

Origin of Jainism

- Jainism is a very ancient religion. As per some traditions, it is as old as the Vedic religion.
- The Jain tradition has a succession of great teachers or Tirthankaras.
- There were 24 Tirthankaras the last of which was Vardhaman Mahavira.
- The first Tirthankara is believed to be Rishabhanath or Rishabhadev.
- The 23rd Tirthankara was Parshvanatha who was born in Varanasi. He may have lived in the 8th or 7th century BC.
- All the Tirthankaras were Kshatriyas by birth.

Vardhaman Mahavira (539- 467 B.C.)

- Considered the last Tirthankara.
- He was born at Kundagrama near Vaisali.
- His parents were Kshatriyas. Father – Siddhartha (Head of Jnatrika Clan); Mother – Trishala (Sister of Lichchhavi chief Chetaka). (Chetaka's daughter married Haryanka King Bimbisara).
- He was married to Yasoda and had a daughter Anojja or Priyadarsana.
- At the age of 30, Vardhaman renounced his home and became a wandering ascetic.
- He also observed self-mortification.
- After 13 years of penance, he attained the highest spiritual knowledge called Kevala Jnan. He attained this at Jimbhikagrama village under a sal tree aged 42. This is called Kaivalya. Thereafter, he was called Mahavira, Jina, Jitendriya (one who conquered his senses), Nigrantha (free from all bonds) and Kevalin.
- He preached his teachings for 30 years and died at Pava (near Rajagriha) aged 72.

Causes of the rise of Jainism

- Vedic religion had become highly ritualistic.
- Jainism was taught in Pali and Prakrit thus was more accessible to the common man as compared to Sanskrit.
- It was accessible to people of all castes.
- Varna system had rigidified and people of the lower castes led miserable lives. Jainism offered them an honourable place.
- About 200 years after the death of Mahavira, a great famine in the Ganga valley prompted Chandragupta Maurya and Bhadrabahu (last Acharya of the undivided Jain sangha) to migrate to Karnataka. Jainism spread to Southern India after that.

Teachings of Jainism

- Mahavira rejected Vedic principles.
- He did not believe in God's existence. According to him, the universe is a product of the natural phenomenon of cause and effect.
- He believed in Karma and transmigration of the soul. The body dies but the soul does not.
- One will be punished or rewarded as per one's karma.
- Advocated a life of austerity and non-violence.
- Stressed on equality but did not reject the caste system, unlike Buddhism. But he also said that man may be 'good' or 'bad' as per his actions and not birth.
- Asceticism was taken to a great length. Starvation, nudity and self-mortification were expounded.

- Two elements of the world: Jiva (conscious) and Atma (unconscious).
- Triratnas of Jainism:
 1. Right faith
 2. Right knowledge
 3. Right conduct (observance of five vows)
 1. Ahimsa (non-violence)
 2. Satya (truth)
 3. Asteya (no stealing)
 4. Parigraha (no acquiring property)
 5. Brahmacharya (abstinence)

Split in Jainism

- When Bhadrabahu left for South India, Sthulabahu remained in the North with his followers.
- Sthulabahu changed the code of conduct and said that white clothes could be worn. Thus, split Jainism into two sects:
 1. Svetambaras: White-clad; Northerners
 2. Digambaras: Sky-clad (naked); Southerners

Jain Councils

First council

- Held at Pataliputra in the 3rd century BC.
- Presided by Sthulabahu.

Second Council

- Held at Vallabhi in Gujarat in the 5th century BC.
- Presided by Devardhigani.
- 12 Angas were compiled here.

Royal patrons of Jainism

South India

- Kadamba dynasty
- Ganga dynasty
- Amoghavarsha
- Kumarapala (Chalukya dynasty)

North India

- Bimbisara
- Ajatasatru
- Chandragupta Maurya
- Bindusara
- Kharavela