

The Jain Temples

The Jain Temples are beautiful artistic and grand. Most of these temples are built of marble. They have beautiful arches and walls. Moreover, the ceilings and towers of those buildings are decorated with magnificent carvings. The interior of a Jain temple has a peaceful, holy and other-worldly atmosphere: and so it is a center of attraction for all. The temples are pervaded by an atmosphere of absolute peace, felicity and sanctity. Magnificent waves of bliss, felicity, love and cheerfulness surge out from the presence of the marble idols from which emanate peace and joy.

All Jains including the young and the old visit the temples in the mornings and in the evenings. They feel blessed by the sight of the Lord and by carrying out such activities as worship, prayer, glorification repeating of holy hymns and meditation. That way they seek satisfaction to their souls. Every evening after the sunset they perform Arati and Mangal deep (burning camphor and lighting ghee-wicks) in every temple. The sweet sound of the bells, the holy noise of the drums; the chanting of the hymns by groups of devotees at the time of the arati, the radiant lights burning with ghee revealing the splendor of the face of the (Lord the Paramatma) bring heaven to the earth.

Special programs and activities are organized on some festival days and special occasions. On these occasions, hundreds or thousands of devotees gather in the temples and worship the Lord with absolute devotion; Some Jain families have a gharmandir a room reserved for the worship of the Lord.

On the occasion of installing the image of the Lord in the temples, a solemn celebration takes place; and this is known as Anjan Shalaka and Pratishta Mahotsav.

Jain Upashraya: Religious Centers

The place or abode where the Jain Sadhus and Sadhvis stay or reside in separate rooms and perform worship, is called Upashraya. Shrawakas, Shrawikas, and even children visit the Upashraya every day and perform spiritual and religious activities such as Samayik and Pratikraman. Separate Upashrayas are meant for men and women. Men approach Sadhus; and women approach Sadhvis and seek their guidance for their spiritual endeavors. The Upashraya is called Paushadh Shala or Vasati in the technical language.

The Jain Libraries

Both ancient and modern books are carefully kept and preserved in the Jain Libraries, which are known as Jnan Mandirs. Even today, we can find in these libraries large numbers of manuscripts (written on palm leaves or cloth). Very careful and systematic arrangements are made for their preservation. Some scriptures collected years ago are available in a good condition, even today in these libraries. The Jain libraries in Jesalmar, Bikaner, Patan, Khambhat Limbadi, Koday (in Kutch) Ahmadabad, Bombay etc., are worth-visiting.

Manuscripts of one thousand years ago or even earlier are available in these libraries. The specialty of the Jain libraries lies in the fact that in those libraries, not only Jain scriptures (Granthas) but also various other Indian and foreign books are available in a well-preserved condition. Scholars, lovers of knowledge, research workers and students can make use of these books for acquiring knowledge and for teaching.

The Jain Schools

In the Jain Schools, students are taught the basic principles of Jainism. They are also taught to study the Jain granthas (scriptures). These schools are generally situated where Jain families live in large numbers. The teachers chosen and appointed in these schools always teach not only children but also elderly people to study the Jain scriptures. In these schools, an attempt is made to develop the innate potentialities of children and to bring about a harmonious development of their personalities. In some Jain schools situated in some cities arrangements are made to teach Sanskrit and Prakrit to students. Even Sadhus and Sadhvis can study there. Some cultural activities are also organized for children in these schools known as Pathshalas.

Ayambil Shala

In the Jain Dharma, the austerity called Ayambil is considered very auspicious and efficacious. Anyone can go to the Ayambil Shala to perform Ayambil. There food, which is devoid of any special taste and spices, is available for the performance of Ayambil. Arrangements also are made in Ayambil Shalas to keep boiled water for drinking. The Ayambil Shalas are situated in places where Jain families live in large numbers.

The Jain Panjarapol--Shelter for Cattle

Non-violence and benevolence are a part and parcel of the very life of a Jain hence the Jains maintain shelter-houses for helpless and dumb animals and birds. In those places, animals and birds, which are helpless, incapacitated, crippled and disabled, are given shelter. In those houses, arrangements are made for providing fodder, water, medicine, treatment and other facilities to them. The cattle that are likely to be sent to slaughter-houses are rescued and kept in these places and are attended to, Even today, in areas like Rajasthan and Gujarat, there are such houses giving shelter to hundreds and thousands of animals and birds.

The Jain Choultries

(Places providing lodging and Boarding)

When Jains go to other places on some purposes, they can stay in the choultries run for such people. They can stay in the choultries paying only a nominal fee. But those who stay there have to conform to the rules and principles of Jain dharma and its tenets. Rooms, beds, pillows, cots, water and all such facilities are available in those choultries. In the same manner, in the Jain Bhojanshalas (choultries where food is served) pure but rich vegetarian food is available for a nominal amount. Anyone who accepts the Jain culture and principles can get food in these choultries. Eating food in the nights eating roots, eating stale food, raw pulses and objectionable kinds of food are prohibited in these choultries.

In most Jain Pilgrim centers such choultries and homes are available, so that the visitors may not experience any inconveniences for food and shelter. Of late such choultries have been constructed in small and large towns and cities. In fact, in some Dharmashalas and Bhojanshalas modern facilities also are available.

Every institution of the Jain society is run and managed with the financial assistance extended by the magnanimous and well-to-do Jains. For the maintenance of these various institutions, every year, crores of rupees are being spent. In case there is any necessity, the Jain institutions found all over India help one another.