

# India (Jainism)

## Practices

Jainism is not a Pagan religion; however some ideas from Jainism have been adopted by many Pagans. Specifically the notion that the memories associated with a person somehow survives reincarnation is held by many Neo-Pagans. Additionally, many Neo-Pagans see the purpose of human life as recognizing their own natural divinity.

The great philosophers of Jainism evolved a view of the universe as material and permanent, in contrast to the Buddhist idea of the illusionary nature of the world.

One of the distinct aspects of Jainism is the five vows of non-injury or nonviolence; speaking the truth; taking only that which is given; chastity; and detachment from place, persons, and things.

In Jainism, death leads ultimately to the liberation of the soul into an individual state of total knowledge and bliss, although this process may take several cycles of death and rebirth. The aim of Jain spiritual endeavor is to liberate the soul (jiva), which is believed to leave the physical body with one's karmic matter.<sup>1</sup>

Upon death, a Jain's body is cremated and not buried. However, in the case of stillbirth, the child is buried. Cremation is to be done as early as possible, preferably within twenty-four hours.

The body should be placed with the head pointed towards the North and cremated after the ceremony. A lit lamp know as a Deeva should be placed on the right side of the head and kept burning until the body is taken for cremation. The lamp has a cotton wick that is soaked in clarified butter (ghee) symbolizing divinity. For Jains an independent Soul resides in each and every living things, therefore as much as possible try not to make use of live flowers.

Those attending the ritual should dress in simple black attire. After paying respects to the dead the men and women sit separately.

Often at the beginning of the funeral, after the opening words, the "Namokar Mantra" is recited 3 to 5 times. (A version of this can be found at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F3GBg60rUOI>). This mantra is considered the most sacred Jainism prayer and pays respect to those humans who have reached the stage of religious progress above that of the layperson.

A traditional part of the funeral is the Confession of Sins or Mistakes. Sins are considered mistakes made in ignorance that cause harm to another. Traditionally the Kshamaapanaa Sutra (forgiveness mantra) is recited.

When the funeral is finished a meal may be served either at the funeral home or at another location. As much as possible, food/vegetables grown underground and serving the food at night should be avoided. When visiting the family it is appropriate to dress in white.

After the funeral close family members and close friends who have handled the body, should not participate in any religious ceremony at the temple alter (vedi in Gabhara) for three days. They should also delay auspicious events like marriages. They may however arrange for religious ceremonies to be.

## Deities and Important Concepts

- Jains do not have gods or goddesses as we might traditionally think of them. Instead there are liberated souls that can be described as supreme souls — paramatman.
- Jina means 'spiritual victor' while Tirthamkara means 'maker of a ford'. The first term describes how a person has successfully battled his natural attachment to the world to achieve enlightenment. The

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<sup>1</sup> What's a Jainism Funeral Like [http://wiki.answers.com/Q/What\\_is\\_a\\_Jainism\\_funeral\\_like](http://wiki.answers.com/Q/What_is_a_Jainism_funeral_like)

second term highlights how the enlightened person has built a ford across the river of rebirth so others can follow him to liberation.<sup>2</sup>

### **Modern Adaptations**

- Use rose petals or other things that have fallen naturally from a plant without killing the plant.
- Display the body with the head pointed North. The body should be cremated after the rite.
- Display a lite oil lamp near the right hand side of the deceaseds head. Explain that the lamp represents the divine spark that exists after death.
- Talk about the journey to recognize the divine in ourselves. How death is a part of this journey.
- Share a meal during day light hours that does not use any food that is grown under the ground.
- Visit the family of the deceased dressed in white.
- Donate money to an organization that saves the lives of animals.
- Pay homage to all great spiritual teachers.

### **Sample Readings**

#### ***Namokar Mantra***

(These five salutations evaporate and eradicate negative influences. This is the most sacred and auspicious prayer of all Jaina prayers.

With some versions 'Om' is recited at the beginning of the first four lines.

Notes on pronunciations:

- 'A' is pronounced as 'u' as in 'but'
- 'AA' is a long 'aw' sound as in 'saw')

(OM) NAMO ARIHANTAANAM

I bow to the Jinas (Arhants) the Perfected, yet Embodied Souls, possessed of Infinite Consciousness, Energy and Happiness;

(OM) NAMO SIDDHAANAM

I bow to the Perfect, Pure (Free of Karmic Attachments), Liberated Souls (Siddhas), those who have attained Moksha,;

(OM) NAMO AAYARIYAANAM

I bow to the Ascetic Leaders (Aacharyas) of the Jaina Order;

(OM) NAMO UVAJJHAAYAANAM

I bow to the Ascetic Preceptors/Teachers (Upadhyayas);

NAMO LOAE SAVVA SAAHUUNAM

I bow to all the Jaina Ascetics (Monks/Nuns) in the world devoted to Purification of Soul/Self.

ESO PANCHA NAMOKAARO

SAVVA PAAVA PANAASANO

MANGALANAM CHA SAVVESIM

PADHAMAM HAVAI MANGALAM

#### ***Kshamaapanaa Sutra***

KHAAMEMII SAVVE JIVAA

SAVVE JIVAA KHAMANTU ME

METTI ME SAVVE BHUESUU

VERAM MAJJHAM

NA KENAI.

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<sup>2</sup> Jainism FAQs <http://beta.jainpedia.org/resources/jainism-faqs/contentpage/1.html>

I grant forgiveness to all living beings;  
and may all of them forgive me.  
I have friendship with all living beings;  
and hostility toward none.

### ***Words of Assurance***

Anyone who recognizes their divine self is a new creation.  
The old life has gone; a new life has begun.  
Friends, believe in the truth and nature of the indestructible, pure Soul; and be at peace.

### ***Prayer for Sending Forth***

Living beings are comprised of two substances: material particles and Soul.  
The bodies of living beings are mortal, formed from particles of matter.  
And to particles of matter these bodies must return.  
This is an inescapable law of nature (or 'of the universe').  
The Soul is immortal.  
Thus even in death we recognize that life continues, with opportunity for continued and increased happiness.  
May the Soul of \_\_\_\_\_ be now in a place where there is neither pain nor sorrow nor dying. Where it can continue to make progress toward Moksha/Liberation; when there is eternal bliss and forevermore freedom from the suffering of the cycle of birth, death and rebirth.  
Shuddha A<sup>ˆ</sup>tm<sup>ˆ</sup>a, Shuddha A<sup>ˆ</sup>tm<sup>ˆ</sup>a, Shuddha A<sup>ˆ</sup>tm<sup>ˆ</sup>.  
Pure Soul, Pure Soul, Pure Soul

### **Resources**

- Jain Funeral Practices & Observances

This is an excellent guide with useful tips for anyone dealing with a funeral.

[http://c.ymcdn.com/sites/www.jaina.org/resource/resmgr/Jain\\_Funeral\\_Procedures\\_0083.pdf](http://c.ymcdn.com/sites/www.jaina.org/resource/resmgr/Jain_Funeral_Procedures_0083.pdf)