



Jain Community Protests

Why in News?

The [Jain community](#) has been protesting over demands related to two holy sites — **Sammed Shikhar on Parasnath hill in Jharkhand and Shatrunjaya hill in Palitana of Gujarat.**

- In Jharkhand, the issue is about Parasnath hill being declared a tourist spot and an [eco-sensitive zone](#) without consulting the people from the Jain community, while in Gujarat, the row is over the vandalising of a shrine and related security concerns in Shatrunjaya Hill.

What are the Key Facts about Parasnath Hills and Shatrunjaya Hill?

- **Parasnath Hills:**
 - **Parasnath Hills** are a range of hills located in Giridih district of Jharkhand.
 - The **highest peak is 1350 metres**. It is one of the most important pilgrimage centre for Jains. They call it Sammed Sikhar.
 - The hill is named after **Parasnath, the 23rd Tirthankara.**
 - Twenty of Jain Tirthankaras **attained salvation on this hill. For each of them there is a shrine (gumti or tuk)** on the hill.
 - Some of the temples on the hill are believed to be more than 2,000 years old.
 - The Santhals call it **Marang Buru, the hill of the deity.** They celebrate a **hunting festival on the full moon day in Baisakh (mid-April).**
 - Every year, thousands of Jains from across the world undertake the 27 km long trek of climbing the hills to reach the summit.
- **Palitana and Shatrunjaya Hill:**
 - Shatrunjaya Hill is a sacred site containing hundreds of shrines in Palitana town, Bhavnagar District, Gujarat.
 - The shrines were **sanctified when Rishabha, the first Tirthankara of Jainism,** gave his first sermon in the temple on the hilltop.
 - It is one of the Jainism's holiest pilgrimage sites, the Shatrunjaya hill is an **incredible hill studded with temples, built over 900 years.**
 - It is said that Adinath (also known as Rishabha), the founder of Jainism, **meditated beneath the rayan tree at the summit.**

What is Jainism?

- Jainism came to prominence in the **6th century B.C.,** when **Lord Mahavira** propagated the religion.
- There were **24 great teachers,** the last of whom was **Lord Mahavira.**
- These twenty-four teachers were called **Tirthankaras**-people who had attained all knowledge (Moksha) while living and preached it to the people.
- The first Tirthankara was **Rishabnatha.**
- 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.

What is the Pilgrimage vs Tourism Debate?

- **Pilgrimage:**
 - Pilgrimage is the purpose of traveling to the destination, which is **mostly focused on religion.** Pilgrimage shrines are **an important aspect of any religion's materiality** and sacred geography.
 - Despite using the term Pilgrimage and Tourism interchangeably, the two cannot be mixed, if a pilgrimage shrine is declared a tourist spot, even people who may not have the distinct sensibilities for the shrine **may enter the sacred place, thus affecting the sanctity and the "purity" of the place.**
 - Also, the sacred character of the place helps to protect the **entire landscape from degradation.**
 - Consider the sacred groves spread throughout India, protected by local deities of different communities and connected to people's behaviour in these places, showing us the **traditional example of ecological conservation practiced by local communities.**
 - Therefore, declaring the area open for tourism may be doing more harm than good, not only to the community and its faith **but also to nature and its fragile ecosystem.**
 - We have seen what happened in Kedarnath, especially when the cloudburst occurred in June 2013.
 - The lack of planning, clearing of forests, and absence and violation of construction codes in a fragile Himalayan ecosystem **meant that a natural calamity turned into a human-made disaster.**
- **Tourism:**
 - Tourism attracts more people in the country and thus creates more employment opportunity, also brings in **focus the importance of sites and need to preserve them.**
 - Tourism as a form of soft power, helps in promoting cultural diplomacy, people to people connect and **thereby promotes friendship and cooperation between India and other countries.**
 - The growth of domestic tourism largely depends on the Pilgrimage tourism in India and restricting any sort of tourism **may affect the economic growth of the place and of the country.**

Way Forward

Pilgrimage tourism is the type of tourism that entirely or powerfully motivates tourists for the achievement of religious attitude and practices. Thus, pilgrimage and "religious tourism could become an enduring source of employment and income, without sacrificing the important social and religious functions of the sanctuaries and their pilgrimages.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Questions (PYQs)

Q1. With reference to the religious practices in India, the “Sthanakvasi” sect belongs to (2018)

- (a) Buddhism
- (b) Jainism
- (c) Vaishnavism
- (d) Shaivism

Ans: (b)

Q2. With reference to the religious history of India, consider the following statements: (2017)

1. Sautrantika and Sammitiya were the sects of Jainism.
2. Sarvastivadin held that the constituents of phenomena were not wholly momentary, but existed forever in a latent form.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Ans: (b)

Q3. With reference to the history of ancient India, which of the following was/were common to both Buddhism and Jainism? (2012)

1. Avoidance of extremities of penance and enjoyment
2. Indifference to the authority of the Vedas
3. Denial of efficacy of rituals

Select the correct answer using the codes given below:

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 1 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Ans: (b)

Q4. Anekantavada is a core theory and philosophy of which one of the following? (2009)

- (a) Buddhism
- (b) Jainism
- (c) Sikhism
- (d) Vaishnavism

Ans: (b)

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