

Jain Meditation

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Jain meditation (*dhyāna*) has been the central practice of spirituality in Jainism along with the Three Jewels. Jainism holds that emancipation can only be achieved through Meditation or *Shukla Dhyana*. According to Sagarmal Jain, it aims to reach and remain in a state of “pure-self awareness or knowership.” Meditation is also seen as realizing the self, taking the soul to complete freedom, beyond any craving, aversion and/or attachment. The practitioner strives to be just a knower-seer (*Gyata-Drashta*). Jain meditation can be broadly categorized to the auspicious (*Dharmya Dhyana* and *Shukla Dhyana*) and inauspicious (*Artta* and *Raudra Dhyana*). The 20th century saw the development and spread of new modernist forms of Jain *Dhyana*, mainly by monks and laypersons of Śvētāmbara Jainism.

Jain meditation is also referred as **Sāmāyika**. A form of this which includes a strong component of scripture study (*Svādhyāya*) is mainly promoted by the more conservative Digambara tradition of Jainism. The word *Sāmāyika* means being in the moment of continuous real-time. This act of being conscious of the continual renewal of the universe in general and one’s own renewal of the individual living being (*Jiva*) in particular is the critical first step in the journey towards identification with one’s true nature, called the *Atman*. It is also a method by which one can develop an attitude of harmony and respect towards other humans, animals and Nature.

There are various common postures for Jain meditation, including Padmasana, Ardha-Padmasana, Vajrasana, Sukhasana, standing, and lying down. The 24 Tirthankaras are always seen in one of these two postures in the Kayotsarga (standing) or Padmasana/*Paryankasana* (Lotus).

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