

Jainism, the oldest living Religion

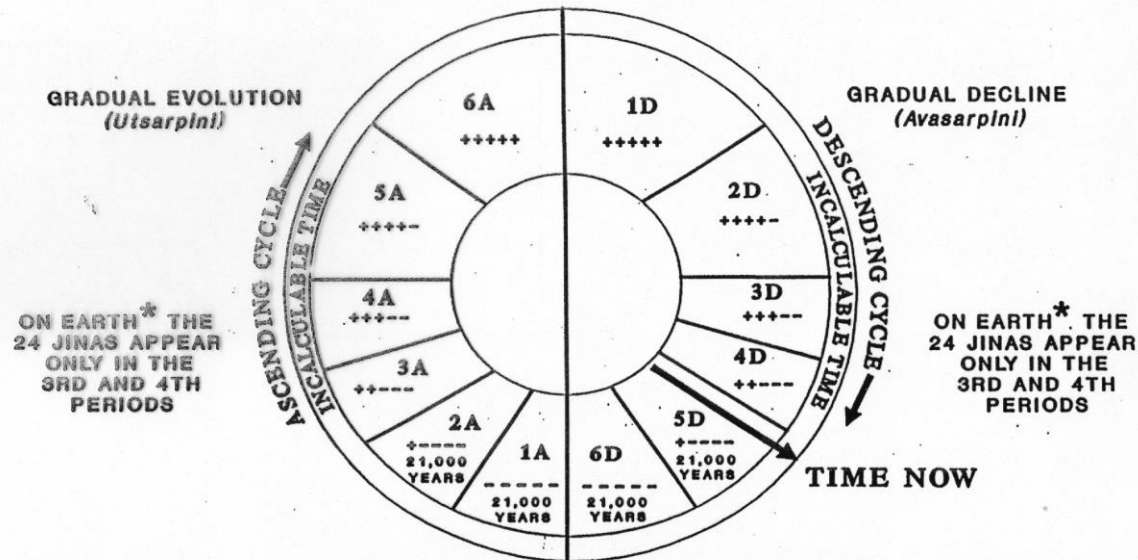
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According to Jain scriptures the universe was never created, nor will it ever cease to exist. Time is divided into Utsarpini (Progressive Time Cycle) and Avsarpini (Regressive Time Cycle). Utsarpini and Avsarpini together constitute one Time Cycle (Kalachakra). Every Utsarpini and Avsarpini is divided into six unequal periods known as Eras. During the Utsarpini half cycle, humanity develops from its worst to its best. During the Avsarpini half-cycle, these notions deteriorate from the best to the worst. Jains believe that we are currently in the fifth Era of the Avsarpini phase, with approximately 19,000 years until the next Era. After this Avsarpini phase, the Utsarpini phase will begin, continuing the infinite repetition of the Kalachakra.

THE COSMIC WHEEL OF TIME

(Kalpa)

ETERNALLY REVOLVING AND DIVIDING TIME INTO TWO RECURRING 1/2 CYCLES.



* ON EARTH, WHICH IS PART OF THE MIDDLE WORLDS, FINAL LIBERATION (MOKSHA) IS ONLY POSSIBLE IN THE 3RD AND 4TH PERIODS. IN OTHER PARTS OF THE MIDDLE WORLDS, THERE IS ALWAYS A JINA SOMEWHERE, WHO CAN TEACH THE PATH OF SALVATION AND MAKE LIBERATION POSSIBLE THERE.

- According to the scriptures, 24 Tirthankaras take birth in each half cycle. Bhagavan Rishabha was the first in the present half cycle and Bhagvan Vardhman was the 24th. The names of the 24 Tirthankars in the past half cycle as well as the next half cycle have also been mentioned in the scriptures. The name of first Tirthankara of the present half cycle Rishabha has been clearly mentioned in Manusmriti as the first Jina at the beginning of the Yuga. His name is also mentioned in Yajurveda.
- Names of Rishbha, Suparshva and Neminatha have been mentioned in Yajurveda.
- Arishatnemi is also mentioned in Rigveda.

अष्टमो मरुदेव्यां तु नाभेर्जातः उरूक्रमः । दर्शयन् कर्म
वीराणां सुरासुरनमस्कृतः । नीतित्रयस्य कर्ता यो, युगादौ
प्रथमो जिनः ॥

मनुस्मृति

aṣṭamo marudevyām tu nābherjitah urukramah |
darśayan karmavīrānām surāśura-namaskṛtah |
nītitrayasya kartā yo yugadau prathamo jinaḥ ||

In the beginning of the age (yuga) was born the first Jina to Marudevi from the eighth Nābhi Manu, who was the hero of action, saluted by the gods and demons and propagated the ethics and rules of punishment. Similar description is found in the Bhāgavata Purāṇa. Not only do the verses conform to the tradition mentioned above but also give the details of advice which Ṛṣabha gave to his sons and which is consistent with the principles of Jainism.

In the Yajurveda, there are references to the three Tīrthaṅkaras viz. Ṛṣabha, Supārśva and Neminātha in cantoes 25 and 92 respectively:

‘Om namo arhato, Ṛṣabho, om Ṛṣabhah pavitram puruhūtamaddhvaram yatīṣu nagnam paramā māha... svāhā . . . Om trātāramindram Ṛṣabham vadanti amṛtāramindram have sugatam supārīśsvamindrāmahuriti samsutam varam... Vajasyanu prasava avabhuvmachā visvābhuvanāni sarvataḥ sa nemiraja pariyati vidvāna prajānpuṣṭim vardhamanah.’

ॐ नमो अर्हतो ऋषभो, ॐ ऋषभः पवित्रं पुरुहूतमध्वरं
यतीषुनग्नं परममाह संस्तुतं वरं, शत्रुं जयंतं
पशुरिन्द्रिभहुरिति स्वाहा । ॐ त्रातारमिन्द्रं ऋषभं वदन्ति
अमृतारमिन्द्रं हवे सुगतं सुपारिश्वमिन्द्रभाहुरिति स्वाहा । ॐ
नग्नं सुधीरं दिग्वाससं बह्यगर्भं सनातनं उपैमि वीरं पुरुषं
महन्तमादित्यवर्णं तमसः परस्तात् स्वाहा ।

यजुर्वेद अध्याय २५ श्रुति १९

arhan vibhārṣi sâyākani dhanvār haniṣtam yajatm viśvarūpam
arhannidam dayase.’ (Aṣṭaka 2, Varga 7).

वामदेवशान्त्यर्थमनुविधीयते सोऽमाकं अरिष्टनेमि स्वाहा ।
अर्हन् विभर्षि सायकानि धन्वार्हन्निष्कं यजतं विश्वरूपं ।
अर्हन्निदं दयसे विश्वं भवभुवं न वा ओजायो
रुद्रनत्वदास्ति॥

ऋग्वेद अष्टक २ वर्ग ७

There is another reference in the same Veda at Aṣṭak 1,
Adhyāya 6 and Varga 16:

ॐ स्वस्तिनः . . . विधवेदाः स्वस्तिनरनाक्षर्यो अरिष्टनेमिः
स्वस्तिनो बृहस्पतिर्ददान् ।

















ऋग्वेद अष्टक १ वर्ग १६

‘Viṣavedha svastinastākya Ariṣtanemihi svastino
brhaspatiradātu...’

- The aforesaid references to Arhats and Tirthankars can only mean that these personalities must be pre-Vedic and the religion they preached was earlier than the Vedic religion. In an ancient scripture called Siribhuvalaya , it has been mentioned that there are 363 different religions and sects , but the chief Dharma is Jeeva Dharma preached by Mahavira Bhagavan and Gautama Ganadhara beneficial to all .

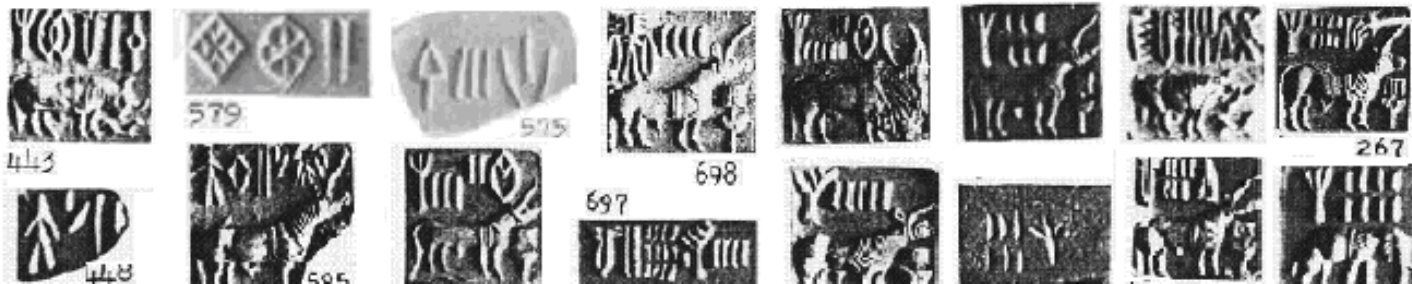
मंगलं भगवान् वीरो मंगलं भगवान् गौतुमो गणिजीवधर्मोस्तु मंगलं
मंगलं सर्व मांगल्यं सर्व कल्याणकारकं प्रधानं सर्वधर्माणां जीवं जयतु शासनं

9. Jain ethical fundamentals visible on Indus seals

The path of Jina is to progress towards [nirwana](#), which can only be reached from human (male) incarnation through austerity with the Great Vows or Mahavrats indicated by the [pichhi](#)  or peacock-feather brush held by the Jain ascetics, who observe the balance of [Nishchaya](#) and [Vyavahaar Dharm](#) indicated by two cherries  or [kawati](#) carried by the guru with renunciation  holding responsibility of guiding both [shrawak/ shrawikas](#) and the [sadhu/ aryikas](#) possessing [ratnatraya](#)  and the four [anuyogas](#)  for knowledge, having faith in  five [parameshthis](#), the six eternal  components of Universe, the seven  [tattwas](#) of the soul, the [eight karmas](#)  to be countered and the [nine padarthas](#) which are very skillfully  presented in this ethical and artistic seal depicting a text that a householder accepting self-restriction  became a yogi  and with [Ratnatraya](#)  took [Mahavrata](#)  observing the Jain ethics. Finally he took [sallekhana](#)  and ended the four [Ghati karmas](#) in this very life , thus ending his cycles of rebirths. This is shown in this seal: The seal explains symbolically all the basic themes of Jain/ [shraman](#) philosophy.



Further seals explain the ethical values of vertical lines in their symbolic texts. The lines numbering from 1 to 13 in these seals in increasing sequential order denote the Jain



fundamental ethics. One must read the ancient Jain scriptures to understand them. The values of the eight karmas, nine Padarthas, ten dharma, eleven pratimas etc. should also be noted.

evolution.¹⁹ Another seal found at Mohenjo-Daro contains a standing figure of a deity in nude form standing between the branches of a tree.

These figures are undoubtedly in conformity with the tradition and culture of Jainism. Acharya Tulsi considers that the pose of *yogāsana*, in which several figures are drawn on the seals of Mohenjo-Daro, was worked out by the Jainas, was widely known in pre-Āryan India and was borrowed much later by the Hindu ascetics.²⁰ Prof. Pran Nath Vidyālakara says that 'the inscription on the Indus seal No. 449 reads according to my decipherment, Jineswara or Jinesa (Jin-i-i-sarah).'²¹

Among the seals discovered by the archaeologists, some of them have signs of Swastik on them. Referring to them, Mrs. Guseva observes: These are 'common in the symbols of Jainism. Swastik is the symbolic sign of the 7th priest (Tīrthaṅkara), Supārśva. The Jainas consider that there were 23 Tīrthaṅkaras before Mahāvīra and the middle part forms the sign of the 18th Tīrthaṅkara Ara. This sign is always drawn in manuscripts and in the ornaments of the Jaina temples

- Acknowledgement: Indus Seal deciphered by Dr. Snehrani Jain
- T. K. Tukol , Compendium of Jainism page 15
- According to Prof. Pran Nath Vidyalankara , seal No. 449 reads Jineswara or Jinesha
- Mrs Guseva attributes Swastik symbol to Jainism.
- Detailed references of both foreign and Indian scholars about the existence of Jain religion before Vedic period has been given in the book “Jainism, The Oldest Living Religion „written by late Dr. Jyoti Prasad Jain in the year 1951 and republished by P V Research Institute, Varanasi in the year 1988.
- Dr. Hermann Jacobi : In conclusion let me assert my conviction that Jainism is an original system, quite distinct, and independent from all others

- A.A. MacDonnel: The antiquity of Jainism goes back to a period prior to the origin of Brahmanism itself.
- Maj.Gen.J. G.R Forlong: There existed throughout upper India an ancient and highly organized religion, philosophical, ethical and severely ascetical, viz. Jainism, out of which clearly developed the ascetical features of Brahmanism and Buddhism.
- Opinions of the following Indian scholars and High Court judges have also been in favor of the antiquity of Jainism .
- Lokamanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak (Jainism Anadi)
- Prof. M.S. Ramaswami Ayengar
- Sir Sanmukham Chetty
- S. N. Gokhale
- Justice Ranganekar
- Chief Justice of Madras High Court Sir C. V. Kumaraswami Sastriar
- Dr. A.N. Upadhye
- Dr. N. N. Basu
- Dr. M. B. Niyogi
- Prof. V. P. Vadyar
- and so on

Even a reputed Vedic scholar Prof. V. P. Vadyar says, "According to the Jaina scriptures, Marīci, the grandson of Ṛṣabha Deva was a materialist. Because the Vedas represent the same materialistic spirit, it was certainly due to him that they (the Ṛgveda etc.) came to be popular. Consequently there are several hymns to be found in the Vedas and Purāṇas, in the memory of sage Marīci, and there are mentions of the Jaina Tīrthaṅkaras at many places. Hence there is no reason why we should not accept the existence of Jainism in the Vedic age".¹

In fact, there is whatsoever no tangible evidence to show that Jainism branched off from the Vedic religion or from any of its later developments, at such and such time, nor there is any marked similarity between the fundamental doctrines and essential features of the two systems, which might favour that possibility. Jainism with the perfectly non-violent creed, animistic belief, subtle and peculiar karma theory, its rejection of a creator and the creation theory, and the like, is not only quite and original system but is also absolutely independent of all other systems. In its origin, it is not only non-Aryan and pre-Aryan, in the sense that these terms are now generally understood, but it is also primitive and absolutely indigenous.

Barrister C. R. Jain, successfully refuting the Hindu-dissenter theory, concludes, "Thus Jainism, the creed of the holy Tirth-aṅkaras, far from being a daughter or rebellious Child of Hinduism, is actually the basis of that undoubtedly ancient creed", and that if there was any borrowing, it was more the otherway round.²

- Even Sankaracharya, who did not understand Syadavada, had to confess that Jainism is prevailing from old time.
- To sum up, Jainism is an independent religion with greater antiquity in relation to not only Buddhism, but also Vedic Brahmanism, with universal appeal and message of peace and good will to all living beings.
- No wonder , Rev. J. A. Duboi said:
- “ Yea! his (Jain’s) religion is the true one upon the earth, the Primitive Faith of Mankind ,, (published by East India Company in 1817).
- In the words of Dr. Kalidas Nag
- Jainism is not a religion of some particular sect or community, rather it is an international universal religion. The great souls of Jain Tirthankaras had never cared to win over the kingdoms of the world.They aimed to to conquer their real self. This is the only lofty aim and therein lies the worth of human life.
- J= Justice, A= Affection, I= Introspection and N= Nobility
- Jainam jayatu shasanam
- Thank you very much