JAINISM

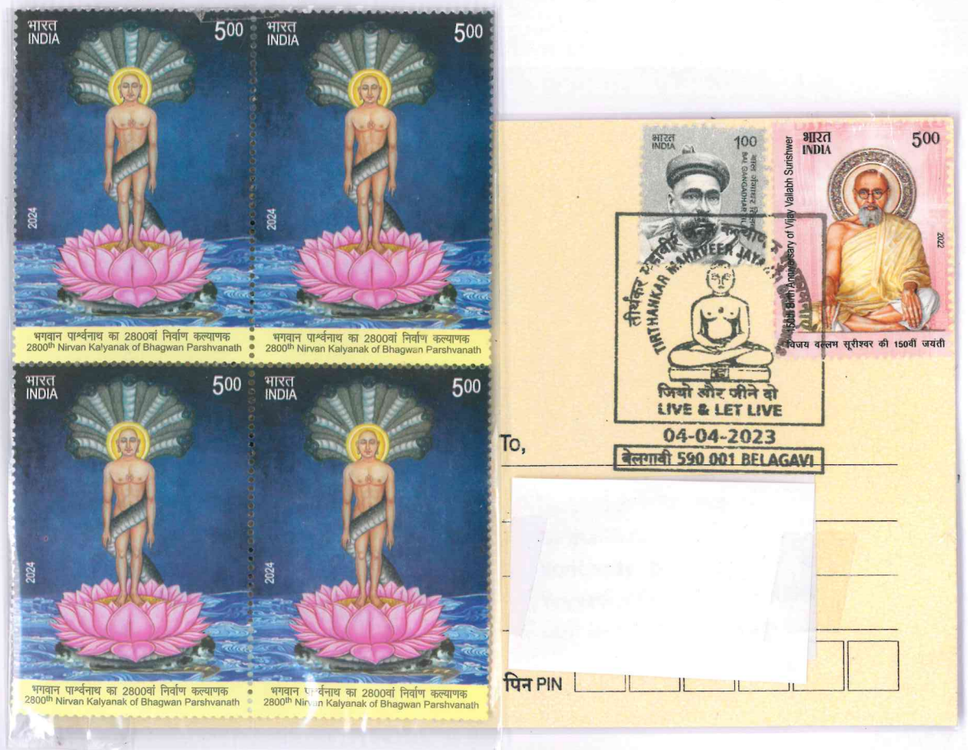
Vidya K Baglodi

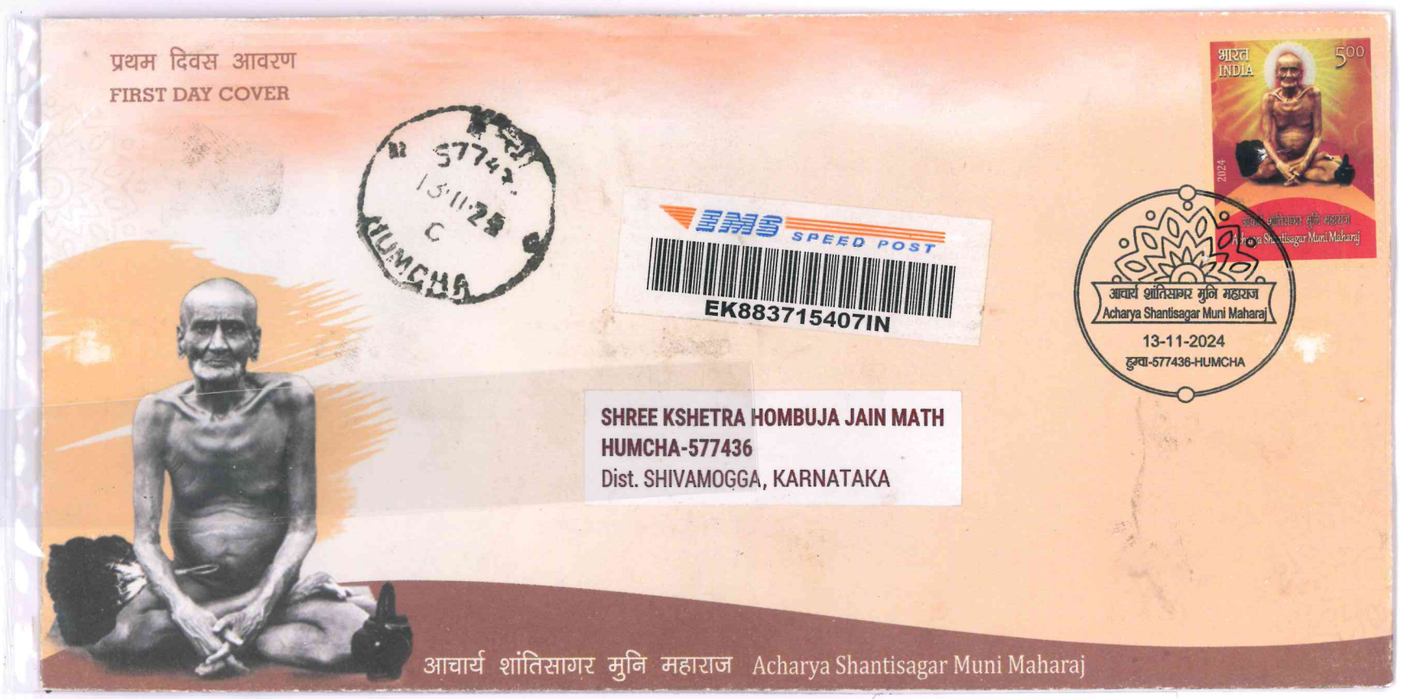
Jainism teaches that the path to enlightenment is through nonviolence and reducing harm to living things (including plants and animals) as much as possible. Like Hindus and Buddhists, Jains believe in reincarnation. This cycle of birth, death, and rebirth is determined by one's karma.

Dharma,[1] is an Indian religion. Jainism traces its spiritual ideas and history through the succession of twenty-four *tirthankaras* (supreme preachers of *Dharma*), with the first in the current time cycle being Rishabhadeva, whom the tradition holds to have lived millions of years ago, the twenty-third *tirthankara* Parshvanatha, whom historians date to the 9th century BCE, and the twenty-fourth *tirthankara* Mahavira, around 600 BCE. Jainism is considered an eternal *dharma* with the *tirthankaras* guiding every time cycle of the cosmology. Central to understanding Jain philosophy is the concept of *bhedvigyān*, or the clear distinction in the nature of the soul and non-soul entities. This principle underscores the innate purity and potential for liberation within every soul, distinct from the physical and mental elements that bind it to the cycle of birth and rebirth. Recognizing and internalizing this separation is essential for spiritual progress and the attainment of *samyak darshan* or self realization, which marks the beginning of the aspirant's journey towards liberation. The three main pillars of Jainism are *ahiṃsā* (non-violence), *anekāntavāda* (non-absolutism), and *aparigraha* (asceticism).

Jain monks take five main vows: *ahiṃsā* (non-violence), *satya* (truth), *asteya* (not stealing), *brahmacharya* (chastity), and *aparigraha* (non-possessiveness). These principles have affected Jain culture in many ways, such as leading to a predominantly lacto-vegetarian lifestyle. *Parasparopagraho jīvānām* (the function of souls is to help one another) is the faith's motto, and the *Namokar Mantra* is its most common and strongest prayer.

Jainism is one of the oldest religions still practiced today. It has two major ancient sub-traditions, Digambaras and Śvētāmbaras, which hold different views on ascetic practices, gender, and the texts considered canonical. Both sub-traditions have mendicants supported by laypersons (*śrāvakas* and *śrāvikas*). The Śvētāmbara tradition in turn has two sub-traditions: Deravasi, also known as Mandirmargis, and Sthānakavasī.[2] The religion has between four and five million followers, known as Jains or Jainas, who reside mostly in India, where they numbered around 4.5 million at the 2011 census. Outside India, some of the largest Jain communities can be found in Canada, Europe, and the United States. Japan is also home to a fast-growing community of converts.[3] Major festivals include *Paryushana* and *Das Lakshana*, *Ashtanika*, *Mahavir Janma Kalyanak*, *Akshaya Tritiya*, and *Dipawali*.





The Commemorative stamp , special cancellations and the First Day cover shown relate to Jainism.