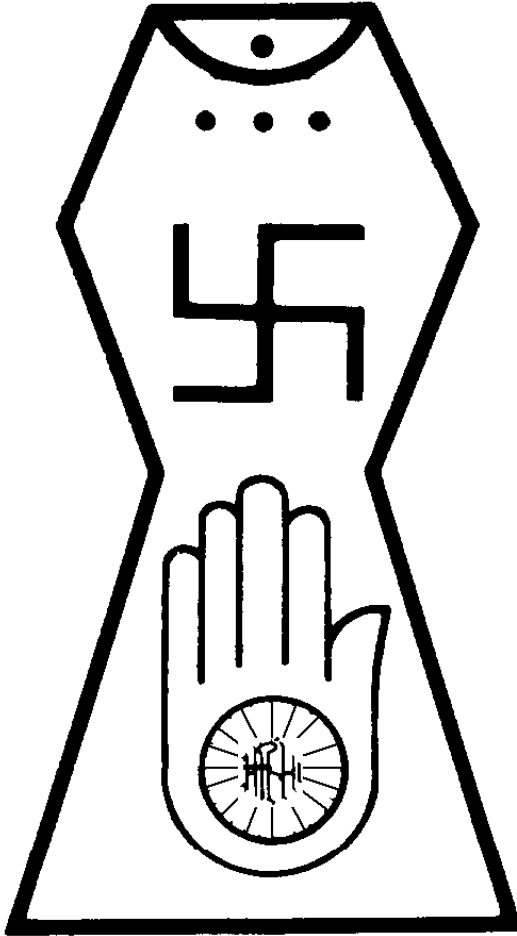


LESSON 22

JAIN SYMBOL

The Jain Symbol is a congregation of various symbols, each having a deeper meaning. This symbol was adopted by all sects of Jainism while commemorating the 2500th anniversary of the nirvana of Lord Mahavira.



The outline of the symbol is defined as the universe (Lok). The lower part of the symbol represents the seven hells (Naraki). The middle part of the universe contains the Earth and the planets (Manushyalok or Madyalok). The upper part contains the heavenly abodes (Devlok) of all the celestial beings and abode of the Siddhas (Siddhashila). Jains believe that this universe was neither created by anyone, nor can it be destroyed by anyone. It may change its form, but otherwise, it has always been and will always be here.

The raised hand means stop. The word in the center of the wheel is “Ahimsa”. Ahimsa means non-violence. Between these two, they remind us to stop for a minute and think twice before doing anything. This gives us a chance to scrutinize our activities to be sure that they will not hurt anyone by our words, thoughts, or actions. We are also not supposed to ask or encourage others to take part in any harmful activity. The wheel in the hand shows that if we are not careful and ignore these warnings and carry on violent activities, then just as the wheel goes round and round, we will go round and round through the cycles of birth and death.

The four arms of the swastika remind us that during the cycles of birth and death we may be born into any one of the four destinies: heavenly beings, human beings, sub-human beings, (including animals, birds, insects, and plants) and hellish beings. Our aim should be the liberation and not the rebirth. To show how we can do this, the swastika reminds us that we should become the pillars of the four fold Jain Sangh, and then only can we achieve liberation. The four pillars of the Jain Sangh are monks (sadhus), nuns (sādhvis), male householders (shrawaks), and female householders (shrawikas). This means that first, we should strive to be a true shrawaks or shrawikas, and when we can overcome our social attachments, we should renounce the worldly life and follow the path of a sadhu or sadhvi to be liberated.

The three dots above the swastika represent the three jewels of Jainism: Right faith (Samyak Darshan), Right knowledge (Samyak Jnan), and Right conduct (Samyak Charitra). We should have all three: right knowledge, right faith, and right conduct together, and then only can we achieve the liberation. The right knowledge means having the knowledge that soul and body are separate and that the soul, not the body attains the salvation. The right faith means one must have faith in what is told by Jinas, who were omniscient. The right conduct means that our actions should be void of attachment and hatred.

At the very top part of the Jain Universe symbol is a small curved arc. This arc represents the abode of the Siddhas. It is known as the Siddhashila. It is the final resting-place of the liberated souls. The dot represents a Siddha. In order to achieve this stage, a soul must remove all attached karmas. Every living being should strive for this state of the Salvation.

CONCLUSION

There are seven sub-symbols in one main symbol... Each symbol has a deep meaning. For example, the hand with the word ahimsa means observe non-violence. The hand reminds us to stop doing bad deeds. The wheel represents on and on going on cycle of birth and death. The "swastika" is also a very important symbol explaining the essence of Jain philosophy for liberation. It also explains four realms of life. Three dots explain the importance of right faith, knowledge and conduct to reach to Arc, the top of the world as a liberated soul.