
Before Buddhism & Jainism — The Background (Vedic → Later Vedic → Mahajanapada Age)

1. After Harappan Civilization

- Harappan cities declined around **1500 BCE**.
- Around that time, **Aryans** migrated into India — bringing **Vedic culture**.
- Early Vedic period: focus on **rituals, sacrifices, nature worship (Agni, Indra, Varuna)**.
- Society: **Tribal**, pastoral, simple life.
- Economy: **Cattle = wealth**, agriculture just beginning.
- Politics: small **janapadas** ruled by chiefs (*rajas*).

2. Later Vedic Period (1000–600 BCE)

- Agriculture & iron tools improved — people settled more permanently.
- Society became **complex** → caste divisions deepened (Brahmins on top).
- Religion became **ritualistic** — heavy sacrifices, costly yajnas.
- Ordinary people were **discontented** — spirituality became mechanical.
- Kings became **powerful**, and states merged into larger **Mahajanapadas**.

3. Mahajanapada Age (600–300 BCE)

16 great kingdoms and republics — the “Age of Transformation”.

Major Mahajanapadas

- **Magadha** (most powerful — later home to Mauryan Empire)
- **Kosala, Vatsa, Avanti, Kuru, Panchala, Malla, Vajji**, etc.

Life during Mahajanapadas

- Use of **iron ploughs**, new **agriculture techniques**, trade expanded.
- First **urban centres** reappeared after Harappans — **cities like Rajagriha, Vaishali**.
- **Coins (Punch-marked)** came into use → monetary economy.
- **Social tension** rose — caste rigidity, high taxes, dominance of Brahmins.
- **People began to question rituals and inequality** — seeking *peaceful, personal* spirituality.

➡ This is where **Buddhism and Jainism** were born — around **6th century BCE** — as *reform movements*.

Rise of Buddhism & Jainism (6th century BCE)

Common Causes

1. Revolt against **Vedic ritualism and caste system**.
 2. Need for a **simple moral code** accessible to all.
 3. Urbanization → people wanted **ethical living** in new social order.
 4. New **merchant class** (Vaishyas) supported these ideas — they liked the emphasis on **non-violence, truth, and simplicity**.
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Buddhism

Founder: Gautama Buddha (563–483 BCE)

- Born in **Lumbini** (Nepal) to **Shakya clan of Kapilavastu**.
- At 29, left home (“Great Renunciation”) to seek end of suffering.
- Attained **Enlightenment at Bodh Gaya** under Bodhi tree.
- Preached first sermon at **Sarnath (Deer Park)** — “Dharmachakra Pravartana”.

- Died at **Kushinagar** — “Mahaparinirvana”.
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Core Teachings

Four Noble Truths

1. Life is full of **suffering** (*dukkha*).
2. Cause of suffering is **desire** (*tanha*).
3. Ending desire ends suffering.
4. Follow **Eightfold Path** to end desire.

Eightfold Path (Middle Way)

👉 Right view, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration.

Middle Path

- Avoids both extreme luxury and severe austerity.

Goal: Nirvana (freedom from cycle of birth and death).

Monastic & Social Life

- **Sangha**: Community of monks & nuns; lived by discipline (*Vinaya*).
 - **Equality** — rejected caste; accepted all (men, women, poor).
 - Promoted **non-violence**, compassion, and truth.
 - Supported by **kings and merchants** (especially Bimbisara & Ashoka later).
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Buddhist Councils

1. **First (Rajagriha)** – Teachings compiled.

2. **Second (Vaishali)** – Monastic discipline.
 3. **Third (Pataliputra)** – During Ashoka; spread to Sri Lanka.
 4. **Fourth (Kashmir)** – Under Kanishka; Mahayana Buddhism emerged.
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Spread

- Spread across **India**, then **Sri Lanka, Myanmar, China, Japan, Tibet**.
 - **Ashoka's patronage** made it a *world religion*.
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Jainism

Founder: Vardhamana Mahavira (599–527 BCE)

- 24th **Tirthankara** (spiritual teacher).
 - Born in **Vaishali (Bihar)**; prince of Licchavi clan.
 - At 30, renounced world; attained **Kaivalya (omniscience)** at 42.
 - Preached till his death at **Pavapuri**.
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Core Teachings

Three Jewels (Ratnatraya)

1. Right Faith (*Samyak Darshan*)
2. Right Knowledge (*Samyak Gyan*)
3. Right Conduct (*Samyak Charitra*)

Five Great Vows (Mahavratas)

1. Non-violence (*Ahimsa*)

2. Truth (*Satya*)
3. Non-stealing (*Asteya*)
4. Celibacy (*Brahmacharya*)
5. Non-possession (*Aparigraha*)

Goal: Liberation (*Moksha*) through purity of thought and action.

Social & Economic Aspects

- Strong emphasis on **Ahimsa**, so followers were often **merchants**, not farmers (to avoid killing insects).
 - **Rejects caste system** and Vedic rituals.
 - Encouraged **simple life, meditation, and self-control**.
 - Society became more **ethical, non-violent**, and **urbanized**.
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Jain Councils

1. **First at Pataliputra** – compiled teachings (Agamas).
 2. **Second at Vallabhi (Gujarat)** – finalized Jain canon (6th century CE).
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Spread

- Spread mainly in **Western India** — Gujarat, Rajasthan, Karnataka, Bihar.
 - Supported by **trading communities**.
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Comparison Table (For Govt. Exam Quick Revision)

| Aspect | Buddhism | Jainism |
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|--------|----------|---------|

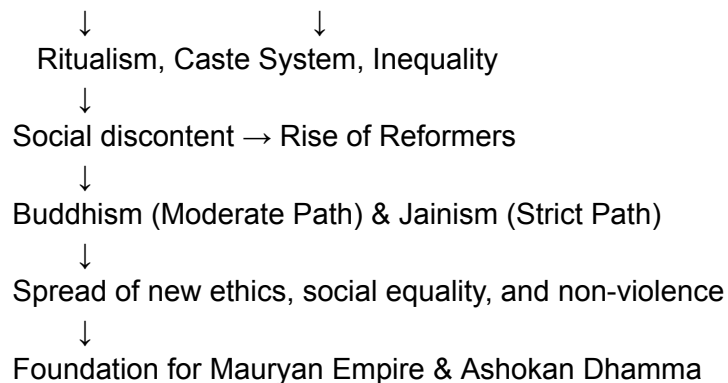
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|---------------|--------------------------|--------------------|
| Founder | Gautama Buddha | Mahavira |
| Goal | Nirvana | Moksha |
| Method | Middle Path (Moderation) | Extreme Austerity |
| View on God | Silent (Agnostic) | No Creator God |
| Non-violence | Ethical principle | Absolute principle |
| Language used | Pali | Prakrit |
| Spread | India → Asia | Mostly India |
| Supporters | Kings (Ashoka) | Merchants |
| Texts | Tripitaka | Agamas |

Significance & Impact

1. Weakened **Brahminical dominance**.
 2. Promoted **moral living, non-violence, equality**.
 3. Supported **urban life and trade ethics**.
 4. Influenced **art and architecture** — stupas, rock-cut caves, pillars.
 5. Laid foundation for **Mauryan unity and Ashokan Dhamma**.
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Visual Summary (Imagine it like a flow chart)

Harappan Civilization → Vedic Period → Later Vedic Age → Mahajanapadas



Would you like me to make a **PDF summary** of this (with diagrams and comparison tables)**
for revision notes** — the kind you can quickly read before exams?