



अहिंसा परमो धर्मः*

International School for Jain Studies

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Celebrating 2,550th Nirvāṇa (Liberation) Anniversary of Lord Mahāvīra

Dear Esteemed Scholars,

Wishing you good health, happiness and peace.

On the auspicious occasion of Diwali/Deepawali 2,550 years ago, Lord Mahāvīra, the 24th and latest *tīrthaṅkara* of Jainism, attained liberation (state of *mokṣa*) at Pāvāpurī, Bihar (India). Jain community worldwide is celebrating and commemorating the year (Diwali, November 12th, 2023 to November 11th, 2024) as Mahāvīra Nirvāṇa year with great fervor and grandeur.

Lord Mahāvīra, distinguished by numerous virtues, particularly his unwavering commitment to the principle of nonviolence (*ahimsā*) and non-absolutism (*anekāntvāda*), self-effort and restraint to attain lasting happiness for individuals, communities and the world at large. He was also one of the greatest Social Engineers and reformers of his time and practiced what he taught.

As a part of our continued effort to promote academic studies of Jainism, we are reaching out to you with a request to undertake activities involving critical and academic exploration of various facets of his life, his era, his teachings and their contemporary relevance in 21st century society inflicted with wars, climate change and arrogance of some to dominate the world. Towards this end, we encourage you to consider organizing courses, classes, classroom discussions, research papers, seminars, conferences, publications, research projects, and fieldwork centered around him and his teachings. We are attaching a list of potential study and research topics related to Lord Mahāvīra for your perusal.

We eagerly await your participation and insights as we collectively delve into his wisdom and legacy to shed light on his profound teachings and their significance in our modern world for greater and sustainable peace, prosperity and happiness substantiated by our research and experiences. We offer our assistance in sharing efforts in organizing such activities and cataloguing your contributions for reference later.

Warm regards,

scjain

Sulekh Jain

Shugan C. Jain

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Encl: as above

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* Non-Violence is the Supreme Spiritual Value (Dharma)



Topics suggested for education / research / seminars / talks

Lord Mahāvīra: A great crusader of *ahimsā* (nonviolence), *anekānta* (non-absolutism), *saṁyama* (self-restraint), *aparigraha* (limiting possessions) and possessiveness for enhancing happiness of individuals/communities and the world at large. He was also a great *yogī*, social engineer and organizer of community, logician and scientist. He never claimed himself to be a reincarnation of God or any other supreme being.

Some of the potential areas for research / teaching / seminars and publications suggested are:

1. Doctrine

- Ahimsā (nonviolence): Concept and its essentiality for enhancing happiness for self as well as others (non-harming/hurting/killing of any forms of living beings).
- Anekānta (non-absolutism): Concept and its essentiality for gaining right knowledge (to minimize conflicts through tolerance, and reconciliation and enhance co-existence)
- Aparigraha (non-attachment/possession): Concept and its essentiality for enhancing gaining right knowledge (to develop feelings and practice of minimizing bondage/possessions and maximize sharing own possessions with others)
- Śrama (Self effort): Concept and its essentiality to achieve immediate and long-term objectives of life and thereafter.
- Saṁyama (Self-restraint) Concept to minimize harmful inclinations and focus on continued effort to enhance peace and sustainability (minimize waste)
- Concept of soul and Karma doctrine: As you sow, so shall you reap.
- Ratnatraya (Trio of jewels) i.e. rational vision-knowledge-conduct together as the path to attain liberation

2. Lifestyle and practices (for minimization of violence)

- Equality of all living beings to minimize discrimination and violence due to caste, creed, gender, status etc. Living beings help each other (*parasparopagraho jīvānām*).
- Simultaneously, keeping different inclinations and capabilities of individuals, organised four fold creed/sangh.
- Nonviolent food and eating practices
- Abolition of violence in religious practices/rituals
- Observing abstinences



- Daily observances (*avaśyakas*)
- Institution of vows: *aṇuvrata* / *mahāvratā*
- Death with equanimity
- His walk and talk were the same. He started preached after attaining omniscience and not before

3. Social Engineering

- Democracy: Every living being has the right and potential to attain the highest. Human rights and duties
- Non-discrimination: Forerunner for elimination of racial biases, caste system, and slavery, subjugation and human-trafficking, and cruelty to women.
- Nonviolent communication: Use of local language and doctrine of Conditional Dialectic (*syādvāda*)
- Improve/correct self before others

4. Others

- Important world personalities practicing/preaching his doctrine and lifestyle
- Scientific basis of his teachings
- Implications in Organization and Management, administration, health care, judiciary etc.
- Environment protection / ecology
- Animal rights
- His life and principles as depicted in art and artifacts.
- etc. etc.