



Jainism is an ancient religion from India that teaches that the way to liberation and bliss is to live lives of harmlessness and renunciation.

The essence of Jainism is concern for the welfare of every being in the **universe** and for the health of the universe itself.

- Jains believe that animals and plants, as well as human beings, contain living souls. Each of these souls is considered of equal value and should be treated with respect and compassion.
- Jains are strict vegetarians and live in a way that minimises their use of the **world's resources**.
- Jains believe in **reincarnation** and seek to attain ultimate liberation - which means escaping the continuous cycle of birth, death and rebirth so that the immortal soul lives for ever in a state of bliss.
- Liberation is achieved by eliminating all **karma from the soul**.
- Jainism is a religion of self-help.
- There are no **gods** or spiritual beings that will help human beings.
- The three guiding principles of Jainism, the '**three jewels**', are right belief, right knowledge and right conduct.
- The supreme principle of Jain living is non violence (**ahimsa**).
- This is one of the **5 mahavratas** (the 5 great vows). The other mahavratas are non-attachment to possessions, not lying, not stealing, and **sexual restraint** (with celibacy as the ideal).

- **Mahavira** is regarded as the man who gave Jainism its present-day form.
- The texts containing the teachings of Mahavira are called the **Agamas**.
- Jains are divided into **two major sects**; the Digambara (meaning "sky clad") sect and the Svetambara (meaning "white clad") sect.
- Jainism has no priests. Its professional religious people are **monks and nuns**, who lead strict and ascetic lives.

Most Jains live in India, and there are reported to be around 4.2 million throughout the world.