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WELCOME TO THE PARYUSHAN FESTIVAL

The Celebration of Jainism and spiritual awareness



Jain festivals are known as 'Parvas', 'one that purifies' or an auspicious day. Festivals in many traditions are a time for gaiety, celebrations, enjoyment. Jain festivals emphasise the spiritual aspects of Jainism and meant to aid on one's spiritual journey. Jain festivals entail renunciation, austerities, studying scriptures, reciting holy hymns, meditation, and expression of devotion for the Tirthankars which revitalise and strengthen our beliefs in Jainism.

For Jains worldwide, Paryushan is the most important religious observance of the year. Shvetambars observe the festival over a period of eight days whilst Digambaras celebrate for ten days known as Das Lakshana Parva. The purpose of life according to Jain teachings is to realize our true self, to experience wholeness with own soul, and to have reverence for all life.

During Paryushan we strive to minimize our worldly affairs so that we can devote some time to spiritual and religious pursuits and concentrate on our true selves.

The word Paryushan is often affixed with 'Parva Raj' meaning 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; affixed with 'Maha Parva' meaning It is an ancient and King of all Jain festivals.

Our scriptures have designated various meaningful and wonderful titles to the festival.



- **Paryu-Prasa** – The festival in which one meditates upon the inherent virtues of the soul in thought, speech and action; or one attains peace of soul i.e., celestial peace.
- **Paryupshamn or Pajjusvana** – The festival in which an attempt is made to obtain peace discarding all passions and lustful desires through various means; and observe harmony in the soul through the study of scriptures.
- **Pajjushana** – The festival through which an attempt is made to put an end to all vices, passions and lustful desires in thought, speech, and deeds.
- **Samvatsari Parva (for Shvetambars)** – The festival which is celebrated annually to subdue all passions and lustful desires.

MODERN DAY INTERPRETATION OF THE FESTIVAL

INCLUDE:

- Paryushan is a time to reflect, repent and seek forgiveness for self-purification, to remove accumulated karma of the previous year and develop control over new accumulating karmas by observing austerities.
- Festival for the purification of the mind as well conduct – a period of time for deep introspection and austerities.
- Festival of self-purification and self-enhancement to reduce our ego and hopefully eliminate totally!
- The daily meditation and prayers during the festival provide an opportunity to look inward and outwards, learn important lessons from the teachings of our Tirthankaras to try and incorporate them in our daily lives.
- Festival of spirituality as well upliftment of life. The festival leads us from the darkness of ignorance to the light of knowledge.
- We can all see the effects of Climate Change and environmental exploitation and the impact it already is having on Earth and its inhabitants.
- Paryushan is a time to reflect on the age-old ecology and environmental Jain ethics and how we may incorporate sustainable and environmentally friendly practices in our daily lives, in line with our ecological ethics.
- The festival is a symbol of Jain unity.

MICHCHAMI DUKKADAM



BY KISHOR B SHAH

Paryushan is as relevant today, if not more. Paryushan is an inspiration, a roadmap, guide and a practice of non-violent lifestyle.

Jain communities have a duty, especially to the younger generations, to elaborate on the value and benefits of these precious short periods of self-consciousness through communal religious activities, silence, meditation, self-study, dietary restraint, sense and emotions control and explore the pure essence of this auspicious festival.

Paryushan is the only festival in the world, in which the soul is worshipped and in which a person can become self-realised through self-reflection and self-purification.

Paryushan Mahaparva is not just a festival of Jains, it is a universal festival.