in [Indian culture](#), Jains have contributed to [Indian philosophy](#), [art](#), [architecture](#), [science](#), and to [Mohandas Gandhi's politics](#), which led to the mainly non-violent movement for [Indian independence](#).

Karma theory

Main article: [Karma in Jainism](#)

The Jain religion places great emphasis on [Karma](#). Essentially, it means that all [jivas](#) reap what they sow. A happy or miserable existence is influenced by actions in previous births. These results may not occur in the same life, and what we sow is not limited to physical actions. Physical, verbal, and mental activities affect future situations. [Karma](#) has long been an essential component of Jainism, and other Indian religions such as [Buddhism](#), [Hinduism](#) and [Sikhism](#). It is believed generally that an omniscient Tirthankar can foresee all things, long before science.

The backbone of the Jain philosophy, the nine Tattvas (because sometimes are added to the seven: merit (punya) and demerit (papa)) show how to attain moksha. Without knowing them, one cannot progress towards liberation. Jainism explains that [Karma theory](#) is intertwined with these nine principles. They are:

1. [Jiva](#) - Souls and living things
2. [Ajiva](#) - Non-living things
3. [Asrava](#) - Influx of karma
4. [Bandha](#) - The bondage of karma

5. [Samvara](#) - The stoppage of influx of karma
6. [Nirjara](#) - Shedding of karma
7. [Moksha](#) - Liberation or Salvation

A simple example: A man rides a wooden boat to reach the other side of the river. Now the man is Jiva, the boat is ajiva. Now the boat has a leak and water flows in. That incoming of water is Asrava and accumulating there is Bandh, Now the man tries to save the boat by blocking the hole. That blockage is Samvara and throwing the water outside is Nirjara. Now the man crosses the river and reaches his destination, Moksha.

Customs and practices



The hand with a wheel on the palm symbolizes the Jain Vow of Ahimsa, meaning [non-violence](#). The word in the middle is "[Ahimsa](#)." The wheel represents the [dharmacakra](#), to halt the cycle of reincarnation through relentless pursuit of [truth](#).

Jain [monks](#) and nuns practice strict [asceticism](#) and strive to make their current birth their last, thus ending their cycle of transmigration. The laity, who pursue less rigorous practices, strive to attain rational perception and to do as much good as possible in order to get closer to the goal of attaining freedom from the cycle of transmigration. Following strict ethics, the laity usually choose professions that revere and protect life and totally avoid violent livelihoods.

Jains practice [Samayika](#), which is a [Sanskrit](#) word meaning *equanimity* and derived from *samaya* (the soul). The goal of Samayika is to attain equanimity. Samayika is begun by achieving a balance in time. If this current moment is defined as a moving line between the past and the future, Samayika happens by being fully aware, alert and conscious in that moving time line when one experiences Atma, one's true nature, common to all life forms. Samayika is especially significant during [Paryushana](#), a special period during the monsoon, and is practiced during the ritual known as Samvatsari [Pratikramana](#).

Jains believe that [Devas](#) (demi-gods or celestial beings) cannot help [jiva](#) to obtain liberation, which must be achieved by individuals through their own efforts. In fact, Devas themselves

cannot achieve liberation until they reincarnate as humans and undertake the difficult act of removing karma. Their efforts to attain the exalted state of [Siddha](#), the permanent liberation of jiva from all involvement in worldly existence, must be their own.

The strict Jain ethical code for both laity and monks/nuns is:

1. [Ahimsa \(Non-violence\)](#)
2. [Satya](#) (truth)
3. [Achaurya Or Asteya](#) (non-stealing)
4. [Brahmacharya](#) (purity of mind and body)
5. [Aparigraha](#) (non-attachment to temporal possessions)

For laypersons, 'chastity' means confining sexual experiences to marriage. For monks/nuns, it means complete [celibacy](#).

Nonviolence includes the concepts of [vegetarian](#), and some Jains choose to be [vegan](#). Jains are expected to be non-violent in thought, word, and deed, both toward humans and toward all other living beings, including their own selves. Jain monks and nuns walk barefoot and sweep the ground in front of them to avoid killing any [insects](#) or other tiny beings. Even though all life is considered sacred by the Jains, human life is deemed the highest form of life. For this reason, it is considered vital never to harm or upset any person.

While performing holy deeds, Svetambara Jains wear cloths, [muhapatti](#), over their mouths and noses to avoid [saliva](#) falling on texts or revered images. Some wear either the muhapatti to avoid accidentally inhaling germs. Many healthy concepts are entwined within the Jain religion. For example, Jains do not drink unboiled water because it contains billions of micro-organisms. In ancient times, a person might get ill by drinking unboiled water, which would prevent her from remaining in equanimity, as illness may precede or engender intolerance.

True spirituality, according to enlightened Jains, starts when a follower attains Samyak darshana, or rational perception. Samyak drshti souls are on the correct path to moksha, or 'striving to remain in the nature of the soul', characterized by detachment from worldly life, and being in a state of pure knowledge and bliss. Attachment to worldly life collects new karmas, and traps one in a cycle of birth, death, and suffering. The worldly life is recognized by its dualistic nature (for example, the dualities of love and hate, suffering and pleasure, etc.), for the perception of one state cannot exist without the contrasting perception of the other.

Jain Dharma shares some beliefs with Hinduism. Both revere the same Devas and Devis (heavenly beings), and the theory of Karma and reincarnation. However, the Jain version of the [Ramayana](#) and [Mahabharata](#) is different from Hindu beliefs, for example. Generally, Hindus believe that Rama was a reincarnation of God, whereas Jains believe he attained moksha (liberation) because they do not believe in God the creator. (Note: some Hindus, such as Yogis, accept many aspects of Jain Dharma.)

Along with the Five Vows, Jains avoid harboring ill will toward others and practice forgiveness. They believe that [atma](#) (soul) can lead one to becoming Parmatma (liberated soul) and this must come from one's inner self. Jains refrain from all violence ([Ahimsa](#)) and recommend that sinful activities should be eradicated.

[Mahatma Gandhi](#) was deeply influenced (particularly through the guidance of [Shrimad Rajchandra](#)) by Jain tenets such as peaceful, protective living and honesty, and made them an integral part of his own [philosophy](#).^[8] Jainism has a distinct idea underlying Tirthankar worship. The physical form is not worshiped, but the Gunas (virtues, qualities) which are praised.

Tirthankars are only role-models, and sects such as the Sthanakavasi stringently reject the worship of statues.

Jain worship and rituals

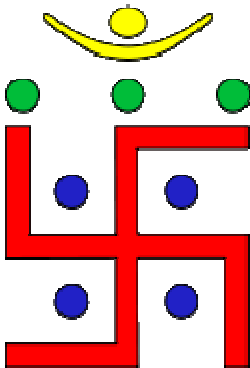
Main article: [Jain rituals and festivals](#)

Every day most Jains bow and say their universal prayer, the Namokara Mantra, aka the [Navkar Mantra](#). Jains have built temples, or [Basadi](#) or Derasar, where images of Tirthankars are worshiped. Jain rituals may be elaborate because symbolic objects are offered and Tirthankaras praised in song. But some Jain sects refuse to enter temples or worship images. All Jains accept that images of Tirthankaras are merely symbolic reminders of the path that they have to take, in order to attain moksha. Jains are clear that the Jinas reside in moksha and are completely detached from the world.

Jain rituals include:

- [Pancakalyanaka Pratishtha](#)
- [Pratikramana](#)
- [Samayika](#)
- Guru-Vandana, Chaitya Vandana, and other sutras to honor ascetics.

Jain symbolism



The [fylfot](#) (swastika) is among the holiest of Jain symbols. Worshippers use rice grains to create a *fylfot* around the temple altar.

The holiest symbol is a simple [swastika](#). Another important symbol incorporates a wheel on the palm of a hand, symbolizing [ahimsa](#).

Other major Jain symbols include:

- 24 Lanchhanas (symbols) of the [Tirthankaras](#)
- [Triratna](#) and [Shrivatsa](#) symbols
- A Tirthankar's or [Chakravarti](#)'s mother dreams
- [Dharmacakra](#) and [Siddha-chakra](#)
- Eight auspicious symbols (The Asta Mangalas). Their names are (in series of pictures)

1. Svastika -Signifies peace and well-being

2. Shrivatsa -A mark manifested on the centre of the Jina's chest, signifying the Jina's pure soul.
3. Nandyavartya -Large svastika with nine corners
4. Vardhamanaka -A shallow earthen dish used for lamps. This symbol is suggestive of increase of wealth, fame and merit due to the grace of the Jina.
5. Bhadrasana -Throne. It is considered auspicious because it is sanctified by the feet of the blessed Jina
6. Kalasha -Pot filled with pure water signifying wisdom and completeness
7. Minayugala -A fish couple. It signifies Cupid's banners coming to worship the Jina after defeating of the God of Love
8. Darpana -The mirror reflects one's true self because of its clarity