



# Tirthankar Mahaveer

‘धम्मो मंगलं मुक्किटं अहिंसा संजमो तवो । देवा वित्तं नमसंती जस्स धम्मो सया मणो।।’

Non-violence, restraint, and austerity are the best religions. Bhagwan Mahaveer, who believed in this, was Jainism's twenty-fourth (24th) Tirthankara. Bhagwan Mahavir Ji was born about two and a half thousand years ago (599 years before BC) in the Ayodhya Ikshvakuvanshi Kshatriya family in the Kundagram of Vaishali. At the age of thirty, Mahavir Ji renounced the kingdom's glory after becoming detached from the world and, after adopting sannyasa, went on the path of Moksha. After 12 years of hard penance, he attained Keval Gyan, after which he disseminated knowledge in Samvasaran. At the age of 72, he attained Moksha in Pavapuri. During this time, Mahavir Swami had many followers, including the prominent kings of the time, Bimbisara, Kunika, and Chetak.

When Vardhaman was 28 years old, his parents passed away, and his elder brother Nandivardhan succeeded his father. Vardhman desired freedom from worldly attachments and sought permission from his brother to renounce his royal life. His brother tried to drive him away from his resolve, but Vardhaman stuck to his insistence. His brother insisted on staying for a few more days. Then he could not refuse and continued to practice fasting and meditation at home. At the age of 30, he finally left his home and adopted the ascetic life of a monk. He renounced his possessions, put on a piece of cloth, and chanted "Namo Siddhanam" (I bow to the liberated souls), leaving behind all his worldly attachments.

According to Jain philosophy, Bhagwan Mahavir was the twenty-fourth and last Jain Tirthankara. Born as Vardhman, he gets recognized as a Bhagwan Mahavir. At the age of 30, Vardhamana left his home in search of spiritual awakening, and for the next twelve and

a half years, he did severe meditation and penance, after which he became omniscient. After attaining enlightenment, he travelled throughout the Indian subcontinent to teach Jain philosophy for the next 30 years.

Due to the dominance of Brahmins, they considered their caste superior to other castes. The established caste system considered Harikeshi (Harikeshbal), or the so-called Shudra Chandal, the lowest fold of society. Bhagwan Mahavir Ji made them Shramana Muni by giving them a high position in the Chaturvidha Sangha. It was impossible in those days. According to his thoughts, humans are elevated and low not by birth but by actions.

Bhagwan Mahavir Ji also showed opposition to the slavery system. Champa, the capital of the country Ang, Princess Chandana, was kidnapped and sold in the slave market. He broke the fast of one hundred and seventy-five days by taking the grain from the hand of that maidservant, Princess Chandana. Bhagwan Mahavir was an extraordinary person in history who executed the great mantra of Sarvodaya.

The term 'Sati Sadhvi' was used by erasing the then traditional meaning of 'Sati.' Bhagwan Mahavir Ji made Chandana the head of the Shramik Sangh and placed many other women in the Place of 'Sati Sadhvi.' Mahaveer was unique, but he was the originator of Sarvodaya. Bhagwan Mahavir Ji has started Jainism and reorganization of religion and Jain Sangh. Bhagwan Mahavir considered men and women to be spiritually equal, and he believed that both of them could attain the Moksha. Bhagwan Mahavir Ji encouraged the participation of all walks of life, rich and poor, Savarna and Shudra men-women. Bhagwan Mahavir Ji preached that the natural way to attain liberation from the cycle of karma is through Samyak darshan (Right faith), Samayak Gyan (Proper knowledge), and Samyak Charitra (Right character). Gandhara Gautam Swami further elaborated these three basic principles in the holy scriptures in twelve parts known as the 12 Agamas. The teachings of Bhagwan Mahaveer were compiled by his disciples into the Agam Sutras and were communicated to the ordinary people through oral recitation.

There are 5 Principles vows mentioned in the scriptures that monks and ordinary disciples must observe. These five fundamental vows are as follows.

1. Ahimsa (non-violence) - Not to harm any living being.
2. Satyavadata (truth) - Speaking only harmless truth.
3. astheya (Not to steal) - Not to consume what is not given.
4. Shuddhta (celibacy) - Not to indulge in sensual pleasures.
5. aparigraha (Non-attachment) – Complete detachment from people, places, and material things.

The spiritual philosophy of Bhagwan Mahaveer comprises eight major principles – three of them spiritual and five moral. Jains believe in the eternal existence of the universe - it is neither created nor can be destroyed. Bhagwan Mahaveer thought that the universe comprises six eternal substances - soul, space, time, material atom, the medium of motion, and the medium of rest. These independent components transform to form the multifaceted reality in which mortals exist.

Bhagwan Mahaveer introduced the philosophy of Anekantavada (the principle of non-absolutism) which refers to the pluralism of existence. It teaches that truth and reality can be different when viewed from different perspectives and that no single point of view represents absolute truth.

Bhagwan Mahavir exhorted all humanity to follow the path of truth and non-violence. In 527 AD, he left his mortal body on the new moon of Kartik month at Pawapuri in Bihar.

Ankita Khane

[ankita.khane@ssfoffice.in](mailto:ankita.khane@ssfoffice.in)

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