

Mahavir

Janma Kalyanak

CHAITRA SUD TERAS

“Om Hrim

Shri Mahvirswami Arhate Namah”



Mahavirswami Bhagwan Pratima
Shikharbandhi Jinalaya Oshwal Centre

“Great men are like milestones which mark the progress of humanity on the road to Moksha. The value and interest of history are chiefly due to the lives led and services rendered to the world by the heroes who are enshrined in its pages. As the stars are the glory of the sky, so great men are the glory not only of their country, but also the whole world. Great men send out rays of silvery light which illuminate the hearts of their fellow men and help them rise above all that is low, mean, selfish and contemptible. A person who renders even material assistance is certainly considered great, for, admittedly he rises above himself. Greater still are the intellectual benefactors who extend our vision, deepen and enlarge our understanding and enable us to distinguish the right from wrong. But the greatest of all are the great Saviour, who by their teachings have brought spiritual peace to the millions on this earth. The supreme greatness of Mahavir was that his life typified all the three, because he was not only a material and intellectual benefactor but also a great saviour of souls.”

In the life of a Tirthankara, there are five auspicious events or days, known as the ‘panch kalyanak’, namely Chyavan Kalyanak (conception) ; Janma Kalyanak (birth) ; Diksha Kalyanak (renunciation) ; Keval Gnaan Kalyanak (absolute enlightenment - omniscience) and Moksha Kalyanak (Nirvana - final liberation). As Christmas marks the birth of Jesus, other religions also celebrate the birth of their great prophets.

All the 24 Tirthankaras in this era underwent the ‘panch kalyanaks’ and these are marked in the Jain calendar. Being the last and most recent Jina, Lord Mahavir holds an important place in the hearts of all Jains. The festival to commemorate the birthday of Lord Mahavir is ‘Mahavir Janma Kalyanak’ and is also popularly known as Mahavir Jayanti. Mahavir Janma Kalyanak is celebrated with great reverence and enthusiasm by all Jains all over the world. Mahavir Janma Kalyanak is a very auspicious day and usually falls in late March or early April (the 13th day of the bright half of Chaitra in the Indian Calendar). This year, Mahavir Janma Kalyanak is being celebrated on Sunday 21st April 2024. Mahavir Janma Kalyanak has left an indelible imprint on Jains and people of other faiths for over two millennia and will continue to do so, as long as mountains last and rivers flow. This festival is an reminder for all people to pledge themselves to eternal Non-Violence in thought, word and deed

All souls are eternal, without beginning or end. Since time immemorial they wander from one birth to another. The soul of Lord Mahavir was also moving in cycles of births and deaths as it was enslaved by actions born out of illusions and ignorance. Our scriptures give accounts of Lord Mahavir twenty seven previous births:-





He was a prince during the birth numbers 3,16,22 and 25. Those who were in all these four births had accepted the vow of self-control. In the 23rd birth he became a supreme ruler in Mahavideh and the 18th birth was that of Vasudeva.

He earned the merits qualifying him to be a Tirthankara during the 25th birth as Nandana Muni by performing penance marked by twenty locations.

Mahavir, who was the 24th and the last Tirthankara (path finder) of the Jain faith of this era, was born some 2600 years (599BC) in Bihar, India. He has been acclaimed as one of the greatest prophets of peace and social reformation that India, or that matter, the world has ever produced.

His parents, King Siddharta and Queen Trishladevi gave him the name of Vardhaman. He grew up as a prince excelling in physical powers as well as intellectual acumen. However, at the age of thirty, he renounced the pleasures and luxuries of the palace, and also the power and prestige of kingship, and undertook a life of intense penance for more than twelve years. He spent this period in deep silence and meditation to conquer his desires, feelings and attachments. He calmly bore not only the rigours of nature but also the torments from the ignorant and mischievous among his own countrymen. Mahavir's spiritual pursuit of twelve years resulted in perfect perception, knowledge, bliss - he became self enlightened. But not content with his own personal salvation, he chose to become a great human redeemer. He spent the next thirty years showing the path of liberation, Moksha (absolute freedom) which consists of the three jewels of Jainism - right perception, knowledge and conduct. Mahavir attained nirvana (Moksha) when he died at the age of 72 (527BC)

Mahavir was not the founder of Jainism; he consolidated the faith by drawing together the teachings of the previous Tirthankaras, in particular those of his immediate predecessor -



Parshvanath. He made religion simple and natural, free from elaborate ritual complexities. His teachings reflected the internal beauty and harmony of the soul. He taught the idea of Supremacy of human life and the stressed the importance of being fearless and having a positive attitude to life.

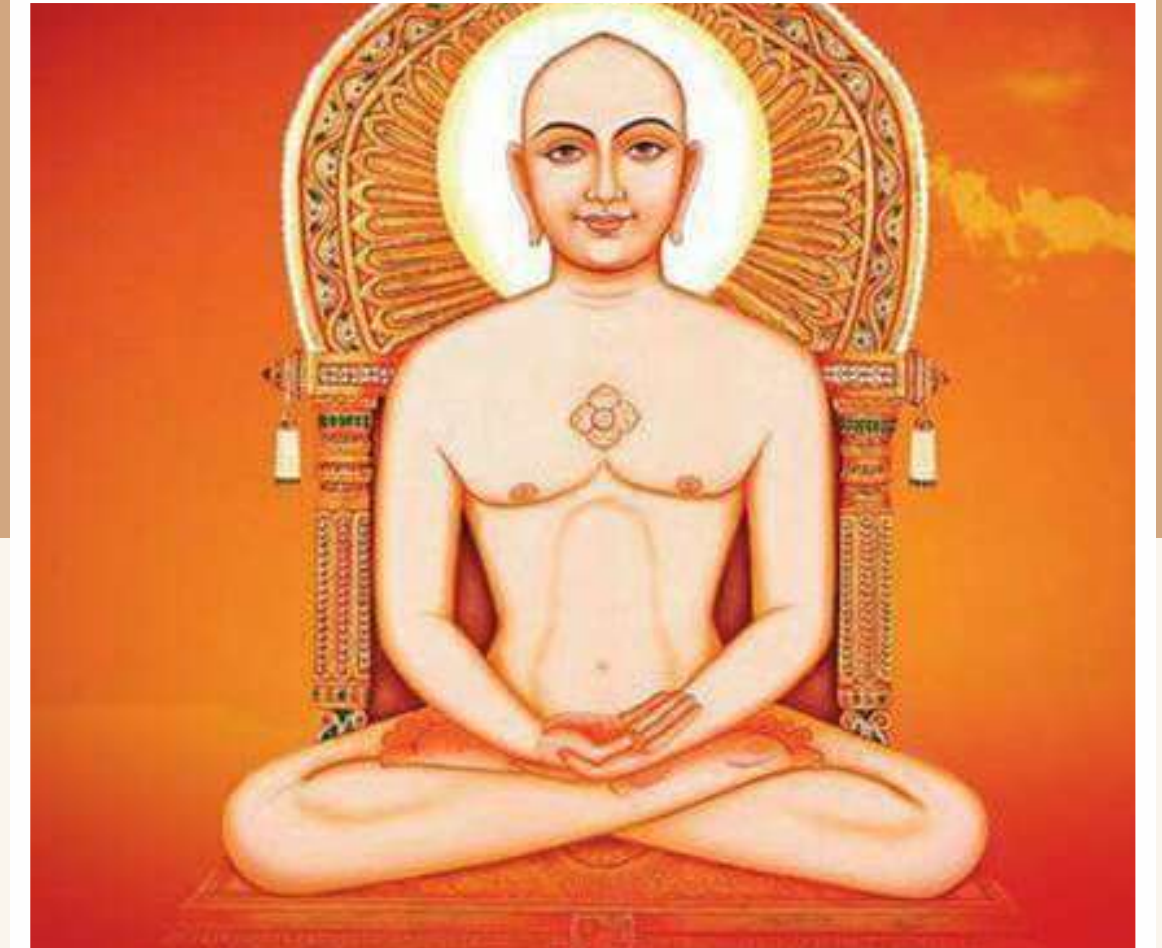


Mahavir's teachings are universal in application and eternal in their appeal. The passage of the millennia has not reduced their relevance in the slightest. On the contrary, the importance of Mahavir's message of non-violence (ahimsa), truth (satya), non-stealing (asteya), chastity (brahmacharya) and non-possession (aparigraha), which is full of universal compassion and also reflects freedom and spiritual joys of living beings, has grown immensely in modern times.

These five essential principles to achieve right conduct exhort humans to be compassionate, to exercise great care in consuming and not exploiting natural resources and to desist from polluting the environment. He showed us the path of careful consumption and the need to practice moderation in the use of resources by adopting carefulness and restraint and setting limits to our possessions of durable and non-durable assets.

Compassion is the noblest manifestation of humaneness. It is the merciful, sympathetic feeling and pity for the sufferings or distress of another, with the innate desire to help or save. It is an important aspect of human nature, part of the human mind. It is one of the good qualities of a human being.

Mahavir was a beacon of compassion and his every action throughout his life was motivated by compassion. His entire life is an example how to be always compassionate. Mahavir said



“One must be most compassionate and friendly towards all living beings.”

Living beings according to the Jaina philosophy as propounded by him includes mobile living beings with 2 to 5 senses and living beings with 1 sense that are water (apo-kayika); earth (prthvi-kayika); air (vayu-kayika), fire (tejo-kayika) and plants (vanaspati-kaya)

Mahavir taught to eliminate the concept of possessiveness and replace it with the concept of trusteeship of material things, wealth and environment. He exemplified this virtue when he renounced his wealth completely and led the life of an ascetic to attain salvation.

Mahavir's philosophy comprising of the three A's of:

- **Ahimsa,**
- **Anekantavada**
- **Aparigraha**

can provide solutions to many of our modern day problems.



- **Ahimsa** – (Non – Violence) : Respect, Reverence, Compassion, forgiveness in thoughts, words and deeds towards all living beings
- **Anekantavada** – (Multi -faceted Reality) : Respect for and seeking multiple view points. Truth has many facets. Jains encourage dialogue and harmony with other communities and faiths.
- **Aparigraha** – (Non – Possessiveness) : Balancing our needs, desires and possessions while staying detached from these possessions.

CONCLUSION:

- **“The nature of all living beings is to be happy. Everyone wishes to eliminate pain so that he/she can be happy forever”**
- **“One who knows the demerit of destruction of plants and trees, knows the merit of reverence for nature”**
- **“One who neglects or disregards the existence of earth, fire, water and vegetation disregards his own existence which is entwined with them”**

The above truths proclaimed by Mahavir are perhaps some of the highest saving principles of human life. The modern man which seeks to exploit and destroy every kind of living species for his own advantage, is in danger of landing the entire human species in the deathly peril.

During this year’s Mahavir Janma Kalyanak celebrations, let us contemplate on Lord Mahavir’s teachings which even after 2600 years have a greater relevance in this modern age by creating:-

- **Universal friendliness and peace through non-violence**
- **Non exploitation of our environment Parasparopagraho jivan —**
- **(All life is bound together by mutual support & interdependence)**
- **Social patterns without exploitation and violence**
- **Responsibilities for one’s actions and their consequences**
- **Compassion for all living beings**
- **Inner peace and happiness**

BY KISHOR B SHAH

