



Mahavir Jayanti

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Why in News?

Recently, the **Prime Minister** of India inaugurated the **2550th Bhagwan Mahaveer Nirvan Mahotsav**, on the auspicious occasion of Mahaveer Jayanti.

- Jains celebrate **five Kalyanak's (major events) of every Tirthankar** including Mahavir Swami Ji: Chyavana/Garbha (Conception) Kalyanak; Janma (Birth) Kalyanak; Diksha (Renunciation) Kalyanak; Kevaljnana (Omniscience) Kalyanak and Nirvana (Liberation/Ultimate Salvation) Kalyanak.
- Prime Minister has also released a **commemorative stamp** and **coin** on the occasion.

What is Mahavir Jayanti?

▪ About:

- [Mahavir Jayanti](#) is one of the most auspicious festivals in the [Jain community](#).
- This day marks the birth of **Vardhamana Mahavira**, who was the **24th** and the **last Tirthankara** 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](#), Mahavir Jayanti is usually celebrated during the month of March or April.
- 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](#).

▪ Lord Mahavira:

- Bhagwan Mahavir Swami left an indelible mark on humanity through his profound **spiritual practices and teachings**.
- Lord Mahavir was named **Vardhamana**, which means “one who grows”.
- During his **twelve-year period** of spiritual practices, Bhagwan Mahavir exhibited **four extraordinary qualities**:
 - **Deep and Undisturbed Meditation:** His unwavering focus allowed him to attain profound insights.
 - **Rigorous Penance:** He endured extreme physical hardships to purify his soul.
 - **Tolerance of Pain:** Mahavir Swami demonstrated remarkable endurance.
 - **Ultimate Equanimity:** His inner balance remained unshaken.
- On the tenth day of the Vaishakh, Mahavir's journey reached a pivotal moment.
- **Among the 5 teachings of Jainism the Brahmacharya (Celibacy/Chastity) was added by Mahavira.**

VARDHAMAN MAHAVIRA

The 24th and last Tirthankara; succeeded the 23rd Tirthankara, Parshvanatha
(Mahavira was not the founder of Jainism)

BIRTH

- To King Siddhartha of Kundalgram and Queen Trishala, a Lichchhavi princess
- In 6th century BC, Vajji kingdom (modern day Vaishali, Bihar)
- Belonged to Ikshvaku dynasty

Mahavir Jayanti, one of the most auspicious festivals for Jains, marks the birth of Vardhamana Mahavira

SPIRITUAL LIFE

- Abandoned worldly life at age 30
- Attained '*kaivalya*' (omniscience) at age 42
- Delivered his first sermon at Pava (near Patna)

A symbol is associated with every Tirthankara, Mahavira's symbol was a lion

DEATH

- Believed to be passed away and attained Moksha at age 72 (5th century BC)
- Died at Pavapuri (near modern-day Rajgir, Bihar)

Moksha - liberation from the cycle of birth and death

TITLES

- Mahavira (great hero)
- Jaina/Jitendriya (who conquered all his senses)
- Nirgrantha (who is free from all bonds)

TEACHINGS (JAIN AGAMAS)

- Ahimsa (non-violence)
- Satya (truth)
- Asteya (non-stealing)
- Aparigraha (non-attachment)
- Brahmacharya (chastity) (propounded by Mahavira)

Mahavira and his disciples taught in Prakrit to teach ordinary people



What is 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).
- In later times, Jainism 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's philosophy.

- According to Jain's 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. [Swetambara](#) Jains call it [Santhara](#) whereas Digambars call it [Sallekhana](#).
 - In the **Nikhil Soni vs Union Of India Case**, the [Rajasthan High Court](#) declared the Jain practice of Santhara as an offence punishable under the **Indian Penal Code (IPC)**. However, the matter is still sub-judice in Supreme Court.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Questions (PYQs)

Prelims:

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

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

Ans: (b)

Q. 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)

Q. 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 the 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)

Q. 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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