



Rise of New Religions: Jainism and Buddhism

The 6th century B.C. marked a transformative era in Indian history with the rise of new religions. **Opposition to the ritualistic and orthodox practices of the Brahmanas gave way to heterodox movements, notably Buddhism and Jainism,** which emerged as well-organized and widely-followed faiths.



Jainism and Buddhism

Reasons for the Rise of Jainism and Buddhism:

Causes for the rise of Jainism and Buddhism

Agricultural Economy

Reaction against Ritualism

Corruption in Religion

Rigid Caste System

Difficult Language

Political Situation



1. Social Stratification:

The rigid four-fold Varna system (Brahmanas, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, and Shudras) created inequality. Kshatriyas, including **Mahavira and Buddha**, challenged **Brahmanical dominance**, questioning their authority and privileges.



2. Agricultural Economy:

The new agrarian economy relied on cattle for plowing, but Vedic sacrifices that involved animal slaughter depleted cattle wealth. Jainism **and Buddhism promoted ahimsa (non-violence)**, opposing these practices.



3. Urban Growth and Trade:

The rise of cities like Kaushambi, Vaishali, and Benaras boosted trade and commerce. Vaishyas, who ranked low in the Varna system, supported Buddhism and Jainism for their egalitarian ideals, which **promoted non-violence and trade-friendly principles**.



4. Reaction to Materialism:

The new agrarian economy relied on cattle for plowing, but Vedic sacrifices that involved animal slaughter depleted cattle wealth. Jainism **and Buddhism promoted ahimsa (non-violence)**, opposing these practices.



5. Language of the People:

Using Pali (Buddhism) and Prakrit (Jainism), the common languages of the masses, these religions spread widely among ordinary people.



6. Curiosity and Debates:

Intellectual curiosity about life, death, and rebirth drove philosophical discussions in public **forums (Kutagara-shala-hut with a pointed roof) where philosophers debated, challenged rivals, and gained followers**. Jainism and Buddhism challenged Vedic authority, advocating liberation for all, irrespective of gender, class, or status.

Jainism: A Historical Overview

Jainism, one of the world's oldest religions, originated in India around the 6th century BCE, though its roots trace back earlier. **Vardhamana Mahavira, the 24th Tirthankara, propagated its core doctrines, emphasizing non-violence (ahimsa), asceticism, and self-discipline as paths to spiritual liberation.** Its fundamental beliefs in the eternal soul and karma have profoundly influenced Indian culture and spirituality.

Key Philosophical Foundations

- ◆ **No Creator God:** Jainism rejected the authority of the Vedas and the concept of a creator God.
- ◆ **Ahimsa (Non-violence):** All beings possess souls, necessitating non-violence.
- ◆ **Karma and Liberation:** Salvation is achieved through penance and ethical living guided by the **Three Jewels (Triratna)**:
 1. Right Knowledge (Samyak Jnana)
 2. Right Faith (Samyak Darshana)
 3. Right Conduct (Samyak Charitra)
- ◆ **Equality:** Mahavira opposed the caste system and emphasized universal brotherhood.

Five Great Vows

1. Non-violence (**Ahimsa**)
2. Truthfulness (**Satya**)
3. Non-stealing (**Asteya**)
4. Non-possession (**Aparigraha**)
5. Chastity (**Brahmacharya**)



Core Doctrines of Jainism

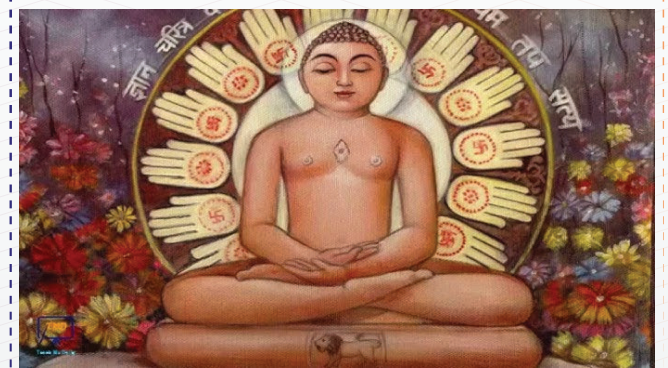
- ♦ **Anekantavada** – Emphasizes multiple perspectives, asserting that reality has infinite aspects. Human perception is limited, while omniscient beings (Kevalins) fully comprehend it. This doctrine promotes non-absolutism, recognizing the manifold nature of reality.
- ♦ **Syadavada** – Asserts that all judgments are conditional and context-dependent. Reality's complexity means no single statement can fully capture it. Prefixing "syat" ("maybe") to propositions encourages a conditional, non-dogmatic approach.
- ♦ **Nayavada** – Highlights partial viewpoints, suggesting reality can be understood from multiple perspectives. Each "naya" offers a partial truth, contributing to a broader understanding without claiming absolute validity.



Tirthankaras of Jainism

Jain tradition identifies 24 Tirthankaras ("ford-makers") who guide souls across the cycle of existence.

- ♦ The names of two Jain Tirthankaras – **Rishabha and Arishtanemi** – are found in the Rig Veda.
- ♦ **Mahavira** added Brahmacharya, completing the five doctrines.



Some important Tirthankaras:

Tirthankara	Symbol	Birthplace	Moksha
1. Rishabhanath	Bull	Ayodhya	Mount Kailash
23. Parshwanath	Serpent	Varanasi	Shikharji
24. Mahavira	Lion	Kundgrama (Bihar)	Pavapuri (Bihar)

Jain Councils

Council	1 st Jain Council	2 nd Jain Council
Year	300 BCE	512 CE
Location	Pataliputra	Vallabhi
Chairperson	Sthulabhadra	Devridhigani Kshmasramana
Outcome	Compilation of 12 Angas	Final compilation of 12 Angas & Upangas



Spread of Jainism

- ◆ Jainism spread to **Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Rajasthan, and Gujarat.**
- ◆ Influential patrons included:
 - **Bimbisara, Ajatshatru, and Chandragupta Maurya.**
 - Southern dynasties like the Gangas and Rashtrakutas.
- ◆ Jainism remained largely confined to India, unlike Buddhism.

Decline of Jainism

- 1. Lack of Royal Patronage:** Post-Maurya rulers favored Buddhism or Hinduism.
- 2. Stringent Practices:** Rigorous asceticism limited mass appeal.
- 3. Sectarian Divisions:** Conflicts between Digambaras and Shvetambaras weakened unity.
- 4. Complex Philosophy:** Doctrines were inaccessible to the masses.
- 5. Buddhism's Popularity:** Buddha's "middle path" approach appealed more widely.



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