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Mains Practice Questions

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Q. Discuss the similarities and differences between the basic tenets of Buddhism and Jainism.

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Approach

- Start the answer by briefly mentioning the origin of both religions.
- Discuss the similarities and differences between Buddhism and Jainism.
- Conclude Suitably.

Introduction

Mahavira and Buddha founded Jainism and Buddhism respectively. Like Buddhism, Jainism also rose partly in reaction to ritualism which marked the Vedic religion. Though both the religions were contemporaries and there was much in common they are marked by distinct characteristics.

Body

Similarities

- They were both inspired by the philosophy of the Upanishads and other Hindu religious sects. For example, the ultimate goal of life is salvation.
- Both the sections appealed to the socially downtrodden and admitted people from different ranks of society.
- Both believed that Nirvana or salvation liberates from the eternal chain of birth and death.
- Both emphasized strong moral principles rather than the practice of ritualism or devotion to and worship of God as a means to attain salvation.

Differences

- Unlike Buddhism, Jainism has survived in India throughout history despite the mutability it faced.
This is due to the strict adherence of Jains to their religious discipline. However, Buddhism remained liberal in its interpretation in foreign countries.
- Jainism believes in a more holistic view of life. According to it everything in nature, every living and non-living thing has a soul of its own.
However, Buddhism does not believe so.
- While Buddhism doesn't discriminate between males and females, according to Jainism, women and men householders cannot attain salvation.
- Elements of Jain teaching such as ahimsa, include opposition to animal sacrifices.
The concept of Ahimsa (non-violence) is different in Buddhism as it permitted the eating of animal flesh where it was a necessity or traditional diet of the people.

Conclusion

Buddhism and Jainism are sometimes referred to as children of a common parent and have a lot in common. However, W.W. Hunter writes "Jainism is as much independent from other sects, especially from Buddhism as can be expected, from any other sect."