



Mahavir Jayanti

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The President and Vice President of India have greeted the people on occasion of 'Mahavir Jayanti'.

About Mahavir Jayanti

- 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.
- This festival is celebrated widely by the Jain community in memory of the last spiritual teacher of the religion. 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

- Mahavir 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**.
- There are several historians who believe that he was **born in a place called Ahalya bhumi** and the **land has not been plowed for hundreds of years** by the family that owns it.
- Lord Mahavir was named **Vardhamana**, which means **"one who grows"**.
- He **abandoned the 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) and 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 and 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 Jaina 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 **Digambara call it Sallekhana**.