

10. Jain Festivals (*Parvā*)

Like other communities of India. Jains have many festivals in a year. Some of the festivals are connected with the anniversaries of the births and deaths of the Tirthankaras

Oli (Sidhha Chakra / Navpad)

The Oli is celebrated twice a year. Once in the month of *Chaitra* and second in the month of *Ashwin*. In both these months, they are celebrated for nine days each, starting from 7th day of the respective month, and ending on the 15th day of the month.

The festival of Oli is characterised by the penance of *Ayambil*, where the devotee takes one meal a day, consisting of only boiled food, without oil, sugar or spices. It is a penance, when one needs a great control over taste.

Oli is a festival of *Navpad Pooja*. Each day of nine days' festival is devoted to nine pads of *Siddhachakra* and on about each day the devotee listens to the significance of that particular element from the monks each of these elements viz *Arihanta*, *siddha*, *Acharya*, *Upadhyay*, and *Sadhu* as well as Right visions, Right Knowledge, Right Conduct and Penance on one day each and special devotion is offered to them. Each of these elements are also symbolized by its specific colours, which respectively are white, red, yellow, blue, black, white, white, white, and white this oli penance is many a times observed nine times (4 ½ years) and thereafter greatly celebrated.

Diwali

Diwali is celebrated all around in India. It falls on last day of *Ashwin*; which is also last day of *Vikramsawant*. Hindus and others celebrate Diwali in their own ways; but Jains celebrate it because it happens to be *Nirwan* day (Day on which he took his last breath) of *Lord Mahavir*. Jains remember *Lord Mahavir* in that context, and offer prayers to his idol. Some Jains may also visit '*Pavapuri*' a place in Bihar where he attained *Nirvan*. Sweet balls (*Laddu*) are offered particularly on this day.

Gyan Panchami

The fifth day of *Kartik* i.e. 5 day after *Diwali Gyan Panchami* is celebrated to offer special prayers to the Goddess of Knowledge. (*Saraswati Devei*). Jains on that day offer their worship not only to *Lord Tirthankara* and Goddess of Knowledge but also to all instruments and equipments of knowledge, viz. Books, Scriptures, Pen, Pencils, etc. In *Upashraya* the books of *Gyan Bhandar* are displayed for *Pooja*. By Jain followers. Jains consider this day to be a day of a science of experienced knowledge.

Kartiki Purnima

It falls on 15th day of *Kartik*. It is also considered to be an auspicious day. It is a day when the *chaturmas* (monsoon 4 months) end and the monks and nuns, who were restricted from any kind of movements now become mobile. It is also a special day for starting of pilgrimage to *Shatrunjay (Palitana)* after restrictions of such *yatra* for 4 months of monsoon.

Meru Teras

It falls on 13th day of the month of *Magshir*. This day happens to be day of *Nirvan* of *Lord Rikhawdev*, the first tirthankara. The day is celebrated by all-round penance (fast etc) on that day. People especially remember *Lord Adishwar* with special reverence. It is a day for offering nector of devotion to God.

Maun Ekadashi

The festival of *Maun Ekadashi* falls on 11th day of the month of *Magshir*. The day is considered to be most anspicious; because it is a day of 150 *Kalyankg* to gether which means that 150 Kalyanaks took place on that day considering the 24 Tirthankaras of this age and 24 Tirthankaras of past period. It is so said that the penance or any good work done on that day brings 150 times great result. As the name suggests, the devotees keep a fast as well as silence nun for the whole day. It is a day for conservation of vigour for experience of emancipation.

Lord Parshvanath Birth celebration

Posh Dashmi according to *Rajasthani* calender and 10th day of second half of *Magashir* according to Gujarati calendar happens to be an auspicious day on account of being a Birth day (*Janm Kalyank*) of *Lord Parshwanath*.

Jains observe Fast on that day. They visit the temple of *Lord Parshwanath* and offer their worships with great devotion. Usually one day ahead and one day behind are tied together and many people observe these 3 days' fast. An Attam penance.

Chaitra Purnima

This also is an anspicious day. It is a day when *Pundrik Swami*, Gandhar of *Lord Adiswar* attained salvation with 10 crore monks, on mountain *Shatranjay*. Jains in thousands visit *Shatrunjay* mountain and offer their devotion to both *Lord Adishwar* and *Pundrik Swami*.

Immortal worship of Akshay Trutiya.

Akshay Tritiya falls on 3rd day of Vaishakh. It is also very auspicious day being a great *Kalyanak* day of *Lord Adishwar*, first Tirthankara.

The day is also celebrated from a little different context. Following *Lord Adishwar*, thousand of Jains observe penance for about 14 months popularly known as *Varshitap* All these months. One has to observe alternative fast-often 2 fasts also together. At the end of such long and strictly followed penance, the break (*Parna*) comes on this day. So, thousands of Jains, on this day officially and formally bring an end of their long penance either at *Palitana-Shatrunjay* or at such other auspicious places. This is a lovely way to remember *lord Adishwar* and his penance. Not only *Shatrunjay* mountain, but all the places where *Lord Adishwar* is main deity, are flooded with thousands of people.