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Q1(d)

Impact of Jainism on Indian society

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2016 · Anthropology GS 2 · 10 marks · Impact of Buddhism, Jainism, Islam and Christianity on Indian society.

3.4 Impact of Buddhism, Jainism, Islam and Christianity on Indian society.

Core demand of the question

- Write a note on impact of Jainism on Indian society
- Keep the note to a 10-mark length of about 150 words

Revision summary

Jainism spread **ahimsa** and a vegetarian public ethic.

Merchant Jains shaped western Indian towns and credit.

Monasticism offered release outside Vedic sacrifice.

Jati-like ranks continued inside Jain society.

Hindu civilisation absorbed Jain shrines into a shared sacred map.

Introduction

Jainism shaped Indian society through **ahimsa**, merchant ethics, and a critique of Vedic sacrifice. It did not abolish jati, but it re-ranked food and occupation.

Body**Social effects**

- Lay Jains in western India became a trading and credit force. Towns still show Jain temples beside bazaars.
- **Ahimsa** pushed vegetarian public style that **Sanskritisation** later copied among many Hindu jatis.
- Monastic orders offered a path of release outside Brahmanical fire, parallel to Buddhism's sangha.

Limits

- Caste-like divisions persisted among Jains. Women and service groups did not become equal by doctrine alone.
- **N. K. Bose's** civilisation absorbed Jain shrines into the same sacred geography **Vidyarthi** mapped for Hindu tirthas.
- Impact is ethical and urban-mercantile more than a mass rural conversion.

Flow diagram

Jainism -> Ahimsa vegetarian style

Jainism -> Merchant towns

Jainism -> Monastic alternative

Conclusion

Jainism's impact is **ahimsa**, trade honour, and a non-Vedic monastic path. Indian society took the ethic without becoming a Jain nation.

Facts & figures

Ahimsa

Non-violence that influenced wider Indian food and occupation taboos.

Jain laity

Trading communities that tied faith to urban capital.

Sanskritisation

Later Hindu jatis often copied vegetarian style that Jain and Brahman ethics had prestige-marked.

N. K. Bose

Read such sects as strands inside one civilisational web.

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