

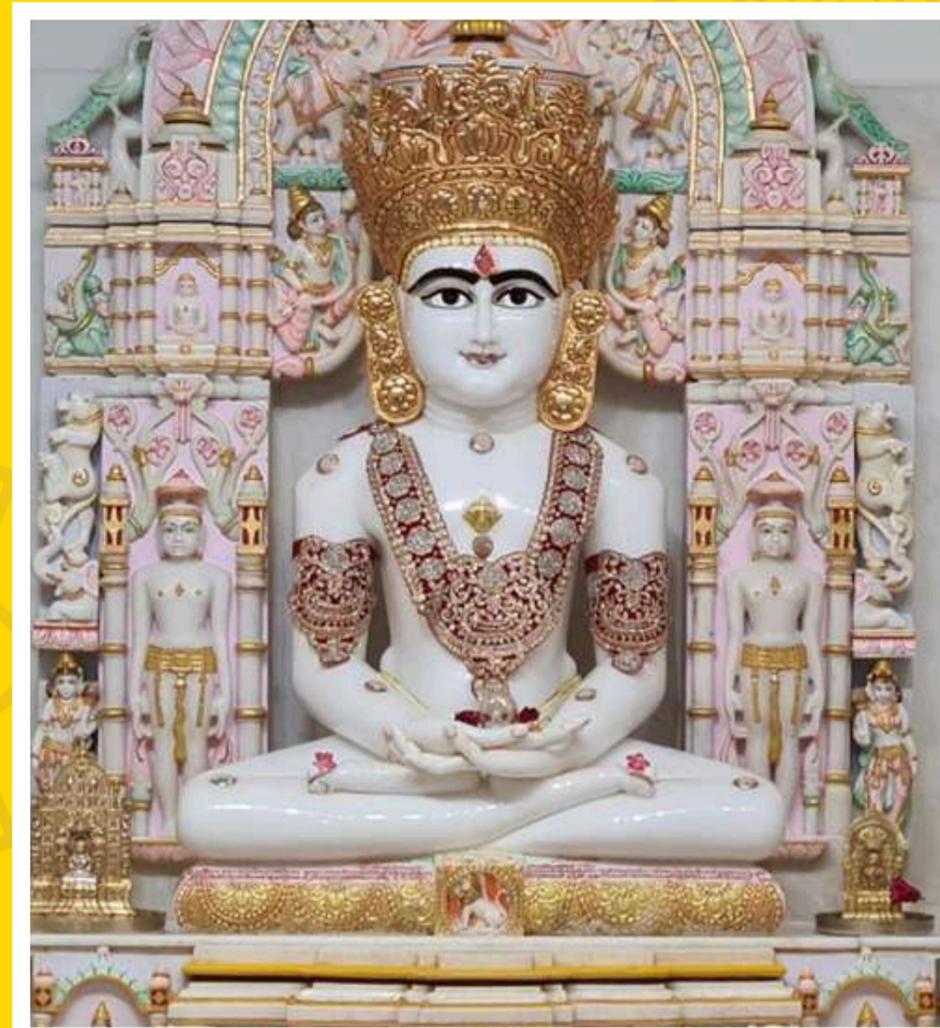
Mahavirswami Nirvan Kalyanak

Aaso Vad Chaudas

On this day, Jains try &
do at least one 'mala' reciting:

“Om Hrim Shri Mahavirswami Parangatay Namah”

Mahavirswami Bhagwan
Shikharbandhi Jinalaya
Oshwal Centre



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

Mahavir life was full of significant events that resulted in achieving Moksha – liberation. His life was full of compassion, truth, ahimsa, and austerity which were aided by meditation of the highest order and off the purest form culminating in the attainment of Nirvan. In doctrines preached by him exist the path to salvation. What they require is their proper assimilation, and translation into action. His message of Ahimsa, Anekantavada, and acceptance of the spirit of austerity, speech and action can usher in era of eternal bliss. His message is eternally relevant for mankind as a whole

Around the 6th century BC, India's religious and social conditions had taken a very ugly turn. The management of the caste system consisting of Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, and Shudras had deteriorated and had lost its influence as a social order system and had become a system of supremacy by Brahims and oppression of the Shudras and women. Animal sacrifices were widespread in the name of religion, which was manipulated for the purpose of power and domination.

Under such conditions Mahavir was born in 599 BC in Kuṇḍagrama, a magnificent city in the heart of Vaishali kingdom near modern day Patna, Bihar, India. Due to the increasing prosperity of their Kingdom soon after the child's birth his parents King Saddharta and Queen Trishladevi gave him the name of Vardhaman – which means 'ever increasing'. Being a son of nobility he had access to a variety of worldly pleasures and comforts but two years after the death of his parents and with the permission of his elder brother, at the age of 30 he left his family and royal household gave up all his possessions and became a Jain monk in search of a solution for life.

Mahavir undertook a life of intense penance and spent the next twelve and half years 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. He went without food for long periods. Mahavir's spiritual pursuit of twelve years resulted in perfect perception, knowledge, bliss – he became self-enlightened.



Mahavir spent the next 30 years travelling around India barefoot and without clothes preaching to the people the internal truth he realised the ultimate objective of his teaching is how one can attain total freedom from the cycle of birth misery and death and achieve the permanent blissful state known as Nirvana



At the age of 72, at the request of King Hastipal, Mahavir spend his last (42nd) monsoon-stay "Chaturmas" at Pavapuri (Apapapuri). He took shelter in the office of King Hastipal's talati (village accountant).

When about three and a half months passed Mahavir foresaw his end approaching and informed everyone about it. As soon as the news spread, Pavapuri was plunged into gloom. Nature also felt the impending doom, as it were, and looked crestfallen at the thought of Mahavir's impending departure. The cognoscenti said, *"Be happy! God's a liberated soul now! The shackles will break, and He will attain complete freedom"*. The common people began to grieve: Alas! The Lord will be no more, and we will not be able to see him anymore. When will we hear his divine speech again? We are trying to dispel the encircling clouds of gloom but in vain. Is it true that God will disappear from our midst for ever?

The devotees were all grieving. *"It is only yesterday that he came in our midst and today he will be on his eternal voyage,"* they said. They were not in a position to rejoice. How could they when Bhagwan Mahavir was to leave this world? They argued, *"For him death is not a matter to be grieved over but how can we be happy at the thought of his death? A night is a night, howsoever bright the moon may be"*.

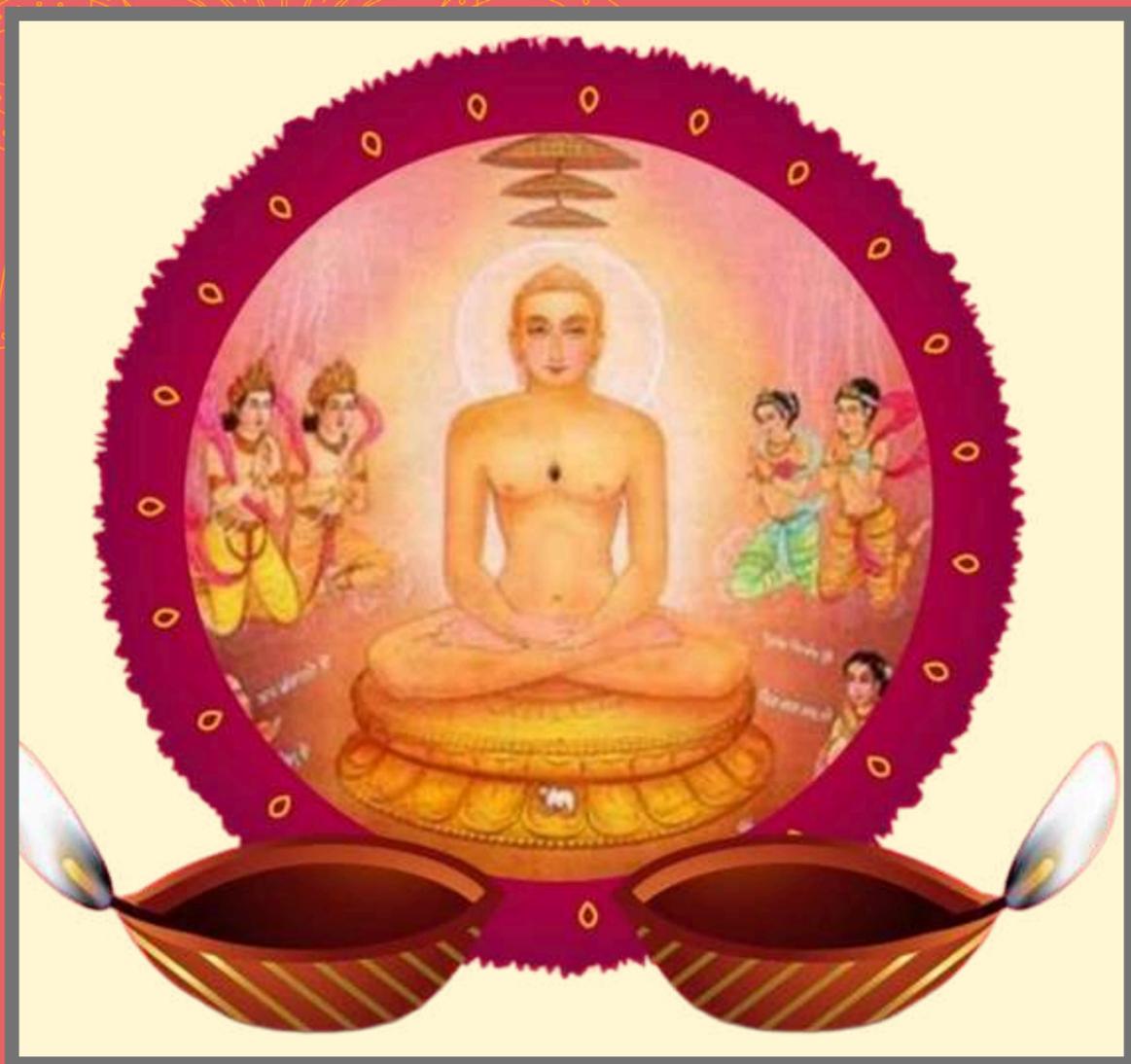


On The fifteenth day of the dark half of the month of Kartik, Mahavir was observing two days fast. He sat in the Samavasaran and gave his last discourse – for 16 Praharas continuously i.e. two days and two nights without any break. These final discourse are now known as Uttaradhyayan Sutra, Vipak Sutra. Mahavir also forecasted the horrible future of fifth and sixth Aras of present Avasarpini.

During the discourse, the world was bathed in the words of wisdom emanating from his Mahavir lips. Indra, the chief of Gods, who had prepared for God's death lost equanimity and was sad too. The very thought of Mahavir's death pained him to no ends. Indra, on behalf of the anxious people, asked, *"Lord, your conception, birth, renunciation and attainment of absolute knowledge were all in the Hastottara Nakshatra?"* Mahavir nodded his head in agreement.

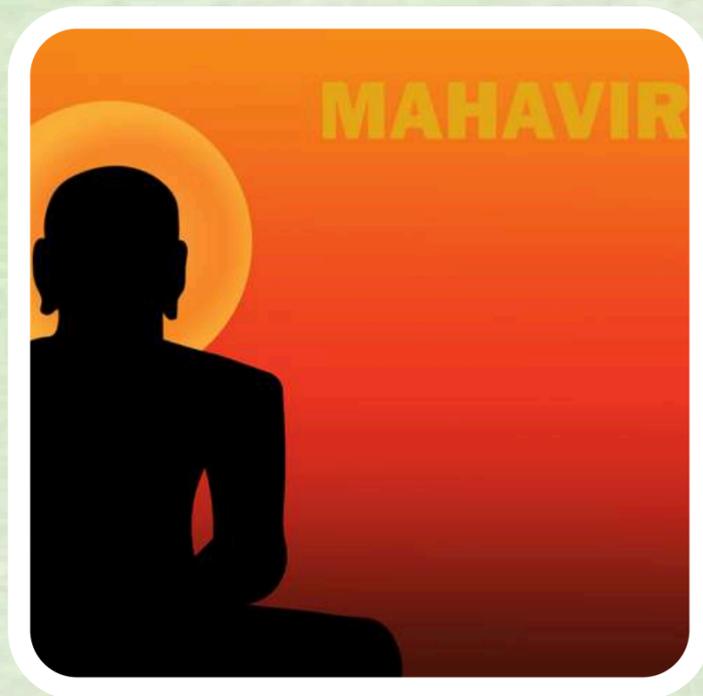
"Your departure coincides with the entry of Bhasmagraha in the Nakshatra. Does it indicate the impending misfortunes?", asked Indra. *"Yes"* said Mahavir. *"You are omnipotent and omniscient; can't you delay the moment of your departure?"* asked Indra anxiously. He thought that if that moment passed then Mahavir would have a new lease of life.

Bhagwan, thereupon, said in a grave tone: *"Indraraj, lust blinds one. You love my body and hence your request. You are knowledgeable and yet you forget that no one - God, demon or a human being - can extend the lifeline by even a fraction of a second. The mission for which I was born as a human being is accomplished and a moment more here is a great burden to me. See Indra, ther is spring blooming and there is new dawn of Sat, Chit, Anand. Welcome it."*



The disciples of Mahavir were trying to console the congregation of people by saying, Mahavir will not attain Nirvan (liberation) now; We know it for sure, "How?" asked the people. They said, "we remember Mahavir once said to his favourite disciple, Gautam Swami, that he would not think of leaving the world without him. Gautam Swami has been sent out by Mahavir for a religious discourse and he will not leave the world in his absence. Have patience." The people, however, on hearing these words, kept quiet. Meanwhile Mahavir was preparing for the ultimate journey. He transcended Badar Manoyog and Vachan-yog and rested in Kayayoga the last vestige of life on this planet. The congregation looked, with rapt attention, at his face which shone very brightly. Everyone appeared tense, anxious. At last Mahavir transcended Kayayoga, and a luminous circle of light appeared. The dark night of amavasya brightened and whispers were heard: Mahavir Bhagwan has **ATTAINED NIRVAN**. The lamp, which had shed its luminous light and enlightened many a soul had burnt out. Indra, who had regained his composure, said, "**Light the lamps. God has attained nirvana.**"

Pages 3-5 - Adapted from an article by Kumarpal Desai



Mahavir attained liberation through sustained purusartha in the face of great adversity.

Mahavir's conduct and his teachings showed us the path of liberation. He was not a philosopher. He lived his truth. His conduct reflected his philosophy. Mahavir believed that karmas can be shed only through appropriate conduct. He realised that each soul is unique, separate and distinct entity.

His life was a study in equanimity and calm. His decisions were well thought out, his message was clear. Harm no one and no one will harm you. Realise the nature of reality. Learn *bheda Jnana*, the art of distinguishing between the permanent and the temporary, between the soul and the non-soul. Realise that one substance cannot do more than become a catalyst for another substance's modifications. Ultimately, each substances' modifications rely on its own dharma, or true nature. Do not run after temporal pleasures. Your stay in this world is fleeting. An orderly life is the base for spiritual development.

Mahavir's messages of Ahimsa, Anekantavada, and acceptance of the essence of austerity, speech and action are relevant today and will be forever.