



LESSON PLAN 4

Jain Worship, Jain Sects and Festivals

This lesson plan looks at how and where Jains worship, the different sects within the faith and the festivals Jains celebrate.



Reading and understanding the following resources will help in planning your lessons on Jainism:

- 1) www.jainpedia.org/resources/jainism-faqs.html
- 2) www.learnjainism.org
- 3) www.youtube.com/user/JAINpedia
- 4) *Discover Jainism & Jain Tales* books
(<http://schools.jainpedia.org/books/where-to-buy.html>)

Worship

Worship is important in Jainism but can take different forms. It can be the quiet repetition of a mantra or chant or more elaborate puja where images are decorated for a ceremonial ritual. Worship is more about personal spiritual development than respect for a God.

Jains worship at temples or at home. A Jain temple is called 'derasar' or 'mandir'.

Jain Sects

Jains are divided into two major sects. These are the Digambara (meaning sky clad) sect and the Svetambara (meaning white clad) sect. Both agree on the basic beliefs of Jainism. Their disagreements are mostly about how Jain monks and nuns should live. Both sects got their names because of their different ideas about the clothes that monks and nuns should wear.

The Digambara sect is stricter than the Svetambaras.

Jain Festivals

Jains festivals have great importance. Festivals provide an opportunity for Jains to worship together and they are often a time when communities come together. Some Jain festivals celebrate an aspect from the lives of the Tirthankaras.

The major festivals include:

1) Mahavir Janma Kalyanak (Mahavir Jayanti)

This is Lord Mahavir's birthday and comes in March or April.

2) Paryushan

Paryushan is an annual 8-day festival for Svetambara Jains to think about their faults, to ask for forgiveness and to find ways to live their lives better. This normally takes place in the month of August or September.

During this time, Jains engage in lots of religious activities, go to the temple and read religious books. On the fifth day of this festival, Jains view the 14 beautiful dreams of Mother Trishala. On the last day, Jains say “Michchha mi Dukkadam” to all their family and friends. “Michchha mi Dukkadam” means “I am asking for forgiveness for anything I may have done to hurt you, and I forgive you too.”

During this time, Jains practise self-control as much as possible by fasting or giving up something that they really enjoy i.e. eating chocolates.

3) Das Lakshana Parva

Das Lakshana Parva is an annual Digambara festival of 10 days that is celebrated after Paryushan. During the Das Lakshana Parva festival, Jains focus on an important virtue every day. It starts with forgiveness, followed by nine other virtues like truth, self-control, not being greedy, and being humble.

4) Diwali

Jains also celebrate Diwali or the 'Festival of Lights'. Jains celebrate this festival because this is the day when Lord Mahavira attained liberation. Jains do not use fireworks to celebrate Diwali as fireworks kill insects and other living beings. Jains celebrate this festival at the temple through various activities.

Classroom Activities

Worship

- 1) Show pupils the images of Jain temples on the Learn Jainism website, found in the 'Resources' section under Image bank:
www.learnjainism.org/resources/image-bank/worship-and-community.html
- 2) Please consult the Learn Jainism website for contact details of the nearest temple your class can visit:
www.learnjainism.org/resources/places-to-visit.html
- 3) Discuss with your class how you can leave the world behind during worship.

Jain Sects

- 1) Read these articles on JAINpedia:
 - Jain sects: www.jainpedia.org/themes/principles/sects.html
 - Monastic equipment: www.jainpedia.org/themes/practices/monks-and-nuns/monastic-equipment.html
- 2) Go to your Resource box and:
 - watch the video on how to use it: www.learnjainism.org/teaching-jainism/for-teachers/resource-box.html
 - look at the objects it contains. Use the monk and nun statues and explain to the class what Shwetambar monks and nuns are. Compare this to the Digambar or 'sky-clad' monks who renounce clothes and all worldly possessions.
- 3) Pictures of Jain sects and practices are on the Learn Jainism website, found in the 'Resources' section under Image bank:
www.learnjainism.org/resources/image-bank/beliefs-and-practices.html

Festivals

- 1) Read these articles on JAINpedia:
 - Festivals: www.jainpedia.org/themes/practices/festivals.html
 - Paruyshan: www.jainpedia.org/themes/practices/festivals/paryusan.html
 - Dasha-lakshana-parvan:
www.jainpedia.org/themes/practices/festivals/dasa-laksana-parvan.html
- 2) Focus on the festival of Paryushan and ask your pupils to describe a time when they have forgiven someone.
- 3) Using 'circle time' ask the pupils to share a situation where they are angry with someone or something and ask them to try and forgive them aloud.