



Mahavir Jayanti

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Why in News

The Prime Minister of India greeted the people on occasion of '**Mahavir Jayanti**' (**25th April 2021**).

Mahavir Jayanti is **one of the most auspicious festivals in the Jain community**.

Key Points

- **About Mahavir Jayanti:**

- This day marks the birth of **Vardhamana Mahavira**, who was the 24th and the **last Tirthankara** and who succeeded the **23rd Tirthankara, Parshvanatha**.
- According to Jain texts, Lord Mahavira was **born on the 13th day of the bright half of the moon in the month of Chaitra**.

As per the **Gregorian calendar**, it is usually celebrated in the month of **March or April**.

- **Celebration:** Usually, a procession is called with the idol of Lord Mahavira called the **Rath Yatra**. **Reciting stavans** or Jain prayers, statues of the lord are given a ceremonial bath called **abhisheka**.

- **About Lord Mahavira:**

- **Mahavira** was born to **King Siddhartha of Kundagrama** and **Queen Trishala**, a Lichchhavi princess in the **year 540 BC** in the **Vajji kingdom**, identical with modern day **Vaishali in Bihar**.
- Mahavira belonged to the **Ikshvaku dynasty**.
- Lord Mahavir was named **Vardhamana**, which means “**one who grows**”.
- He **abandoned worldly life** at the **age of 30** and attained ‘**kaivalya**’ or **omniscience** at the **age of 42**.
- Mahavira taught **ahimsa** (non-violence), **Satya** (truth), **asteya** (non-stealing), **brahmacharya** (chastity) and **aparigraha** (non-attachment) to his disciples and his teachings were called **Jain Agamas**.
- Ordinary people were able to understand the teachings of Mahavira and his followers because **they used Prakrit**.
- It is believed that the Mahavira passed away and attained moksha (liberation from the cycle of birth and death) at the age of **72 in 468 BC** at a place called **Pavapuri** near modern **Rajgir in Bihar**.

Jainism

- The word **Jaina** comes from the **term Jina**, meaning **conqueror**.
- **Tirthankara** is a Sanskrit word meaning '**Ford maker**', i.e., one who is able to ford the river, to cross beyond the perpetual flow of earthly life.
- **Jainism attaches** utmost importance to **ahimsa or non-violence**.
- **It preaches 5 mahavratas** (the 5 great vows):
 - **Ahimsa** (Non-violence)
 - **Satya** (Truth)
 - **Asteya or Acharya** (Non-stealing)
 - **Aparigraha** (Non-attachment/Non-possession)
 - **Brahmacharya** (Celibacy/Chastity)
- **Among these 5 teachings**, the **Brahmacharya** (Celibacy/Chastity) was added by **Mahavira**.
- The **three jewels or Triratna of Jainism** include:
 - **Samyak Darshana** (right faith).
 - **Samyak Gyana** (right knowledge).
 - **Samyak Charitra** (right conduct).
- **Jainism** is a religion of **self-help**.
 - **There are no gods** or spiritual beings that will help human beings.
 - **It does not condemn** the varna system.
- In later times, it got divided into **two sects**:
 - **Shvetambaras** (white-clad) under Sthalabahu.
 - **Digambaras** (sky-clad) under the leadership of Bhadrabahu.
- The important **idea in Jainism** is that the entire world is animated: even stones, rocks, and water have life.

- **Non-injury to living beings**, especially to humans, animals, plants, and insects, is central to Jaina philosophy.
- According to Jain teachings, the **cycle of birth and rebirth is shaped through karma**.
- **Asceticism and penance** are required to free oneself from the cycle of karma and achieve the liberation of the soul.
- The **practice of Santhara** is also a part of Jainism.
 - It is the ritual of fasting unto death. Svetambara Jains call it Santhara whereas Digambaras call it Sallekhana.

Source: PIB