



LAST MINUTE PRELIMS RECKONER 2025

ART & CULTURE

BUDDHISM AND JAINISM

About this material

This material is a summary of Buddhism and Jainism from AL Basham's 'The wonder that was India'. All of the UPSC questions except one about these philosophies from 2011-19 could have been answered using this information.

BUDDHISM

- ✓ **Originated:** end of the sixth the beginning and of the fifth century B.C.
- ✓ The followers are also called as **yellow-robed followers**

BUDDHA'S LIFE:

- ✓ He was the son of a chief of The Sakyas, Himalayan small tribe of the foothills.
- ✓ **His Mother Mahamayas Dream:** In divine lake Anavatapta in Himalayas he was bathed by the heavenly guardians and a **white elephant with lotus** in his trunk approached her and entered her side (**Depicted in many sculptures and stupas throughout India as Maya's dream**)
- ✓ Name : Siddhartha
- ✓ Born : Grove of Sal trees called **Lumbini** near Kapilavastu, the Sakhya capital
- ✓ Charioteer's name : Channa
- ✓ Name of his Horse : Kanthaka
- ✓ **Mahabhinishkramana:** Means "The Great Going Forth" – The term is used for the event when Buddha went out and became a wandering ascetic.
- ✓ At Gaya, under the (Peepal tree) Tree of wisdom (Bodhi)- Attained enlightenment
- ✓ **1st sermon:** Deer park, near Banaras (the modern Saranath)
- ✓ 1st Sermon called as **Set in motion the Wheel of the Law**
- ✓ For many years, he taught in the kingdoms of **Kosala and Magadha** and tribal lands north of Ganges and had a group of followers
- ✓ A disciplined body of **monks are called as bhiksus** literally beggars
- ✓ At the request of his foster mother and aunt, **Krsa- Gautami**, he allowed with much misgiving the formation of a community of nuns
- ✓ **Sangha:** literally Society, **The buddhist Order**
- ✓ **Died:** Sometime between 486 and 473 BC at Kushinagara---> under a sal tree
- ✓ **Final Blowing out: Parinirvana**

AFTER BUDDHAS DEATH:

- ✓ **Viharas**, which were both monasteries and temples.
- ✓ **Chaityas** or sacred spots
- ✓ After his death **Buddha was worshipped in his symbols:** the stupa, recalling his parinirvana, and the tree, recalling his enlightenment.
- ✓ **1st council:**
 - At **Rajagriha**, Capital of Magadha.
 - At this council **Upali**, one of the chief disciples, recited the **Vinaya Pitaka** (rules of the order) and **Ananda**, another disciple, recited **Sutta Pitaka**, the great collection of the Buddha's sermons on matters of ethics doctrine and ethics
- ✓ **2nd Council--> Vaisali-** 100 years after Buddhas death
 - Here the Order broke into two sections:
 - **Sthaviravadins** or Believers in the Teaching of the Elders

- **Mahasanghikas** or Members of Great community
 - The minor points of discipline on which the Order divided were soon followed by doctrinal differences of much greater importance.
- ✓ **3rd Council** ---> **Pataliputra** under patronage of **Asoka**:
 - resulted in expulsion of many heretics and the establishment of the **Sthaviravada school as Orthodox**.
 - At this council it is said that the last section was added to the Pali scriptures, the **Kathdvatthu of the Abhidhamma Pitaka**, dealing with psychology and metaphysics.
 - Another very important sect, the **Sarvastivadins**, was strong in the region of Mathura and in Kashmir.
- ✓ **4th Council**:
 - In **Kashmir** under the patronage of **Kaniska** (1st—2nd century AD), at which the **Sarvastivadin doctrines** were codified in a summary, the **Mahavibhasa**.
- ✓ It was chiefly among the **Sarvastivadins**, but also to an extent in **Mahasanghikas**, that new ideas developed, which were to form the basis of the division of Buddhism into the "**Great**" and "**Lesser Vehicles**" (**Mahayana and Hinayana**).

THREE VEHICLES OF BUDDHISM

- ✓ The **Great Vehicle (Mahayana)** became rapidly popular in many parts of India, for it fitted the mood of the times and the needs of many simple people better than did the **Lesser Vehicle (Hinayana)**, which soon began to lose ground.
- ✓ In Ceylon, however, the **Lesser Vehicle** resisted all the attacks of the new sects and thence it was taken to Burma, Siam and other parts of South-East Asia, where it became the national religion.
- ✓ **The Great Vehicle**, on the other hand, itself soon divided by various schisms, was carried by a succession of Indian monks to China and thence to Japan.
- ✓ **Hiuen Tsang**, in the 7th century, found the Lesser Vehicle almost extinct in most of India, and only flourishing in a few parts of the West;
- ✓ During the period, Buddhism as a whole was already declining. But the faith was still important, and had thousands of monks and many prosperous monasteries.
- ✓ Chief of these was **Nalanda**, which, under the **patronage of kings of the Pala line**, remained a center of Buddhist piety and learning until the Muslim invasion.
- ✓ From the end of the Gupta period onwards Indian religion became more and more permeated with primitive ideas of **sympathetic magic and sexual mysticism**, and Buddhism was much affected by these developments.
- ✓ **A third vehicle, "the Vehicle of the Thunderbolt" (Vajrayana)** appeared in Eastern India in the 8th century, and grew rapidly in Bengal and Bihar.
- ✓ It was this form of Buddhism, modified by primitive local cults and practices, which was finally **established in Tibet**, in the 11th century, as a result of missions sent from **the great Vajrayana monastery of Vikramashila, in Bihar.**

- ✓ A fanatical Saivite king of Bengal, Saṅkha, almost destroyed the Tree of Wisdom at Gaya.
- ✓ Decline of Buddhism was not only due to persecution but also revival and reformation of Hinduism

BUDDHIST CANON

The canon contains 3 sections called **baskets / pitaka**:

1. Vinaya (Conduct) pitaka:

- Contains pronouncements attributed to the Buddha, laying down **numerous rules for the conduct of the Order**

2. Sutta (Sermon) pitaka: The largest and most important of the "Three Baskets", it is divided into five "Groups" (Nikaya):

- **Digha (Long) Nikaya**, a collection of long sermons ascribed to the Buddha, with accounts of the circumstances in which he preached them.
- **Majjhima (Medium) Nikaya**, shorter sermons.
- **Samyutta (Connected) Nikaya**, collections of brief pronouncements on kindred topics.
- **Anguttara (Graduated) Nikaya**, a collection of over 2,000 brief statements,
- **Khuddaka (Minor) Nikaya**, miscellaneous works in prose and verse. Among the contents of the Khuddaka are the
 - **Dhammapada** ("Verses on Virtue")
 - **Theragatha and the Therigatha** ("Hymns of the Elder Monks and Nuns respectively), which contain some of India's greatest religious poetry,
 - And the **Jataka**, a collection of over 600 poems, briefly outlining folktales and other stories, which were originally intended to be told in the words of a narrator.

3. Abhidhamma (Metaphysics) pitakas

- The third Pitaka, Abhidhamma, consists of a number of drily pedantic works on **Buddhist psychology and metaphysics**, and is of little interest except to the specialist. It is certainly later than the other two Pitakas.
- ✓ Besides the canon and its many commentaries, there are several semi-canonical works. Chief of these is the "Questions of Menander" (**Milinda-panha**), an account of the discussions of the Greco- Bactrian king and the monk Nagasena
- ✓ Of a different character are the **verse chronicles** which tell the history of Buddhism in Ceylon, and give valuable information on political and social history also.
 - **Dipavamsa (the "Island Chronicle")** dates from the 4th century AD, and has no literary merit.
 - **Mahavamsa ("Great Chronicle")** of the following century, contains passages of beauty and vigour. It was continued as the **Culavamsa ("Lesser Chronicle")** by a succession of monks down to the fall of the kingdom of Kandy to the British at the beginning of the 19th century.

FUNDAMENTAL TEACHINGS OF BUDDHISM:

- ✓ This contains the "**Four Noble Truths**", and the "**Noble Eightfold Path**", which are accepted as basic categories by all Buddhist sects.
- ✓ **Four Noble truth:**
 - Noble Truth of Sorrow
 - Noble Truth of the Arising of Sorrow, -- it arises from thirst
 - Noble Truth of the Stopping of Sorrow
 - Noble Truth of the Way which Leads to the Stopping of Sorrow.
- ✓ It is the **Noble Eightfold Path:**
 - Right Views, Right Resolve, Right Speech, Right Conduct, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Recollection, Right Meditation.

About Soul:

- ✓ There is **no immortal soul**.
- ✓ The **universe is soulless**. In transmigration nothing passes over from one life to another—only a new life arises as part of the chain of events which included the old.
- ✓ Even the **gods are soulless**
- ✓ The Buddhism of the Lesser Vehicle is therefore a religion without souls and without god.
- ✓ No Buddhist teacher was rash enough to deny the existence of the gods outright, but they are thought of as beings in no way supernatural or different from man except in their greater happiness and power.

The doctrines which we have described are those of the Sthaviravadin sect of the Lesser Vehicle, which is the only surviving sect of that branch of Buddhism, and is today dominant in Ceylon, Burma, Siam, Cambodia and Laos.

- ✓ Other sects of the Lesser Vehicle are:
 - **Sarvastivadins** (They who say "All is"), who had a canon in Sanskrit, and who differed from the Sthaviravadins in their view that the constituents of phenomena (dharma) were not wholly momentary, but existed forever in a latent form.
 - **Sautrantikas**, who maintained that our knowledge of the outside world was only a feasible inference, and who were well on the way to the idealism of some schools of the Great Vehicle.
 - **Sammitiyas**, even went so far as to reject the doctrine of soullessness and to postulate a sort of soul in the pudgala or person, which passed from life to life.
- ✓ As per the Lesser Vehicle there were **four Buddhas** (Krakucchanda, Kanakamuni, Kasyapa, and Sakyamuni), and a fifth (**Maitreya**) is yet to come.

The Great Vehicle

- ✓ **Bodhisattva doctrine** was a hallmark of the Mahayana, the Great Vehicle.
- ✓ The Bodhisattva was thought of in the schools of the Great Vehicle not as a being who was soon to become a Buddha, **but as one who would bide his time until even the smallest insect had reached the highest goal.**
- ✓ The old ideal of the **Arhant**, the "Worthy", who achieved Nirvana and would be reborn no

more, began to be looked on as rather selfish.

- ✓ Instead of striving to become Arhants men should aim at becoming Bodhisattvas, and by the spiritual merit which they gained assist all living things on the way to perfection.
- ✓ The universe of the Great Vehicle contains numerous Bodhisattvas, like
 - **Avalokitesvara** ("The Lord who Looks Down"), also called Padmapani ("The Lotus-Bearer")
 - **Manjusri**, whose special activity is to stimulate the understanding, and who is depicted with a naked sword in one hand, to destroy error and falsehood
 - **Vajrapani**, a sterner Bodhisattva, is the foe of sin and evil, and, like the god Indra, bears a thunderbolt in his hand.
 - The gentle **Maitreya**, the future Buddha, is worshipped as a Bodhisattva.
 - **Ksitigarbha**, the guardian of the purgatories, who is thought of not as a fierce torturer, but rather as the governor of a model prison, doing his best to make life tolerable for his charges, and helping them to earn remission of sentence.
 - In Mahayana heaven, **Sukhavati, the "Happy Land"** the blessed are reborn in the buds of lotuses. This divine Buddha is usually called **Amitabha (Immeasurable Glory)**, or **Amitayus (Immeasurable Age)**.
 - He too shares the compassion of the Bodhisattva, for, though he enjoys endless and infinite bliss, he maintains an interest in his world, and especially in his heaven.

LITERATURES OF THE GREATER VEHICLE

- **Vaipulya Sutras ("Expanded Sermons ")**: sermons of the Buddha, but of much greater length than those of the Sutta Pitaka;
- **Lalitavistara**, a flowery narrative of the life of the Buddha
- **Saddharmapundarika ("The Lotus of the Good Law")**, a long series of dialogues of considerable literary merit;
- **Vajracchedika ("Diamond Cutter")**, containing important metaphysical writing;
- **Sukhavativyuha**, describing the glories of Amitabha and his paradise;
- **Karandavyuha**, glorifying Avalokiteśvara
- **Ashtasahasrika Prajnaparamita**, a work describing the spiritual perfections of the Bodhisattvas
- The Great Vehicle had **two chief philosophical schools**:
 - 1) **the Madhyamika and**
 - 2) **the Yogacara**

Madhyamika and Yogacara

- **Madhyamika ("Intermediate") School**, so called because it took a line midway between the uncompromising realism of the Sarvastivadins and the idealism of the Yogacara. **Nagarjuna**, whose **Madhyamika Karika** formed the basic text of the school.
- The **Yogacara ("Way of Union") or Vijnanavadin School** completely rejected the realism of the Lesser Vehicle, and maintained a thorough-going idealism, not even allowing the qualified realism of the Madhyamikas.

- Important Philosopher of this school was **Asanga**, a monk of Peshawar of the 4th or 6th century, whose **Sutralankara** is the earliest text of the school.
- Among the most important writings of Yogacara is the **Lankavatara Sutra**

The Vehicle of the Thunderbolt (Vajrayana)

- **The Lesser Vehicle** taught that release was obtained by the gradual loss of individuality through self-discipline and meditation;
- **The Great Vehicle** added that the grace and help of the heavenly Buddhas and Bodhisattvas assisted the process.
- The followers of the new teachings taught that it could be best **attained by acquiring magical power**, which they called **vajra** (thunderbolt, or diamond).
- Hence the new school of Buddhism was called **Vajrayana, the Vehicle of the Thunderbolt**.
- The new Vehicle developed, to be codified and given dignity under the **Pala kings of Bengal and Bihar**.
- Even in the 7th century Xuan Zang found certain monasteries permeated with magical practices.
- The chief divinities of the new sect were the "**Saviouresses**" (**Taras**), the spouses of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.
- There were also a host of lesser divinities, many called by the names of demons, such as "**outcaste women**" (**matangis**), **demonesses (pisacis)**, **sorceresses (yoginis)**, and **she-ghouls (dakinis)**.
- The Buddhas and Bodhisattvas with their Taras were often depicted with many arms in ferocious poses.
- it was thought that these deities should be compelled rather than persuaded.
- The textbooks outlining the means of doing this (sadhan) were called Tantras, and hence the new cult is often referred to as **tantric**.
- By pronouncing the **right formula (mantra)** in the correct manner, or by drawing the **correct magical symbol (yantra)**, one might force the gods to bestow magical power on the worshipper and lead him to the highest bliss.
- **Tantric Buddhism did not neglect the techniques of mental training** which were part of all the chief religions of India, but their direction was altered. Their primary purpose was to obtain supernormal power
- Drinking of alcohol, meat-eating, killing of animals, and sometimes even of human beings—every imaginable sin—were practised at the tantric Covens, however under a strict control

THE BUDDHIST ORDER

- **Membership of the Buddhist Order** was not restricted by caste, but slaves, soldiers, debtors, and other persons under obligation or in tutelage might not enter it without the permission of their superior.
- The rites of admission were simple, involving putting on the three yellow or orange robes of the Order, ceremonially shaving the head, and pronouncing the **Three Jewels** ("I go for

refuge to the Buddha; I go for refuge to the Doctrine (Dharma) ; I go for refuge to the Order (Sangha)." and the **"Ten Precepts"**.

- if any monk felt that he could no longer honestly maintain them he might leave the Order quite freely, though public opinion tended to frown on the backslider.
- The **chief monk, or abbot**, was not appointed from above or nominated by his predecessor, but held office by the suffrage of all the monks in the monastic Parish.
- The monks assembled every fortnight on the evenings of the full and new moons for **upavasatha** (in Pali, uposatha), an act of general confession. The long list of monastic rules (**Pratimoksa**, in Pali Patimokkha) from the **Vinaya Pitaka** was read, and each monk confessed any breaches which he had committed during the preceding Fortnight.

Buddhism inculcates a high system of ethics. The Noble Eightfold Path, whereby a man attains Nirvana, is not merely a matter of belief or knowledge, but also of conduct, and **the Four Cardinal Virtues** of Buddhism **love, pity, joy, and serenity** are more positive in character than the non-violence and abstinence of the Upanisads



JAINISM

- ✓ Jainism, the "Religion of the Conquerors" (jinas) was founded by Vardhamana Mahavira.
- ✓ Unlike Buddhism, there were no fundamental changes and developments in Jaina doctrine.

History of Mahavira

- ✓ **Born** about 540 BC.
- ✓ **Father: Siddhartha**, a chief of the clan of Jnatrikas, the associates of the Licchavis of Vaisali
- ✓ **Mother:** Trisala was the sister of the Licchavi chief Cetaka
- ✓ Educated as a prince, and married and had a daughter
- ✓ **At the age of thirty**, when his parents were dead, he left his home for a life of asceticism.
- ✓ At first, he followed the practices of an ascetic group called the **Nirgranthas** ('Free from Bonds'), which had been founded some 200 years earlier by a certain **Parsva**.
- ✓ The term Nirgrantha was later used for the members of the order which Mahavira founded, and **Parsva was remembered as the 23rd of the 24 great teachers or Tirthankaras** ("Fordmakers") of the Jaina faith.
- ✓ For over twelve years, Vardhamana wandered from place to place, begging his bread, meditating, disputing, and subjecting his body to austerities of all kinds.
- ✓ For some six years his hardships were shared by another ascetic, **Gosala Maskariputra**. They two quarreled, and Gosala left Vardhamana to found the sect of **Ajivikas**.
- ✓ In the thirteenth year of his asceticism, Vardhamana found full enlightenment and Nirvana; he became a "**Worthy**" (**Arhant**), a "**Conqueror**" (**Jina**), a "**Ford-maker**".
- ✓ For thirty years, he taught in the Gangetic kingdoms.
- ✓ Died of self-starvation at the age of seventy-two, in the town of **Pava**, near the Magadhan capital **Rajagrh**. probably in 168 BC.

JAINIST SECTS:

- ✓ According to a strongly held Jaina tradition, **Chandragupta Maurya** joined the order as a monk on his abdication
- ✓ A serious famine at the end of Chandragupta's reign led to a great exodus of Jaina monks from the Ganges to the Deccan, where they established important centers of their faith.
- ✓ After this migration, Jainism divided into two, based on monastic discipline:
 - **Bhadrabahu**, the elder of the community, who had led the emigrants, had insisted on the retention of the rule of nudity, which Mahavira had established. the **Digambaras** ("Space-clad", i.e., naked)
 - **Sthulabhadra**, the leader of the monks who had remained in the North, allowed his followers to wear white garments, owing to the hardships and confusions of the famine. **Svetambaras** ("White-clad").
- ✓ But they had no fundamental doctrinal differences.

DOCTRINE:

- ✓ Jainism, like Buddhism, is **fundamentally atheistic**, in that, while not denying the existence of the gods, it refuses them any important part in the universal scheme.

- ✓ The world, for the Jaina, is not created, maintained or destroyed by a personal deity, but functions only according to universal law.
- ✓ The **universe is eternal**. Its existence is divided into an infinite number of cycles, each consisting of a period of improvement (**utsarpini**), and one of decline (**avasarpini**).
- ✓ Each period containing:
 - **Twenty-four Tirthankaras**
 - Twelve Universal Emperors (**Cacravartins**)
 - Sixty-three Great Men (**Salaka-purusas**)
- ✓ **1st Tirthankara** - Rishabhanatha (Adinatha)
- ✓ **23rd Tirthankara** - Parsva
- ✓ **24th Tirthankara** - Vardhamana Mahavira
- ✓ Unlike the cosmology of the Buddhists and Hindus, that of the Jainas involves no cataclysms of universal destruction.
- ✓ **Souls are not only the property of animal and plant life**, but also of entities such as stones, rocks, running water, and many other natural objects not looked on as living by other sects.
- ✓ The soul is naturally bright, all-knowing and blissful.
- ✓ **Karma** adheres to Soul and hence the cycle of transmigration continues indefinitely.
- ✓ On these premises' transmigration can only be escaped by dispelling the karma already adhering to the soul and ensuring that no more is acquired.
- ✓ The **annihilation (nirjara) of karma** comes about through **penance**, and the **prevention (samvara) of the influx (asrava) and fixation (bandha)** of karma in the soul
- ✓ It is ensured by carefully disciplined conduct
- ✓ When the soul has finally set itself free it rises at once to the top of the universe, where it remains in inactive omniscient bliss through all eternity. This, for the Jainas, is **Nirvana**.

Literature:

- ✓ **Sacred literature:**
 - According to tradition an oral had been passed down from the days of Mahavira.
 - **Sthulabhadra** called a **great council at Pataliputra**, and the canon was reconstructed as best possible in **twelve Angas**, or sections, which replaced the fourteen "former texts" (Purvas). (First Council)
 - **This canon was accepted only by the Svetambaras.**
 - The Digambaras claimed that the old canon was hopelessly lost, and proceeded to devise new scriptures for themselves, many of which are still unpublished.
 - The texts of the Svetambara canon were finally settled and reduced to writing at a **council at Valabhi in Kathiawar in the 5th century AD. (Second council)**
- ✓ **Commentarial and Secular literature:**
 - Written both in Prakrit and Sanskrit.
 - One of the last great poets in Sanskrit, **Nayacandra**, of the 14th century was a Jaina monk
 - **Mallinatha**, the author of the standard commentary on the poems of Kalidasa.

- ✓ Later times **Jainism is chiefly concentrated** in two regions:
 - Kathiawar, Gujarat and parts of Rajasthan, where the Svetambara sect prevailed.
 - The central part of the Peninsula, the modern Mysore and South Hyderabad, where Digambaras were dominant.

JAIN MONKS

- ✓ **Full salvation is not possible to the layman.** In this Jainism differs from Buddhism and Hinduism, which concede it in very exceptional cases.
- ✓ To attain Nirvana a man must abandon all trammels, including his clothes.
- ✓ Only by a long course of fasting, self-mortification, study and meditation, can he rid himself of karma, and only by the most rigorous discipline can he prevent fresh karma from entering his soul.
- ✓ Hence **a monastic life is essential for salvation.**
- ✓ The regimen of the Jaina monk was, and still is, strict in the extreme.
- ✓ The life of the monk was governed by five vows, abjuring
 - Killing
 - Stealing
 - Lying
 - Sexual Activity
 - Possession Of Property
- ✓ Jainas usually carried **feather dusters**, to brush ants and other insects from their path and save them from being trampled underfoot.
- ✓ **They wore veils over their mouths**, to prevent the minute living things in the air from being inhaled and killed.
- ✓ **No lay Jaina could take up the profession of agriculture**, since this involved not only the destruction of plant life, but also of many living things in the soil.
- ✓ Thus, in its insistence on ahimsa, or non-violence, Jainism went much further than any other Indian religion.