

# JAIN FESTIVALS

All communities have their own festivals and their own unique ways of celebrating them. Festivals allow us to break the monotony of our daily routine life and invigorate us with new energy and thinking so that we can enjoy life and prepare ourselves to achieve our long-term objectives.

Festivals are an integral and an important aspect in the lives of Jains. The Jain community has a rich tradition of festivals and rituals and its own way of celebrating them. Jain festivals provide a focus for communal celebration and an opportunity to show devotion and gain merit. The Festivals provide a platform for community members to present their knowledge, artistic skills, wealth and other attributes for the good cause of all and contribute to the propagation of Jain philosophy and culture.



Traditionally, in most communities, festivals are a time for celebration, jubilation, enjoyment, and entertainment. However, the Jain festivals and rituals emphasize the spiritual aspects of Jain faith. Festivals provide Jains an opportunity to enhance their spiritual beliefs by shedding wrong beliefs (*mithyātvā*), learning more about their religious practices and enhancing their conduct to be closer to the stated right conduct in the scriptures. True celebration of festivals for Jains implies enhancing self-control (*sañyama*), giving up sensual pleasures, knowing and experiencing more about pure soul. Thus Jain festivals are in the main – *alaukik* – concerned with the upliftment of the soul through the means of penance, worship and self-restraint. Happy Paryushan Festival

The Jain faith emphasis is on spiritual purification to achieve ultimately moksha by self effort and improvement. Celebration of festivals and practice of rituals revitalize and strengthen our beliefs in Jainism. The Jain festivals are known as Parvas. The word “*Parva*” means ‘one that purifies’ or simply ‘auspicious’,

The primary objective of Jain festivals is to make some progress in spiritual purification. During the festival, Jains try to minimise the four *kashayas* of anger, greed, ego and deceit to a greater degree than normal by



# JAIN FESTIVALS



adopting the three jewels of right faith, knowledge and conduct. Some of the activities undertaken by Jain laypeople during festivals include partial renunciation, austerities such as fasting, partial fasting, meditation, performing samyaika and pratitraman, studying the holy scriptures, listening to religious discourses by monks, scholars in person or on Zoom, prolonged worshiping in temples, making donation etc.

Jain Festivals are of two types, namely: -

**Nitya (Eternal)** i.e. those festivals that are being observed forever. Since Jains believe in continuous cycles avasarpini and utsarpini epochs; we say that they are eternal i.e. had been, are being and will always be celebrated. These festivals can be also further sub-classified as those being observed annually / quarterly / fortnightly or daily.

**Naimittika** – (Event oriented) i.e. those festivals, which are associated with some event, usually the five kalyanakas of the Tirthankaras or life events of renowned spiritual preachers of Jainism, significant events like removing the obstacles experienced by monks or religious people; creation of Holy Scriptures or building a new temple etc. These are mostly annual festivals.

Dates of Jain festivals vary year by year as they are calculated based on the Lunar Calendar. Although Jain festivals involve austerities and self-restraint, colourful processions, music and hymn -singing and community members rejoicing ensure Jain festivals celebrations are full of joy.

Main Jain Festivals include Mahavir Janma Kalyanak, Aksaya Tritiya, Ayambil, Paryushan, Dasa Lakshana Paryan, Diwali, Raksha bandhana , Jnana Pancami, Karttik Purnima, Maunaikadasi, Posadasami.





## PARYUSHAN PARVA

*"Parismantadushayante dhante karmani yasimannasau paryushnm"*

"The celebration through which the karmic matter attached to the soul is totally burnt or vanquished (both internally and externally) is known Paryushan i.e., self- purification".

It is sated that just as *Navkar* is the best amongst all mantras, *Palitana* the greatest Jain pilgrimage place, *Abhay Daan* (promise of no harm) is the best form of charity, *shukla dhyam* is the most supreme form of dhyam (meditation), *Paryushan* is regarded as the most auspicious festivals amongst all festivals.

### PARVA RAJ

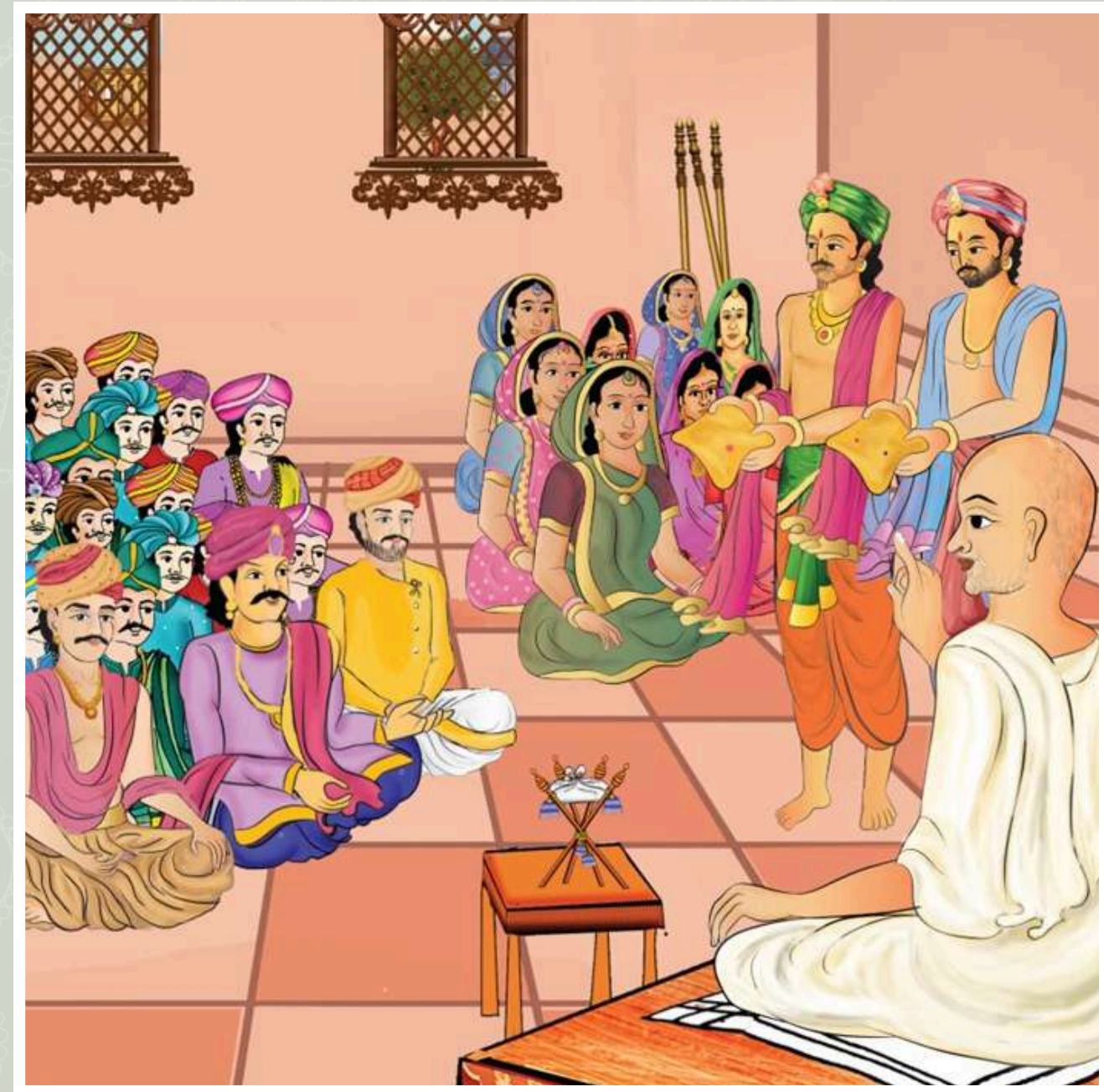
The festival which carries a special and greater significance; its celebrations spread over a longer duration, and it is more soul-stirring than any other Jain festival.

### MAHA PARVA

It is an ancient and chief of all Jain festival.

Festivals like Mahavir Janma Kalyanak, Ram Navami, Janmasthanmi last for one day, whilst Paryushan lasts for eight days and Das Lakshana, celebrated by Digambaras lasts for ten days. This is as Paryushan is for the constant inward journey, for cleansing, and for self-awakening. The first seven days of Paryushan are for spiritual persistence and the eighth day is for attainment – known as Samvatsari – dedicated to forgiveness.

## JAIN FESTIVALS



# JAIN FESTIVALS

## PARYUSHAN PARVA

The Nav Tattvas or 'fundamentals' explain Jainism theory of karma describing how karma gets attached to the soul, how to allay the inflow of karmas and eradicate previously accumulated karmas.

**Ashrav** – inflow of karma. Our souls are constantly acquiring new karmas as we go about our daily lives by intentionally and unintentionally sinful activities. *The stopping of sinful activities during Paryushan aids in reduction of the inflow of karma.*

**Samvar** is the process to stop the inflow of karmas. *This is achieved during Paryushan by curtailing sinful activities.*

**Nirjara** is the eradication of accumulated karmas bound to the soul, which leads to spiritual progress towards the ultimate goal of liberation – moksha. *The rites, rituals and penances prescribed during Paryushan aid in the eradication of karma and lead to nirjara.*

The Paryushan Festival teaches us to develop 'high thinking and simple living', involving examining our actions/faults, reflection, humility, requesting and granting unconditional forgiveness.

The message of Paryushan is to purify the soul by staying closer to it, to shed off karmas, remove or suppress the negative qualities of the soul i.e anger, ego, deceit and greed and to inculcate the virtues of the soul which are forgiveness, humility, straightforwardness and contentment.

"Embodying the enduring, universal truth that, in our short time on earth, each moment we have represents a chance to take care of one another and shape a better tomorrow, this sacred festival reflects the hope and compassion that bind us in our common humanity".

We have been celebrating Paryushan for many years. Let us resolve to 'walk the talk' and put in practice the 'Jain way of life' and embark on a spiritual journey for the rest of our lives.

