



## Jainism

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Jainism is an ancient religion that is rooted in the philosophy that teaches the way to liberation and a path to spiritual purity and enlightenment through disciplined nonviolence to all living creatures.

## Origin

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- Jainism came into prominence in **6<sup>th</sup> 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 **Rishabhatha**.
- The word 'Jain' is derived from **jina** or **jaina** which means the '**Conqueror**'.

### Cause of Origin

- Hinduism had become rigid and orthodox with complex rituals and the dominance of Brahmanas.
- Varna system divided the society into 4 classes based on birth, where the two higher classes enjoy several privileges.
- Kshatriyas' reaction against the domination of the Brahmanas.
- Spread of new agricultural economy in north-eastern India due to the use of iron tools.

## Tenets of Jainism

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- **Belief in God:** Jainism **recognised** the **existence of god** but placed them lower than Jina (Mahavira).

- **It did not condemn the varna system** but attempted to mitigate the evils of the varna order and the ritualistic Vedic religion.

According to Mahavira, a person is born in higher or lower varna as the consequence of the sins or the virtues in the previous birth. Thus, Jainism believes in the **transmigration of the soul** and the **theory of Karma**.

**Anekantavada:** Emphasises that the ultimate truth and reality is complex, and has multiple-aspects i.e **theory of plurality**.

It refers to the simultaneous acceptance of multiple, diverse, even contradictory viewpoints.

**Syadvada:** All judgments are conditional, holding good only in certain conditions, circumstances, or senses.

Syadvada literally means the 'method of examining different probabilities'.

The basic difference between them is that Anekantavada is the **knowledge** of all differing but opposite attributes whereas Syadvada is a **process of the relative description** of a particular attribute of an object or an event.

- It mainly aims at the **attainment of liberation**, for which no ritual is required.
  - It can be attained through three principles called **Three Jewels or Triratna i.e.**
    - **Right Faith** (Samyakdarshana)
    - **Right Knowledge** (Samyakjnana)
    - **Right Action** (Samyakcharita)
- **Five Doctrines of Jainism**
  - **Ahimsa:** Non-injury to a living being
  - **Satya:** Do not speak a lie
  - **Asteya:** Do not steal
  - **Aparigraha:** Do not acquire property
  - **Brahmacharya:** Observe continence

## Vardhamana Mahavira

- Vardhamana Mahavira, the 24<sup>th</sup> Tirthankara, was born in 540 B.C. in a village called **Kundagrama** near **Vaishali**.
- He belonged to **the Jnatrika clan** and was connected to the royal family of Magadha.
- His father Siddharta was the head of the Jnathrika Kshatriya clan and his mother Trishala was a sister of Chetaka, the king of Vaishali.
- At the age of **30 years**, he renounced his home and become an ascetic.
- He practised austerity for **12 years** and attained the highest spiritual knowledge called **Kaivalya** (i.e conquered misery and happiness) at the age of 42 years.
- He delivered his first sermon at **Pava**.

- A symbol was associated with every Tirthankara and Mahavira's symbol was a **lion**.
- His missions took him **Koshala, Magadha, Mithila, Champa** etc
- He passed away at the age of 72 in 468 B.C. at the **Pavapuri** in Bihar.

## Sects/ School

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Jain order has been divided into two major sects: Digambara and Svetambara. The division occurred mainly due to famine in Magadha which compelled a group led by Bhadrabahu to move South India.

During the 12 years famine, the group in South India stick to the strict practices while the group in Magadha adopted a more lax attitude and started wearing white clothes.

After the end of famine, when the Southern group came back to Magadha, the changed practices led to the division of Jainism into two sects.

- **Digambara**
  - Monks of this sect believe in complete nudity. Male monks do not wear clothes while female monks wear unstitched plain white sarees.
  - Follow all five vows (Satya, Ahimsa, Asteya, Aparigraha and Brahmacharya).
  - Believe women cannot achieve liberation.
  - **Bhadrabahu** was an exponent of this sect.
  - **Major Sub-Sects**
    - Mula Sangh
    - Bisapantha
    - Terapantha
    - Taranpantha or Samaiyapantha
  - **Minor Sub-Sets**
    - Gumanapantha
    - Totapantha
- **Svetambara**
  - Monks wear white clothes.
  - Follow only 4 vows (except brahmacharya).
  - Believe women can achieve liberation.
  - **Sthulabhadra** was an exponent of this sect.
  - **Major Sub-Sects**
    - Murtipujaka
    - Sthanakvasi
    - Terapanthi

## Spread of Jainism

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- Mahavira organised an order of his followers which admitted both men and women.

- Jainism did not very clearly mark itself out from Hinduism, therefore it spread gradually into West and South India where brahmanical order was weak.
- The great Mauryan King Chandragupta Maurya, during his last years, became a Jain ascetic and promoted Jainism in Karnataka.
- Famine in Magadha led to the spread of Jainism in South India.
  - The famine lasted for 12 years, and in order to protect themselves, many Jains went to South India under the leadership of Bhadrabahu.
- In Odisha, it enjoyed the patronage of Kalinga King of Kharavela.

## Jain Council

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- **First Jain Council**
  - Held at **Patliputra** in **3<sup>rd</sup> Century B.C.** and was presided by **Sthulbhadra**.
- **Second Jain Council**
  - Held at **Vallabhi** in **512 A.D.** and was presided by **Devardhi Kshmasramana**.
  - Final Compilations of 12 Angas and 12 Upangas.

## Jain Architecture

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Jain architecture cannot be accredited with a style of its own, it was almost an offshoot of Hindu and Buddhist styles.

Types of Jain Architecture:

- **Layana/Gumphas (Caves)**
  - Ellora Caves (Cave No. 30-35)- Maharashtra
  - Mangi Tungi Cave- Maharashtra
  - Gajapantha Cave- Maharashtra
  - Udayagiri-Khandagiri Caves- Odisha
  - Hathi-gumpha Cave- Odisha
  - Sittanavasal Cave- Tamil Nadu
- **Statues**
  - Gometeshwara/Bahubali Statue- Shravanabelagola, Karnataka
  - Statue of Ahimsa (Rishabhatha)- Mangi-Tungi hills, Maharashtra
- **Jinalaya (Temple)**
  - Dilwara Temple- Mount Abu, Rajasthan
  - Girnar and Palitana Temple- Gujarat
  - Muktagiri Temple- Maharashtra

**Manastambha:** It is found in the front side of the temple, having religious importance with an ornamental pillar structure carrying the image of Tirthankar on top and on all four cardinal directions.

**Basadis:** Jain monastic establishment or temples in Karnataka.

## Jain Literature/Texts

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Jain literature is classified into two major categories:

- **Agam or Canonical Literature (Agam Sutras)**
  - Agam literature consists of many texts, which are the sacred books of the Jain religion.
  - They are written in the Ardha-magadhi, a form of Prakrit language.
- **Non-agam Literature**
  - Non-agam literature consists of commentary and explanation of Agam literature, and independent works, compiled by ascetics and scholars.
  - They are written in many languages such as Prakrit, Sanskrit, Apabhramsa, Old Marathi, Rajasthani, Gujarati, Hindi, Kannad, Tamil, German, and English.

## Contribution of Jainism

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- Attempts to reform the evils of varna order.
- Growth of Prakrit and Kannada.
- Contributed to architecture and literature immensely.

## How is Jainism different from Buddhism?

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- Jainism **recognised** the **existence of god** while Buddhism did not.
- Jainism does **not condemn** the varna system while Buddhism does.
- Jainism believed in the **transmigration of soul i.e. reincarnation** while Buddhism does not.
- Buddhism prescribes a **middle path** while Jainism advocates its followers to live the life of complete austerity.

## Relevance of Jain Ideology in Today's World

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The Jain theory of **Anekantavada** translated into practical terms in social context would mean three principles:

- Absence of dogmatism or fanaticism
- Honouring the freedom of others
- Peaceful coexistence and cooperation

**Anekantavada highlights the spirit of intellectual and social tolerance in the world.**

- The **principle of Ahimsa (non-violence)** gains prominence in today's nuclear world to attain long-lasting peace in society.  
The concept of **Ahimsa** can also help to counter growing violence and terrorism.

- The principle of **Aparigraha** (non-possession) can help to control consumerist habits as there is a great increase in greed and possessive tendencies.  
Global warming also can be healed with this thought by doing away with unwanted luxuries, which produce carbon emissions.