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Speak Up

JAIN YOGA: A HOLISTIC PRACTICE FOR LIBERATION

Gyapti Jain

jgyapti@gmail.com

June 21st is celebrated as the International Day of Yoga worldwide. Yoga is essentially an Indian scientific system and the Jain philosophy talks a great deal of Jain yoga. Jain Yoga is an ancient spiritual practice rooted in Jain philosophy aiming to achieve liberation of the soul from the cycle of birth and death.

This liberation is called *kevalajñāna* in the Jain philosophy and *nirvāṇa* in the Buddhist philosophy, whereas Yoga philosophy recognizes it by the name of *samādhi*. Where the whole world is confused and restless in the darkness of materialism and is burning in the fire of internal and external violence, only the great principles like *ahimsā* and *anekānta* created in the laboratory of spirituality in the form of yoga and meditation can illuminate the path of eternal happiness to the world. From Ādiyogī Ṛṣabhadeva to the twenty-fourth Tīrthamkara Mahāvīra, everyone has followed the postures and mudras of meditation-yoga to attain liberation. While Jain monks have inspired to pave the way for self-realization through the science of yoga in the texts discussing both dogmas and spirituality, Patañjali also described the path of yoga as the ultimate path by saying *yogaḥ citta nivṛtti*.

Though there is not much difference in the practices of *aṣṭāṅga yoga* and the practices of Jainism, there is definitely a difference in the philosophy contained in them that explains, according to both traditions, that the desired goal cannot be achieved by mere physical practice



of yoga and meditation without understanding the true nature of the self and the world. The practice integrates physical postures (*āsanas*), breath control (*prāṇāyāma*), meditation (*dhyāna*), and ethical conduct to cultivate spiritual growth, self-realization, and inner peace.

In Jain scripture, the *Tattvārtha Sūtra*, yoga is defined as – knowing and focusing on one object for a longer time and forgetting the rest of the things (*ekāgra-cintā-nirodho dhyānam*) that leads to the attainment of the soul. This definition parallels the classical definition of yoga in Patañjali's Yoga Sutra which is – yoga is the cessation of the fluctuations of the mind, emphasizing the stilling of mental fluctuations and the realization of the ultimate truth.

Jain Yoga encompasses various practices, including:

1. **Āsanās:** Physical postures promoting physical and mental well-being to prepare for meditation.
2. **Prāṇāyāma:** Breath control techniques to balance the life force and calm the mind.
3. **Dhyāna:** Meditation on the supreme soul to attain spiritual insight.
4. **Ahimsā:** Ethical conduct, non-violence, and compassion towards all living beings.
5. **Aparigraha:** Non-possessiveness and detachment from worldly attachments.
6. **Satya:** Truthfulness and honesty in thought, word, and deed.
7. **Śauca:** Purity of body, mind, and speech.
8. **Tapas:** Austerity and self-discipline to purify the soul.

The ultimate goal of Jain Yoga is to achieve liberation of the soul from karma and rebirth. By embracing Jain Yoga, practitioners can:

- Cultivate spiritual growth and self-realization
- Attain inner peace and liberation from suffering
- Develop compassion, non-violence, and ethical conduct
- Purify the body, mind, and speech



- Achieve physical and mental well-being
- Experience profound growth and transformation

In conclusion, Jain Yoga offers a holistic and transformative practice, integrating physical, mental, and spiritual disciplines to attain spiritual liberation. By embracing this ancient wisdom, practitioners can experience profound growth, inner peace, and ultimate freedom.

