

APPOLO STUDY CENTRE

TEST 10

Buddism and Jainism

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6th History

(Term II)

2. Great Thinkers and New Faiths

Intellectual Awakening

The Sixth Century BC (BCE) is regarded as an important period in the history of ancient India. As a land mark period in the intellectual and spiritual development in India, historian Will Durant has rightly called it the "shower of stars".

Sources

Literary sources

Angas – Jain texts
Tripitakas and Jatakas - Buddhist texts

Causes for the Rise of Intellectual Awakening and the Birth of Buddhism and Jainism. There were several reasons for the rise of new intellectual awakening. Some of the exploitative practices that paved way for new faiths include:

- The complex rituals and sacrifices advocated in the later Vedic period
- Expensive sacrificial ceremonies
- Superstitious beliefs and practices that confused the common man.
- Upanishads taught as alternative to sacrificial rites were too philosophical, which a layperson could not understand.

- Slavery, caste system, gender discrimination also contributed to the new awakening.

Origin of Jainism

Jainism is one of the world's oldest living religions. Jainism grounds itself in 24 Tirthankaras. A 'Tirthankara', is the one who revealed religious truth at different times. The first Tirthankara was Rishabha and the last one was Mahavira. Jainism gained prominence under the aegis of Mahavira, during the sixth century BC (BCE).

Mahavira (The Great Hero)

Vardhamana, meaning 'prosperous', was a kshatriya prince. However, at the age of 30, he renounced his princely status to adopt an ascetic life. He undertook intense meditation. After twelve and a half years of rigorous penance, Vardhamana attained omniscience or supreme knowledge, known as Kevala.

Thereafter, he became Jina meaning 'one who conquered worldly pleasure and attachment'. His followers are called Jains. Mahavira reviewed the ancient Sramanic traditions and came up with new doctrines. Therefore he is believed to be the real founder of Jainism.

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|----------------|---|----------------------------------|
| Original name | - | Vardhamana |
| Place of Birth | - | Kundhagrama near Vaishali, Bihar |
| Parents | - | Siddharth, Trishala |
| Place of Death | - | Pavapuri, Bihar |

Unique Teachings of Jainism

- Jainism denies God as the creator of Universe.
- Basic philosophy of Jainism is Ahimsa or 'non –Violence'.
- Ultimate aim of Jainism is attaining moksha or ending the cycle of birth – death – rebirth.
- Jains reject the belief in Last judgement, where God, a supreme being, decides who goes to heaven or hell.
- Jainism advocates that the goodness or quality of one's life is determined by one's karma.

Tri-rathnas or Three Jewels

Mahavira exhorted the three – fold path for the attainment of moksha and for the liberation from Karma. They are:

- Right Faith
- Right Knowledge
- Right action

Jain Code of Conduct

Mahavira asked his followers to live a virtuous life. In order to live a life filled with sound morals, he preached five major principles to follow.

They are:

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| Ahimsa | - | not to injure any living beings |
| Satya | - | to speak truth |
| Asteya | - | not to steal |
| Aparigraha | - | not to own property |
| Brahmacharya | - | Celibacy |

Digambaras and Svetambaras Jainism split into two sects.

Digambaras

- Digambaras are orthodox and conservative followers.
- Monks of the digambara sect, do not wear any clothing and live naked.
- They are forbidden to have any kind of possessions.
- Digambaras believe that women cannot achieve nirvana or liberation directly.

Svetambaras

- The Svetambaras are considered progressive.
- Monks of Svetambaras sect, wear white robes. They are permitted to have Rajoharana (broom with wollen threads), begging bowl and book.
- Svetambaras believe that women are equally capable of achieving liberation as men.
- Reasons for the Spread of Jainism

The following are the main reasons for the wide acceptance of Jainism in India

- Use of people's language.
- Intelligible teachings.
- Support from rulers and traders.
- Perseverance of Jain monks.
- Influence of Jainism (Samanam) in Tamil Nadu
- In ancient Tamil literature, Jainism is referred to as Samanam.
- There is a Samanar Hill or Samanar Malai in Keelakuyilkudi village, 15 km away from Madurai. The images of Tirthankaras created by Jain monks are found in the hill. It is a protected monument of Archaeological Survey of India.
- In Arittapatti, a small village 25 km from Madurai, on one side of Kalinjmalai hill there are Jain caves called Pandavar Padukkai. Pandavar Padukkai is the bed of Jain saints.
- There is a reference to Aravor Palli, place of living for Jain monks, in Manimegalai.

- According to Silapathikaram, when Kovalan and Kannagi were on their way to Madurai, Gownthiyadigal a female jain monk blessed the couple and accompanied them.
- Puhar, Uraiyur, Madurai, Vanchi (Karuvur), Kanchi all had Jain monasteries.
- Jina Kanchi – Thiruparthikundram, a village in Kanchipuram, has two ancient Jain temples. This village was once called Jina Kanchi.

Buddhism

Gautama Buddha

Gautama Buddha was the founder of Buddhism. His real name was Siddhartha. Like Mahavira, he was also a Kshatriya prince belonging to the ruling Sakya clan. When Siddhartha was only seven days old his mother died. So he was raised by his step mother Gautami.

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| Original name | - | Siddhartha |
| Place of Birth- | | Lumbini Garden, Nepal |
| Parents | - | Suddhodana, Maya devi |
| Place of Death | - | Kushi Nagar, UP |

Four Great Sights

- At the age of 29, Siddhartha saw four sorrowful sights. They were:
- An uncared old man in rags with his bent back.
- An sick man suffering from an incurable disease.
- A man's corpse being carried to the burial ground by weeping relatives.

An ascetic

Enlightenment

Buddha, the Awakened or Enlightened One, realised that the human life was full of misery and unhappiness. So at the age of 29 he left his palace and became a hermit. He sacrificed six years of his life towards penance. Nonetheless deciding that self-mortification was not a path to salvation, Buddha sat under a Pipal tree and undertook a deep meditation near Gaya.

- Buddha's Four Noble Truths
- Life is full of sorrow and misery.
- Desire is the cause of misery.
- Sorrows and sufferings can be removed by giving up one's desire.

The desire can be overcome by following the right path (Noble eight-fold path)

Eight Fold Path

- Right view
- Right Thought
- Right Speech
- Right Action
- Right Livelihood
- Right Effort
- Right Knowledge
- Right Meditation

The teachings of Lord Buddha were simple and taught in a language which people used for communication. Since the teachings addressed the everyday concern of the people, they could relate to them. He was opposed to rituals and sacrifices.

Teachings of Buddha

- Buddha's teachings are referred to as dhamma.
- Buddhism accepted the Theory of Karma – meaning that the quality of man's life depends on his deed.
- Buddha neither accepted nor denied the existence of God, but believed in the laws of universe.
- Buddha asserted that attaining nirvana is the ultimate aim of life.
- Buddha advocated ahimsa or non-violence.
- Buddha had rejected the caste system.
- The Wheel of life – represents the Buddhist view of the world.

Buddhist Sangha

Buddha laid foundation for a missionary organization called Sangha, meaning 'association' for the propagation of his faith. The members were called bhikshus (monks). They led a life of austerity.

Buddhist Sects

| Hinayana | Mahayana |
|----------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| • Did not ship idols or images of VBuddha. | • Worshiped images of Buddha. |
| • Practiced austerity. | • Observed elaborate rituals |
| • Believed that Salvation of the individual as its goal. | • Believed that salvation of all beings as its objective |
| • Used Prakrit language. | • Used Sanskrit language |
| • Hinayana is also known as Theravada. | • Spread to Central Asiam Ceylon, Burma, Nepal, Tibet, China, Japan, where middle path was accepted. |

Causes for the Spread of Buddhism

- Simplicity of the teachings of Buddha in local language appealed to people.
- Buddhism rejected elaborate religious customs whereas the practice of orthodox Vedic religion insisted on expensive rituals and sacrifices.
- Buddha's emphasis was on observance of Dhamma.
- Buddhist Sanghas played an important role in spreading the messages of Buddha.
- Royal patronage under Ashoka, Kanishka and Harsha also helped the causes of Buddhism.
- Viharas or the Buddhist monasteries became great centres of education. One such centre was Nalanda, where Hiuen Tsang, the Chinese pilgrim, studied for many years.

| Jainism and Buddhism – Similarities and Dissimilarities | | |
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| Similarities | Dissimilarities | |
| | Jainism | Buddhism |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both Mahavira and Buddha hailed from royal families. Yet they renounced royal privileges and chose to adopt an ascetic life. • Denied the authority of Vedas. • Taught in the language of the common people. • Admitted disciples from all the castes and from both the genders. • Opposed blood sacrifices. • Believed in the doctrine of Karma. • Emphasized on right conduct and right knowledge instead of performing religious ceremonials and rituals as the means to achieve salvation. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It followed extreme path. • It remained in India only. • It does not believe in the existence of god, but believes life in every living being. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It followed middle path. • It spread across many parts of the world. • It emphasise on ANATMA (no eternal soul) and ANITYA (impermanence). |

Influence of Buddhism in Tamilnadu

- Buddhism spread to Tamil Nadu much later than Jainism.
- Manimekalai, one of the epics of the post-Sangam age is a Buddhist literature.
- There is an elaborate description about Kanchipuram in classical epic Manimegalai.

- Kanchipuram was a famous Buddhist Centre, from where Dinnaga, the famous Buddhist logician, and Dharmapala, a great scholar of Nalanda University hailed.
 - Hieun Tsang who visited Kanchipuram in the seventh century A.D(CE). noticed the presence of 100 feet stupa built by Ashoka there.
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9th History

4. Intellectual Awakening and Socio-Political Changes

Introduction

The discovery of iron marked the beginning of the second phase in the history of civilisations. The invention of smelting of iron transformed both production and warfare. Before iron, copper and its alloy, bronze, which were expensive, were employed in production. The copper or bronze edges became blunt quickly and so implements, whether weapons or ploughs, made of bronze could not be used effectively. Iron ore, in contrast, was available in abundance compared to copper or bronze. The effect of iron axe on agriculture was immense. The iron axe enabled cultivators to clear the jungles and the iron plough was used to break the hardest soil. The Assyrian Empire, which made use of iron technology, was ascendant by the beginning of the seventh century BCE. Small kingdoms or city states emerged in China, Asia Minor (modern Turkey), Greece, Italy, Palestine, Lebanon and North Africa.

A new civilisation began to develop in northern India, with the revival of trade and urbanization during the sixth century BCE. In this period of major political and social changes in north India, Buddha and Mahavira were born. In the century following their death, Buddhism and Jainism took root as major religions in India. This meant that new religious orders were coming up with many followers, propagating new beliefs and philosophies. Similarly Zoroastrianism in Persia and Confucianism and Taoism in China became popular during this period.

Religion in the Sixth Century BCE

The new civilisations that emerged in the new Iron Age had certain common features. They were characterised by the proliferation of new crafts, growth of long-distance trade, building of cities and towns, rise of universalistic religions and evolution of a code of conduct. Sixth century BCE was, therefore, a period of exceptional development in all spheres of life such as material, cultural and intellectual. About this time, we find that a number of prominent men, great thinkers and founders of new religions lived, making it a period of great historical importance. Philosophical and religious thinkers such as Confucius in China, Zoroaster in Iran and Mahavira and Buddha in India gained popularity in sixth century BCE.

Confucia

In the sixth century BCE, two great thinkers were born in China: Confucius and Lao-Tse. They laid down the systems of morals and social behaviour for individuals and communities. But after their death, temples were built in their memory and the philosophy they taught was developed into a religion. Known as

Confucianism and Taoism respectively, their books were held in great reverence in China. Confucianism exerted a big influence on not only the political class of China but also on the common people.

Confucius (551–478 BCE)

Confucius was born in the Shantung province of China in 551 BCE. He studied history, poetry, philosophy and music. He is the author of five important works:

1. The Book of Records, which is chiefly ethical, providing guidelines for the regulation of human society;
2. The Book of Odes, illustrating the sound principles of morality in songs;
3. The Book of Changes dealing with metaphysics;
4. The Spring and Autumn Annals, a code of political morality; and
5. The Book of History narrating the events and legends of the early religions of China.

Five Cardinal Principles of Confucius' Ethics

1. Humaneness
2. Righteousness
3. Propriety;
4. Wisdom
5. Trustworthiness

Confucius said that wisdom grows from the family, and that the foundation of society is the disciplined individual in an orderly family. The superior man, according to him, is not merely intelligent or scholarly, but his character should be exemplary. The superior man of Confucius possesses three virtues: intelligence, courage and goodwill. Though Confucius insisted on children obeying parents and wife her husband, he also clearly proposed that "when the command is wrong a son should resist his father and a minister should resist the prince." When asked about government, he said that there are three requisites for it: "That there should be sufficiency of food, sufficiency of military equipment and confidence of the people in their ruler."

The philosophy of Confucius gave the Chinese people an awareness about their political rights. It also clearly listed the government's duty towards the people. Confucius felt that the government should work with an ideal. In matters of national life, Confucius felt that the people in the nation are the actual and proper source of political sovereignty. He advised that the ruler must appoint persons of character in the government to govern the people impartially. Confucianism is often characterised as a system of social and ethical philosophy rather than as a religion.

Taoism

Lao-Tse, the greatest of the pre-Confucian philosophers, was 53 years older than Confucius. Lao-Tse was born in 604 BCE. Disgusted with the intrigues of politicians and the prevailing corruption of his time, he left China to live in a peaceful abode. Lao-Tse wrote a book in two parts, running into 5,000 words. He then disappeared from the place and no one knew where he died. His book Tao Teh Ching is a guide to the conduct of life.

Teachings of Lao-Tse (Taoism)

- ü The cause of human unhappiness in the world is human selfishness. Selfishness creates unlimited human desires, which can never be satisfied.
- ü Innature,allthethingsactinanatural way. The law of human conduct must correspond with nature.
- ü Humans live a life under the regulation of someone. This is because they have acquired knowledge and have not remained innocent. On the basis of their acquired knowledge, they have built up an urban civilisation and have made themselves unhappy.

Zoroastrianism

Zoroastrianism is one of the oldest of the revealed world religions. It remained as the state religion of three great Iranian empires, which flourished from the 6th century BCE and dominated much of the Near and Middle East. Zoroaster of Persia is the founder of Zoroastrianism. Zoroaster was pained to find his people worshipping primitive deities. He revolted against it and proclaimed to the world that there is one god, Ahura Mazda (the Lord of Light). The holy book of Zoroastrians is Zend Avesta. It is a collection of sacred literature of different epochs, containing religious hymns, invocations, prayers, confessions, laws, myths and sacred reminiscences. The doctrines and rituals of the Zoroastrians have much similarity to those of the Vedas.

The language of Avesta bears similarity to that of the Indo-Aryan. Linguists have established a close relationship between Indo-Aryan and the languages of West Asia, in particular Iran. The old Iranian language dates back to the second millennium BCE. Later, it incorporated languages of Dravidians and those of aboriginals of the Indian sub-continent. According to the historian Romila Thapar, the old Iranian and Indo-Aryan speakers originally belonged to a single group and later split up because of dissensions.

Teachings

Zoroaster taught that the great object of religion, state or society is the cultivation of morality. The highest religious conception is purity of thought, word and deed. He asserted that Ahura Mazda has seven qualities: (1) light; (2) good mind;

(3) right; (4) dominion; (5) piety; (6) well-being; and (7) immortality. Ahura Mazda is omniscient (knows everything), omnipotent (all powerful) and omnipresent (is everywhere). In Zoroastrianism, sacrifice and image worship were discarded. Fire was worshipped as a symbol of the deity and considered the highest form of worship. Charity was made an essential part of religion, and service to the poor was particularly emphasised. Human virtues did not mean only prayer, meditation, sacrifices and rituals. It meant much more, such as fighting evil, making efforts for good and assisting the activity of Ahura Mazda.

This religion ceased to exist in its place of origin, as in the wake of Muslim conquest of Persia (Iran), many of the Zoroastrian families fled to different countries, including India between the eighth century and tenth century CE. With their dwindling numbers and in the face of coercive measures adopted by the Arabs to push through their new faith, as well as the incidents of destruction of fire temples and killing of priests, Zoroastrianism went into a decline. The Parsis, who came to India from Persia first as merchants and later in the wake of persecution, brought Zoroastrianism with them and they have been practicing it ever since.

Impact of Iron Technology in India

In the Gangetic valley, people learnt to produce crops more than that was required for subsistence. So, another section of people took up some professional crafts as their livelihood. Like the farmers, these craftsmen also had to rely on a group of people who collected raw materials and distributed the craft products. Early urbanisation happened in two ways. One was as a result of some villages specialising in black smithy, pottery, carpentry, cloth weaving and the like. The other was on account of the congregation of specialised craftsmen in villages close to where the raw materials were available and where markets were present. Such a concentration enabled villages to evolve into towns and exchange centres. Vaisali, Shravasti, Rajagriha, Kausambi and Kashi were some significant commercial centres of the Gangetic plain.

Religion: Post-Rig Vedic

Three more Vedas – Yajur, Sama and Atharva – were composed after the Rig Veda. Manuals of rituals called Brahmanas, specifying rhyming words to be sung, and two commentaries on certain Rig Vedic hymns called Aranyakas, containing knowledge to be learnt secretly in the forest, and the Upanishads, were compiled in the upper Gangetic plain during 1000–600 BCE.

Post-Vedic

During the post-Vedic period, the Rig Vedic gods such as Varuna, Indra, Agni, Surya and Usha lost their importance. New gods like Siva, Vishnu and Brahma appeared on the religious firmament. Aryans developed the ideas of tapas (virtuous living) and brahmacharya (celibacy). Rites and rituals insisted on by

Brahman priests overshadowed the true spirit of the religion. The sacrificial cult, supported by the wealthy and the elite, practised in accordance with the formulae prescribed in Brahmanas, were opposed by Buddha and Mahavira, who revolted against the existing practices and proposed their ethical teachings.

Jainism and Buddhism

In the Gangetic plain, iron plough agriculture required the use of bullocks. But the indiscriminate killing of cattle for Vedic rituals and sacrifices caused resentment. The founders of Jainism and Buddhism did not prescribe killing as a religious rite. They secured their livelihood mostly by alms. Celibacy and abstinence from holding property made the new teachers much more acceptable than the Brahman priests. The people's resentment about the expensive and elaborate Vedic rituals, animal sacrifice and the desire for wealth eventually took them towards Jainism and Buddhism.

Mahavira and Buddha lived a life of purity and exemplified simplicity and self-denial. They lived in the times of Bimbisara and Ajatashatru, the famous kings of Magadha. The commercial development of the northern cities like Kaushambi, Kushinagara, Benaras, Vaishali and Rajgir added importance to the Vaishyas who turned to Buddhism and Jainism in their eagerness to improve their social status.

Jainism

Mahavira: Birth and Life:

Vardhamana Mahavira was born in 599 BCE at Kundagrama near Vaishali. His mother was Trishala, a Lichchavi princess. He spent his early life as a prince and was married to a princess named Yashoda. The couple had a daughter. At the age of thirty, he left his home and became an ascetic. For over twelve years, Mahavira wandered from place to place, subjecting himself to severe penance and self-mortification. In the thirteenth year of his asceticism, he acquired the highest knowledge and came to be known as Jaina (the conqueror) and Mahavira (great hero). Jains believe that Mahavira came in a long line of Tirthankaras and he was the twenty fourth and the last of them. Rishabha was the first Tirthankara and Parshvanath the penultimate or the twenty third. Mahavira travelled extensively as a preacher in the kingdoms of Magadha, Videha and Anga. Magadha rulers Bimbisara and Ajatashatru were influenced by his teachings. Thousands of people became his followers. After 30 years of preaching, Mahavira died at Pawapuri in 527 BCE at the age of seventy two.

Teachings of Mahavira

The three principles of Jainism, also known as Tri-ratnas, are the following:

1. Right faith : Belief in the teachings and wisdom of Mahavira.

2. Right knowledge : Acceptance of the theory that there is no God and that the world existed without a creator.
3. Right action : It refers to the Mahavira's observance of the five great vows: (a) ahimsa, (b) honesty, (c) kindness, (d) truthfulness and (e) not coveting or desiring things belonging to others.

Spread of Jainism

In order to spread his new faith, Mahavira founded monasteries and engaged munis (Jaina monks) who led a very austere life. In North India, this new faith was patronised by rulers such as Dhana Nanda, Chadragupta Maurya and Kharavela. There was a notable following for Jainism in Karnataka and western India during the 4th century BCE. Jainism encouraged the public spirit among all who embraced it. Varna system practiced by Brahmans was challenged. People were spared from the costly and elaborate rituals and sacrifices. Mahavira believed that all objects, both animate and inanimate, have souls and various degrees of consciousness. They possess life and feel pain when they are injured.

Split in Jainism

In course of time, Jainism split into two branches, namely the Digambaras (sky-clad) and the Svetambaras (white-clad). The Digambaras were the orthodox followers of Mahavira. The Digambara rejected clothes altogether. Svetambara wore a white dress from head to toe.

Decline of Jainism

The lack of royal patronage, its severity, factionalism and spread of Buddhism led to the decline of Jainism in India.

Buddhism

Gautama Buddha: Birth and Life:

Gautama Buddha was the son of Suddhodana, the chief of a Kshatriya clan of the Sakyas of Kapilavastu in present-day Nepal. His given name was Siddhartha. As he belonged to the Sakya clan, he was also known as 'Sakya Muni'. He was born in 567 BCE in Lumbini Garden, near Kapilavastu. His mother, Mayadevi (Mahamaya), died after a few days of his birth and he was brought up by his step - towards worldly affairs, his father got him married at the age of sixteen to a princess called Yashodhara. He led a happy married life for some time and had a son by name Rahula.

One evening, while Siddhartha was passing through the city, he came across an old man who had been abandoned by his relatives, a sick man crying with pain and a dead body surrounded by weeping relatives. Siddhartha was deeply moved by these sights. He also saw an ascetic who had renounced the world and found no

sign of sorrows. These 'Four Great Sights' prompted him to renounce the world and search for the cause of suffering. In 537 BCE, he left his palace and went into the forest in search of truth. In the course of his wanderings, he sat under a peepal tree for several days until he attained enlightenment. The place where he attained enlightenment, the Mahabodhi temple, still exists in Bodh Gaya (Bihar). After his enlightenment, Buddha decided to impart his knowledge to the people. He went to Varanasi and gave his first sermon at Saranath. He preached in the kingdoms of Magadha and Kosala. A large number of people became his followers including his own family. After forty five years of preaching, he breathed his last in 487 BCE at Kushinagar (near Gorakhpur in Uttar Pradesh) at the age of eighty.

Teachings of Buddhism

- i. Four Great Truths: 1. there is suffering and sorrow in this world. 2. The cause of human suffering is desire and craving. 3. This pain or sorrow can be removed by suppressing desire and craving. 4. This is to be achieved by leading a disciplined life or by following what Buddha called the 'Noble Eight-fold Path'.
- ii. Attainment of Nirvana: According to Buddha, a person should aim at attainment of nirvana or the highest bliss, and it could be achieved by any person by leading a virtuous life and by following the Noble Eight-fold Path.
- iii. The Noble Eight-fold Path: Buddha preached a new path to attain the purest state of mind: 1. right views, 2. right aspirations, 3. right speech, 4. right action, 5. right livelihood, 6. right effort, 7. right mindfulness and 8. right contemplations or meditation. Buddha preached that he who practices the eight-fold path can attain the highest and purest state of mind.
- iv. Middle Path and Salvation: Buddha advised his followers neither to indulge in material pleasures and luxuries nor to practice austere penances. He said that by following the 'Middle Path', people could attain moksha or salvation, that is freedom from the cycle of birth, death and rebirth.
- v. Ahimsa or Non-violence was another fundamental belief of Buddha. He condemned bloody sacrifices in the yajnas. According to him, love for all living beings was an essential disposition for a good practitioner of Buddhism.
- vi. Emphasis on Morality: Buddha advised his followers to do good deeds and lead a moral and disciplined life. He appealed to them to refrain from lying, from killing living beings, from taking intoxicants, from stealing and from leading a sensual life.

Spread of Buddhism

Buddha, in order to carry his message to different parts of India, established the Buddhist sangha or the Holy Order of Monks. The bikshus (monks) and the bikshunis (nuns) were enlisted for spreading the faith and they were required to lead a life of purity and poverty. Buddhism spread to Central Asia, Sri Lanka, Tibet, Southeast Asia, as well as the eastern countries of China, Mongolia, Korea, Japan and Vietnam.

The Split in Buddhism

During the reign of Kanishka, the Buddhist monk Nagarjuna initiated reforms in the way Buddhism was being followed. As a result, Buddhism was split into two as Hinayana and Mahayana.

- i. The *Hinayana* (Lesser Vehicle) was the original creed preached by Buddha. The followers of this form regarded Buddha as their guru and did not worship him as God. They denied idol worship and continued with the people's language, Pali.
- ii. In *Mahayana* (Greater Vehicle), Buddha was worshipped as God and Bodhisattva as his previous avatar. The followers made images and statues of Buddha and Bodhisattva and offered prayers, and recited hymns (mantras) in their praise. Later, they wrote their religious books in Sanskrit. This form of Buddhism was patronised by Kanishka.

Decline of Buddhism

Buddhism declined in India due to the following reasons:

1. Buddhism was popular in the beginning because it was preached in people's language (Pali). The later texts were written in Sanskrit, which was difficult for the common people to understand.
2. The split in Buddhism into Hinayana and Mahayana was another vital reason. Image worship in Mahayana made no difference between Hinduism and Buddhism.
3. Buddhism lost its royal patronage during the reign of Guptas.
4. Further, the invasions of Huns and Turks almost wiped out Buddhism.

Other Heterodox Sect

Ajivika

The period that produced Buddhism and Jainism also witnessed the birth of a sect known as Ajivika. Its founder was Gosala (Maskariputra Gosala), a friend of Mahavira. For some time, they were together. Later, Gosala moved away and founded the Ajivika sect. As an atheistic sect, Ajivikas rejected the karma theory,

which postulated that the condition of men is determined by their past actions. Gosala argued that acts of charity and piety can, in no way, influence this finality. Ajivikas had a small presence in southern India. Under the Cholas, a special tax was levied on them. Tree Tamil texts, the Mani mekalai of Buddhists, the Nilakesi of Jains and the Sivajnanasiddhiyar of Saivites, contain the outlines of Ajivika doctrine.

Political Organisation: Pre-Mauryan

The spread of Aryans in the east led to the establishment of new settlements in the Gangetic region. One important result of introduction of iron tools was the easy removal of dense forest cover from the banks of the Ganges. Sedentary agriculture had resulted in a permanent settlement of a clan in a particular area, thereby giving it a geographical identity. Retaining their acquired land required political organisation. The emergence of gana-sangha, chiefdom, has to be seen in this context. The clusters where particular clansmen were dominant came to be known as janapadas.

Gana-sanghas

There were two distinct forms of government at the time of Mahavira and Buddha: monarchical kingdom and clan oligarchies or Gana-sanghas. The Gana-sanghas provided a polity alternative to the kingdoms. Vedic rituals and the rules of varna were not followed. The Gana-sanghas consisted of either a single clan, such as the Shakyas, Koliyas and Mallas, or a confederacy of clans, such as the Vrijjis and the Vrishnis (a confederacy located at Vaisali). The Gana-sanghas had only two strata: the Kshatriya rajakula, ruling families, and the dasa-karmakara, the slaves and labourers. The dasa-karmakaras had no representation in the Assembly. The presence of various other popular religious cults in Gana-sanghas is in contrast to the socio-cultural system prevailing in kingdoms.

In Gana-sanghas, the head of the clan presided over the Assembly, comprising the heads of families. The clan's head was not chosen following heredity. This Assembly discussed the matters relating to the affairs of the Gana-sanghas and if a unanimous decision was not possible, it was put to vote. There were advisers to the head of the clan. In later days, elaborate judicial procedures also evolved. The income of the Gana-sanghas was drawn from agriculture and cattle rearing, which was confined only to the Punjab and the doab, and to some extent from trade. For the chieftains of the north-west, the income primarily came from trade. Land was owned in common by the clan. They were cultivated by dasa-karmakara. There was only domestic slavery. The use of slaves in production was absent.

Rise of Kingdoms

The 6th century BCE witnessed the establishment of kingdoms, oligarchies and chiefdoms as well as the emergence of towns. From the largest of the chiefdoms emerged kingdoms. Many tribes of Rig Vedic period such as Bharatas, Pasus, Tritsus

and Turvasas passed into oblivion and new tribes such as the Kurus and Panchalas rose into prominence. Sixteen mahajanapadas are listed in the Buddhist texts. Linguistic and cultural commonality prevailed in the janapadas, whereas in the mahajanapadas, different social and cultural groups lived. With the emergence of kingdoms, the struggle for supremacy among different states occurred frequently. Sacrifices such as Rajasuya and Asvamedha were performed to signify the imperial sway of monarchs over their rivals. The Rig Vedic title of 'Rajan' was replaced by impressive titles such as Samrat, Ekkrat, Virat or Bhoja.

Growth of Royal Power

The king enjoyed absolute power. The sabha of the Rig Vedic period ceased to exist. The king sought the aid and support of the samiti on matters like war, peace and fiscal policies. However, in spite of the existence of the assemblies, the power of the king kept increasing. The Satapatha Brahmana describes the king as infallible and immune from all punishments. The growth of royal power was reflected in the enlarged administrative structure. The king was now assisted by a group of officers such as Bhugadugha (collector of taxes), Suta (charioteer), the Aksharapa (superintendent of gambling), Kshattri (chamberlain), Gorikartana (king's companion in the chase), Palogola (courtier), Takshan (carpenter) and Rathakara (chariotmaker). In addition, there were the ecclesiastical and military officials like the Purohita (chaplain), the Senani (army general) and the Gramani (leader of the village). In the later Vedic period, Gramani, who acted both a civil and military officer, was the link through which the royal authority was enforced in the village. The king administered justice and occasionally delegated his judicial power to Adhyakshas (royal officials). In the villages, Gramyavadin (village judge) and Sabha (court) decided the cases. Punishments for crimes were severe.

The Rise of Magadha Kingdom

The polity followed in kingdoms was different from that of gana-sanghas. Kingdoms operated with a centralised government. Political power was concentrated in the ruling family, which had become a dynasty, with succession becoming hereditary. There were advisory bodies such as parishad (ministers) and sabha (advisory council). The sabha collected the revenue and remitted it to the treasury in the capital of the kingdom, from where it was redistributed for the public expenses, such as maintenance of army and salaries to state officials. Of the kingdoms mentioned in the literature of the period, Kashi, Kosala and Magadha are considered to be powerful. The only republic that rivalled these kingdoms was the Vrijiis, whose capital was Vaisali. In the struggle for control for the Gangetic Plain, which had strategic and economic advantages, the Magadha kingdom emerged victorious.

Bimbisara was the first important king of Magadha. Through matrimonial alliances with the high-status Lichchavi clan of Vaishali and the ruling family in Kosala, Bimbisara went on to conquer Anga (in West Bengal now), thereby gaining

access to the Ganges delta. Bimbisara succeeded in establishing a comprehensive structure of administration. Village was the basic unit of his administrative system. Apart from villages (gramas), there were fields and pastures as well as wasteland and the forests (aranya, khetra and vana). Each village was brought under a gramani (headman), who was responsible for collecting taxes and remitting them to the state treasury. Officers appointed to measure the land under cultivation and assess the value of crop were to assist the gramani in his task. Land tax (bali) was the main source of revenue to the kingdom and the share of the produce (bhaga) was determined proportionate to the extent of land cultivated.

The term shadbhagin – one who is entitled to a share of one-sixth – referred to the king. Thus, a peasant economy came into being at Magadha. Ajatashatru, the son of Bimbisara, is said to have murdered his father and ascended the throne in 493 BCE. He continued his father's policy of expansion through military conquests. The capital city of Magadha was Rajagriha, which was surrounded by five hills, providing protection to the kingdom from external threats. Ajatashatru strengthened the Rajagriha fort and also built another fort at Pataligrama on the Ganges. It served as the exchange centre for the local produce and later became the Mauryan capital of Pataliputra. Ajatashatru died in 461 BCE and he was succeeded by five kings. All of them followed the example of Ajatashatru by ascending the throne by killing their parent. Fed up with such recurring instances, people of Magadha appointed the last ruler's viceroy Shishunaga as the king.

After ruling nearly for half a century, the Shishunaga dynasty lost the kingdom to Mahapadma Nanda who founded the Nanda dynasty. The Nandas were the first of non-kshatriya dynasties to rule in northern India. Nandas extended the Magadhan Empire still further. Nandas gave importance to irrigation, with the canals they built touching even the Kalinga (Odisha) kingdom. During their period, officials were regularly appointed to collect the taxes which became a part of the administrative system. Nandas' attempt to build an imperial structure was cut short by Chandragupta Maurya who founded the Mauryan kingdom in 321 BCE.

North-West India and Alexander

Historically, the north-west part of India remained a region under varying suzerainties such as north India, Afghanistan and Persia (Iran). During 6th century BCE, it was part of the Achaemenid empire founded by Cyrus II of Persia. The Indian region had since been providing mercenaries for the Persian armies in their fight against the Greeks. Takshashila or Taxila, as the Greeks called it, was a prominent city in the northwest. It turned out to be a centre for intermixing of Iranian and Indian culture and learning. The ascendancy of Achaemenid empire in north-west ended with the conquest of that empire by Alexander of Macedonia. While marching on the territories of the Achaemenid Emperor Darius III. Alexander, the Greek Emperor entered the Indian provinces in 326 BCE. His campaign in northern India lasted for two years.

The king of Jhelum region, Porus, fought him heroically in the battle of the Hydaspes (Jhelum). Though Porus lost the battle, he was restored to the throne only to be killed by one of Alexander's generals after Alexander's death. Alexander had left his governors in India. But his sudden death at the age of thirty three prompted his governors to leave north-west India to seek their fortune in West Asia. Alexander was a great general and a world conqueror. After his death, his great empire fell to pieces. Ptolemy took Egypt with its capital Alexandria, while Seleucus had Persia and Mesopotamia and part of Asia Minor as his share. Alexander's death, however, cleared the way for the founding of a great empire, the Mauryan empire in India.

Mauryan Empire: State and Society

Mauryan Kings

Vishnugupta, who was later known as Chanakya or Kautilya, fell out with the Nanda king and vowed to dethrone him. Chandragupta perhaps inspired by Alexander of Macedonia, was raising an army and looking for opportunities to establish a kingdom of his own. On hearing the news of Alexander's death, Chandragupta stirred up the people and with their help drove away the Greek garrison that Alexander had left at Taxila. Then he and his allies marched to Pataliputra and defeated the Nanda king in 321 BCE. Thus began the reign of the Mauryan dynasty. During Chandragupta's reign, Seleucus, the general of Alexander, who had control over countries from Asia Minor to India, crossed the Indus only to be defeated by Chandragupta. Seleucus's envoy, Megasthenes, is said to have remained in India and his account titled Indica is a useful record about Mauryan polity and society.

After gaining control over the Gangetic plain, Chandragupta turned his attention to north-west to take advantage of the void created by Alexander's demise. These areas comprising the present-day Afghanistan, Baluchistan and Makran surrendered without any resistance. Thereupon Chandragupta moved to Central India. According to Jaina tradition, towards the end of his life, Chandragupta, who had by now become an ardent follower of Jainism, abdicated his throne in favour of his son Bindusara. Bindusara, during his rule, succeeded in extending the Mauryan Empire upto Karnataka. At the time of his death, a large part of the subcontinent had come under Mauryan suzerainty.

Ashoka succeeded Bindusara in 268 BCE. Desirous of bringing the remaining parts of South India into his empire, Ashoka waged a war against Kalinga in the eighth year of his reign. The people of Kalinga fought bravely, but they were defeated after a large-scale slaughter. This war and slaughter affected Ashoka so much that he decided to give up war. Ashoka became an ardent Buddhist after meeting the Buddhist monk Upagupta and propounded his Dharma. The only true conquest, he proclaimed, is the conquest of self and the conquest of men's hearts by the dhamma (Pali) or dharma (Sanskrit). He issued edicts, which were carved out in the rock.

In one of his Kalinga edicts, he tells us his horror and sorrow over the deaths which the war and conquest caused. In yet another edict, he makes it known that Ashoka would not tolerate any longer the death or captivity of even hundredth or thousandth part of the number killed and made captive in Kalinga. Ashoka's passion for protecting life extended to animals as well. Hospitals were constructed for them and animal sacrifice was forbidden. Ashoka sent his son Mahendra and his daughter Sanghamitra to Ceylon to spread his message of Dharma there. Ashoka died after ruling for 38 years.

Mauryan Administration

The Mauryan state in its early years undertook some measures that were positive for the development of society. The state raised taxes to finance a huge standing army and a vast bureaucracy. The Mauryans had evolved a very efficient system of governance. The king, as the head of the administration, was assisted by a council of ministers. There were mahamatryias, who functioned as secretaries to the ministers. The person in charge of revenue and expenditure was samaharta. The empire was divided into four provinces and these provinces were administered by governors, who were usually princes or from the royal family.

The district was under a sthanika, while gopas were in charge of five to ten villages. The urban administration was under a nagaraka. Six committees with five members each carried on their duties under him. They were to take care of the foreigners, to register the birth and death of the citizens, to look after trade and commerce, to supervise different manufactures and to collect excise duties and custom duties respectively. Like the city or town administration, the military department was also managed by a board of 30 members, split into six committees, with five members in each of them. At the village level, there was gramani, whose responsibility was maintaining the boundaries, keeping the records of land and a census of population and livestock. In order to keep a vigil over the entire administration, including the conduct of officers, a well-knit spy system was evolved and put in place. Justice was administered through well-established courts in all major towns and cities. Punishment for crimes was severe.

The state used the surplus appropriated for the development of the rural economy by founding new settlements, granting land and encouraging the people to settle as farmers. It also organised irrigation projects and controlled the distribution of water. There was state control of agriculture, mining, industry and trade. The state discouraged the emergence of private property in land and banned its sale. The Mauryan state gave further boost to urban development. It secured land trade routes to Iran and Mesopotamia, as well as to the kingdoms of northern China. Arthashastra refers to Kasi (Benares), Vanga (Bengal), Kamarupa (Assam) and Madurai as textile centres. The distribution of black polished ware of northern India as far as South India is indicative of the extent of trade during the Mauryan rule. Trade contributed

to urbanisation in a big way. New cities such as Kaushambi, Bhita, Vaishali and Rajagriha had sprung up in the doab region.

Educational Centres

Monasteries and temples served the purpose of imparting education. Nalanda was a great monastery built by the Magadha Empire. Educational centres offered Buddhist and Vedic literature, logic, grammar, medicine, philosophy and astronomy. Even the science of war was taught. Nalanda became the most renowned seat of learning in course of time. It was supported by the revenues of 100 villages. No fees were charged to the students and they were provided free board and lodging.



11th Volume (I)

Lesson III

Rise of Territorial Kingdoms and New religious Sects

Introduction

Aryans began migrating eastwards from about 1000 BCE. As they moved eastwards, they encountered thick forests. Iron played a significant role in the clearing of the forest. The fertile soil of the Gangetic valley and the use of iron ploughshares improved agricultural productivity. Iron also played a big role in improving craft production such as pottery, carpentry and metal working. This in turn paved the way for urbanization. In the meantime, a spirit of scepticism began to pervade questioning every custom and orthodoxy in the belief system in the society leading to rise of new ideas and faiths. Of these several competing alternate beliefs, only Jainism and Buddhism touched the ears of the people. In this lesson we focus on the territorial identities and the new heterodox religious sects that emerged during this period.

Impact of Iron Technology: Differing Views

The movement of the Indo-Aryans towards the east was aimed at accessing the iron ore of south Bihar and gaining a near monopoly over it. The iron ore was responsible for the political dominance

attained by the state of Magadha. -D.D. Kosambi.

Iron axes and iron ploughs led to the expansion of area under cultivation in the Ganges valley. -R.S. Sharma.

That the use of iron axe and iron plough facilitated clearing of forests and generation of agricultural surplus is a myth because even as late as 16th and 17th centuries the Gangetic plain was heavily forested. -Makkhan Lal.

The forests of Ganges region could have been cleared by means of fire. -A. Ghosh and Nihar Ranjan Ray.

Sources

The epics Mahabharata and Ramayana, the dharmasastras, Buddhist texts such as the Tripitakas and Jatakas, Jaina texts and Greek accounts such as that of Arrian constitute literary sources for the period. Archaeological excavations have corroborated the literary evidences.

- i. Iron objects such as hoes, sickles, knives, hooks, nails, arrowheads, vessels and mirrors confirm the widespread use of iron technology.
- ii. Textiles, beads, pottery, ivory objects, ceramics and glassware and artefacts of other metals are found.
- iii. A large number of terracotta artefacts have also been found. Some of the urban features revealed by excavation of the various cities are as follows:

- iv. Northern Black Polished Ware (NBPW), considered luxury-ware and "urban hallmark" have been excavated.
- v. The towns were enclosed by a moat and sometimes they were fortified.
- vi. Houses were built with mud bricks and in some cases with burnt bricks.
- vii. Facilities such as drains, ring wells and soak-pits are found, confirming the second urbanisation in the Gangetic plains.

Developments in Gangetic plain

Agriculture improved during this phase of development in the middle Gangetic plains. Wet rice cultivation began to yield more produce of rice than other crops, thus creating the necessary agrarian surplus. Protected irrigation alone was not responsible for the surplus production of rice. Iron technology also played a crucial role. While it is debated whether iron axes aided clearing of the forests or whether iron ploughshare increased agricultural yield, there can be no two opinions that it played a critical role in improving the production of artefacts. The impact of iron technology is better understood if one considers "the technical changes which the introduction of iron implements would have brought about in various craft activities". Leisure time provided by agricultural surplus and technology led to growth of crafts, which in turn aided vibrant trade.

Second Urbanisation

Agricultural surplus, the growth of crafts and trade, and the growing population led to the emergence of towns in the Gangetic plains. This is called the second urbanisation in Indian history after the first urbanisation evident in the Harappan Civilization. Different types of towns came into being:

- i. Political and administrative centres such as Rajgriha, Shravasti, Kaushambi and Champa
- ii. Centres of trade and commerce such as Ujjain and Taxila
- iii. Holy centres such as Vaishali.

Janapadas to Mahajanapadas

The Later Vedic period (900–600 BCE) witnessed the transition from a tribal polity based on lineage to a territorial state. The janas who migrated eastwards began to settle down in various regions. The loyalty of the people shifted from jana (tribe or clan) to janapada (territory). Janapada literally meant 'the place where the tribe sets its foot upon.' The janapadas fought with one another for resources and political dominance. Some janapadas extended their territories and brought various janas within their jurisdiction. Such janapadas grew into mahajanapadas.

Territory, people, government and sovereignty are important elements of a state. All these elements were found in some

of the mahajanapadas. The mahajanapadas represented the emergence of territorial kingdoms that ruled over people (jana). The king headed the government aided by a centralised administration. The king was also the sovereign ruler. The king levied taxes out of agricultural surplus and redistributed it and ensured maintenance of law and order in a hierarchical society by force and coercion. These features marked the formation of state in the Gangetic plains.

Sixteen Mahajanapadas

According to Puranic, Buddhist and Jain traditions, there were sixteen mahajanapadas.

1. Gandhara
2. Kamboja
3. Assaka
4. Vatsa
5. Avanti
6. Shurasena
7. Chedi
8. Malla
9. Kuru
10. Panchala
11. Matsya
12. Vajji (Vrijji)
13. Anga
14. Kasi
15. Kosala
16. Magadha

The mahajanapadas are classified as gana-sanghas and chiefdoms based on the nature of their polity.

Gana-Sanghas

The proto-states of the Gangetic region were known as janapadas and comprised chiefdoms, republics and small kingdoms. Sixteen mahajanapadas find mention in the early texts. There were also gana sanghas or oligarchies, which were centred on clans. The Vrijjis were one of the best known of the gana-sanghas, and Vaishali was their capital in the Mithila region. These kingdoms did not come under the single decision-making authority of a king but decisions were taken on a collective basis by the heads of the different clans together. There were also smaller kingdoms such as Kosala and Kasi. It is interesting to note that the names of the clans, such as Ikshvaku and Vrishni, as well as these early kingdoms, are all mentioned in the two epics, Ramayana and Mahabharata.

Monarchies or Kingdoms

The mahajanapadas on the Gangetic plains were all monarchies. Vedic orthodoxy was an established practice in these kingdoms. The priestly class enjoyed a preeminent status in the mahajanapadas unlike in the gana-sanghas. The kingdoms were governed by kings and the administration was centralised. The brahman priests provided legitimacy to the king through various rituals. The kingship was hereditary and the succession was in most cases based on the law of primogeniture. The king was assisted by councils called parishad and sabha. The councils were advisory in nature. The king appropriated the agricultural surplus through land revenue apart from a few other taxes. Bali was a tax imposed based on the area of cultivable land. Bhaga was obtained as a share of the produce. Kara and Shulk were some of the other taxes collected during this period. Thus the king raised revenue through taxes to maintain an elaborate administrative structure and an army.

The richer landowners were called grihapatis. These landowners employed labourers called dasas or karmakaras. The smaller landowners were known as kassakas or krishakas. The society was stratified on the basis of varna. It emerged as a marker of status. Cultivators and artisans were identified as the shudras. A new social category that emerged during this period was placed below the shudras in the social hierarchy and considered untouchables. They were forced to live on the fringes of the settlements and subsisted on hunting and gathering their food. They were marginalised and given only menial jobs as urbanisation was on the rise. They had their own language, which was different from that spoken by the Indo-Aryans.

Emergence of Heterodox Thinkers

In the sixth and fifth centuries before the Common Era, north India underwent a remarkable intellectual awakening that profoundly impacted India and influenced its culture in subsequent millennia as well. The impact also swept across South Asia. This awakening was the outcome of questioning the existing philosophy by a host of heterodox thinkers. Gosala, Gautama Buddha, Mahavira, Ajita Kesakambalin and other thinkers renounced the world and wandered across the Gangetic plains, contemplating and reflecting on the social and cultural scenario of their times. It was not uncommon to see ascetics crisscrossing the Gangetic plains, propounding new ideas. The teachings of these ascetics addressed the needs of a rapidly changing society, which saw the emergence of new polities, the coming into being of urban centres, development of crafts, and an increase in long-distance trade. These thinkers questioned the Vedic ideas of soul, mind and body, thereby paving the way for the rise of new religious sects. Even though all of them questioned the Vedic religion, there was rivalry among them. Eventually Buddhism and Jainism emerged as popular faiths.

Causes of Intellectual Awakening

Sixth century BCE was a period of intense intellectual ferment. There are several reasons for the emergence of this ferment.

1. State formation and the rigidity of the Vedic religion constrained the liberty of thought and action. A revolt against religious practice of following dogmas found its articulation in heterodox sects.

“When attempts are made to smother the intellectual curiosity of people, the mind of man rebels against it, and the inevitable reaction shows itself in an impatience of all formal authority and a wild outbreak of the emotional life long repressed by the discipline of the ceremonial religion”. -Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, the philosopher President of India.

2. The emergence of territorial identities accelerated the process of socio-political and economic changes. The elite class, disillusioned with the system in place, began to move in protest towards the heterodox religions blossoming in Magadha or middle Ganges plains.
3. As the Vedic religion was not fully organised, its reach did not permeate into the society and hence people did not find it difficult to follow the newly emerging religious sects.
4. With urbanisation and expansion of trade, new classes of merchants and bankers such as the Sethis sought higher social status appropriate to their economic status.
5. The grievance of Kshatriyas was that they were denied a staged life of ashramas, a privilege permitted only to Brahmins in the Vedic texts.

Heterodox Sects

The ascetic wanderers and teachers attracted groups of followers and established various sects. Their philosophies encompassed antinomian (belief that divine grace takes away the necessity of obeying moral law), materialist and fatalist elements. They were heterodox sects that rivalled the orthodox Vedic religion and many of them came into existence during this time. A Buddhist text, Samannaphala Sutta, while making a reference to Ajatashatru of Magadha meeting Gautama Buddha, mentions that before his meeting, the former had a philosophical discourse with the leaders of the various sects such as Purana Kassapa, Makkhali Gosala, Ajita Kesakambalin, Pakudha Kachchayana, Sanjaya Belatthiputta and Nigantha Nataputta (Mahavira). They are described as “homeless wanderers” of long standing (chira-pabbajito), founders of sects (tithakaro) and leaders of their orders (ganachariyo). These sects were the key rivals of Buddhism. Their doctrines were shown unsatisfactory while that of Buddha was acceptable to Ajatashatru.

Ajivikas

The Ajivikas are believed to have evolved from one of the many ascetic groups of the times. According to Buddhist records, Nanda Vaccha was considered the founder of the Ajivika sect. He was succeeded by Kisa Samkicca, followed by Makkhali Gosala, who was the third and the greatest of the Ajivikas. Gosala met Mahavira for the first time in Nalanda and their friendship lasted for six years. They separated due to doctrinal differences. Gosala then went to Sravasti, where he was

patronised by a rich potter woman called Halahala. He believed in the doctrine of reanimation, and criticised and ridiculed the severe austerities of the Vedic ascetics. Being rival sects, both the Buddhist and Jaina accounts portray Gosala as a person of vicious character. Sravasti was the headquarters of the Ajivika sect. The Ajivikas were naked ascetics. The basic principle of the Ajivikas was niyati or fate: they believed that nothing in this world could be changed as everything was predetermined. Everyone has to pass through a series of transmigrations to put an end to pain. According to Ajivikas, there were six inevitable factors in life, viz. gain and loss, joy and sorrow, and life and death. Two other preachers, Purana Kassapa and Pakudha Kaccayana, joined the Ajivikas after the death of Gosala and infused new life to it.

Purana Kassapa held the view that actions did not have any merit or demerit. No evil is caused by torture, hurting and killing others. Similarly, no merit is acquired by generosity, self-control and truthful speech. Humans cannot change anything by action as everything is predetermined. According to him, non-action is the way out of life. Pakudha Kaccayana believed that the world was made of seven substances that were "unmade, irreducible, uncreated, barren, stable as a mountain peak, standing firm like a pillar – that do not alter, do not change, do not interfere with one another, are incapable of causing one another pleasure, pain or both pleasure and pain".

The Ajivikas had rich lay disciples such as potters and bankers. The Ajivika sect spread across the length and breadth of the country, though their influence was much less compared to that of Buddhism and Jainism.

Ajivikas in Tamil Land Manimekalai, Nilakesi and Sivagnanasiddhiyar have references to Ajivika doctrine. Nilakesi's quest for truth takes her to Buddha and Puranan. Puranan was the leader of the Ajivika sect. The Cholas are known to have levied a tax on the Ajivikas.

Ajita Kesakambalin (Ajita of the Hair Blanket) was a materialist. He believed that every human was made of four primary elements: fire, water, wind and sense. After death, these elements return to the earth. There is no life after death. He said, "Generosity is taught by idiots. The words of those who speak of existence after death are false, empty chatter. With the breakup of the body, the wise and the foolish alike are annihilated, destroyed. They do not exist after death."

Lokayata and Carvaka

The term "lokyata" signifies materialist thought. Indian materialism has also been named Carvaka after one of the two founders of the school. Carvaka and Ajita Kesakambalin are said to have established Indian materialism as a formal philosophical system. Carvakas developed the concept of scepticism and believed in the pursuit of knowledge through experience. They questioned the authority of Vedas.

Rivalry among Heterodox Sects

There was intense rivalry among the various heterodox sects. This is evident from the various religious accounts of the period. Buddhist and Jain texts not only mention other heterodox sects but also belittle them. For example, Bhagavatisutra, a Jain text, provides a poor account of Makkhali Gosala. He is described as born to a poor mendicant in a cowshed. It accuses Gosala of becoming a disciple of Mahavira for material comfort as the latter had many wealthy patrons. It describes "the greatest Ajivika teacher as a person of most contemptible character, a man of low parentage, and (sic) of low profession". Buddhagosa also ridicules Gosala in his commentaries. He describes Gosala as a servant fleeing naked from his master on committing a mistake even disregarding the fact that his garment had fallen. A Buddhist Jataka story "compares the heretics with the fire-flies, whose faint light faded before the rising glory of the sun, i.e., the Buddha".

Jainism

Among the various sects, the sect led by Vardhamana Mahavira (referred to as Nigantha Nataputta by Buddhist texts) bloomed into a religion called Jainism. It was earlier known as Nirgrantha (free from bonds). Mahavira was known as Jina (conqueror) of the soul and hence his sect came to be known as Jainism. According to Jain tradition, Mahavira was not the founder of Jainism, but the last of the 24 Tirthankaras or 'maker of fords' (ford means a shallow place in river or stream to allow one to walk across). According to Jain tradition, Risabha was the founder of the sect. He is considered the first Tirthankara. Yajur Veda mentions three of the Tirthankaras, viz., Risabha, Ajitanatha and Aristanemi. Mahavira organised his members into monastic and lay followers.

Life of Mahavira

Vardhamana was born around 540 BCE in Kundagrama, a suburb of Vaishali. He was a member of the ruling family of the Gana-sangha and his father Siddhartha was the chief of the Jnatrika clan. His mother Trishala was a Lichchavi princess and sister of its chief Chetaka. Mahavira was closely connected to rulers of Magadha, Anga and Videha through his mother. From his childhood, he was attracted to spiritual life. After the death of his parents, he left his home at the age of 30 and wandered about as a mendicant for 12 years in search of true knowledge. He practiced severe austerities and discarded his garments. During the course of his wanderings, he met Gosala and spent six years with him before they parted due to differences. In the 13th year of his wandering, at the age of 42, Vardhamana attained enlightenment or Nirvana. He then became a Tirthankara and came to be called a Jina or Mahavira (the Great conqueror). He preached for 30 years and was patronised by the rich and the elite. He died about 468 BCE at the age of 72 in Pavapuri near Rajgriha. He fasted unto death according to Jain ideals. His death or final liberation was a joyous event for the Jains.

Mahavira had a huge following. In the early stages, his followers were drawn from different sections of the society. However, in course of time, Jainism was confined to the trading and money-lending community. Jainism's insistence on non-violence closed other occupations, including agriculture, as it prescribed refraining from intended or unintended killing. About 500 years after Mahavira's death, in about 79 or 82 CE, a schism occurred in Jainism. Magadha was affected by severe famine and some of the Jain monks under Bhadrabahu went south to maintain their strict discipline. They remained without garments and were known as Digambaras (space-clad or naked). Others stayed back under the leadership of Sthulabhadra and adopted a white garment and were known as Svetambaras (white-clad). The schism weakened Jainism in Magadha, but it found ardent followers in Gujarat, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa and Karnataka. On the death of Bhadrabahu, Sthulabhadra held a Great Council at Pataliputra, which compiled the Jain canon. It consisted of 12 angas (limbs). Another council was held in Valabhi, Gujarat, in the 5th century CE. It added 12 upangas (minor sections). The Jain monks not only wrote religious treatises but also promoted secular literature. Acharrangasutra, Sutrakritanga, and Kalpasutra are the earliest Jain texts. Most of the early Jain texts were written in Ardha-Magadhi, the language of the common people.

Tenets of Jainism

The central tenet of Jainism is non-violence. No other religion lays as much emphasis on non-violence as does Jainism. It also criticises human emotions. Jainism denies the existence of God. In its early stages, deity was not worshipped in Jainism. It emphasises that salvation cannot be attained by worshipping god or by sacrifices. It stipulates that one can escape misery only by performing austerities.

Mahavira rejected Vedic authority. Hence, Jainism is an unorthodox religion. According to Jainism, the world has no beginning or end. It goes through a series of progress and decline according to an eternal law. Jainism advocated dualism: the world is made of soul (jiva) and matter (ajiva), which are eternal. The coming together of jiva and ajiva creates karma (action), which leads to an endless cycle of birth and rebirth. To free oneself from karma, one has to practice severe austerities and self-mortification. Therefore, in Jainism, only monks could achieve liberation from the cycle of birth and rebirth.

Triratnas

Jain discipline requires adherence to certain rigorous rules. The Jains are required to follow three principles called Triratnas or Three Gems.

- (1) Right faith (samyag-darshana);
- (2) Right knowledge (samyag-jnana);
- (3) Right conduct (samyag-mahavrata)

Five Great Vows

The monks have to undertake the five great vows (pancha-mahavrata):

- (1) Not to kill or injure (ahimsa);
- (2) Not to steal (asteya);
- (3) Not to lie (satya);
- (4) Celibacy (brahmacharya);
- (5) Not to possess property (aparigraha)

Non-Violence

The five vows are common to both the monks and lay followers. The monks were to observe the vows more rigorously than the lay followers. As Jainism placed great emphasis on non-violence, strict observers of the faith wear a muslin cloth around their mouth and nose so that they would not inhale small insects even by mistake. To avoid trampling on ants and other insects, Jain monks used feathers to sweep the path before walking. Jains could not practice agriculture or other crafts that involve killing or injury to living organisms. Hence they took to trading and money-lending and excelled in it. As a result, they were closely associated with urbanisation.

Jainism is an egalitarian religion. It does not sanction any inequality based on birth. It is one's deeds that determine one's status in society and not birth. Jainism believes that "by one's action one becomes a Brahmin, a Kshatriya, or a Vaishya, or a Sudra." Pride based on birth is considered as sin. Women were admitted into the monastic order. However, as a woman one cannot attain salvation. By accumulating merit by good deeds, a woman could be reborn as a man and then strive to attain salvation.

Jainism in Tamil Nadu

Jainism spread to Tamil Nadu from about the third century CE. Jaina rock shelters are found in large numbers around Madurai and other places. The mention of death of Kopperuncholan by fasting in chol Purananuru is considered by some to be similar to Jaina practice of sallekhana. Jain influence is strong in early Tamil literature. Naladiyar, Palamoli, Jivaka Chinthamani, Yapperunkalam Karikai, Neelakesi are some of the prominent Jaina works in Tamil. As early as c. 470 CE a Jaina Dravida Sangha was established in Madurai by Vajranandi, a disciple of Boojya Padha. Jainism has survived in Tamil Nadu and there are several Jaina temples. One of the Jaina temples is at Tiruparuthi Kunram near Kanchipuram with beautiful ceiling paintings. This part of Kanchipuram was known as Jaina Kanchi.

Decline of Jainism in India

Absence of royal patronage, split amongst Jains as Digambaras and Svetambaras, lack of missionary zeal, factionalism and the severity of practices, and spread of Buddhism as a rival faith led to the decline of Jainism in India.

Buddhism

Among the heterodox sects, Buddhism was the most popular. It went on to emerge as a powerful religion patronised by various rulers. It was so influential that its ideas were adopted by Asoka as a state policy. Though it virtually disappeared from India for nearly a millennium, it spread far and wide and is widely followed even today in the South-east and East Asian countries. In the mid-twentieth century it was revived in India by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar.

Life of Buddha

Gautama Buddha was born as Siddhartha in the Sakya clan to its king Suddhodhana and his chief queen Mahamaya. His mother Mahamaya dreamt of a white elephant with six tusks entering her womb when she was pregnant. Learned men prophesied that the child would either become 'a Universal Emperor or a Universal Teacher'. While Mahamaya was going to her parents' home, Siddhartha was born in a park in Lumbini near Kapilavastu. Siddhartha grew in luxury as a royal prince. He married Yashodhara and had a son named Rahula. When he was riding on his chariot with his charioteer one day outside the palace, he saw an old man, a sick man, a corpse and finally a religious mendicant. Overcome by remorse at the misery of people, he left his palace in the dead of night in search of eternal truth. He rode in his chariot pulled by his favourite horse Kanthaka and driven by his charioteer Channa far away from the city. He cut his hair and sent it along with his discarded garments and jewellery to his father. This is known as Mahabhiraskramana or the Great Going Forth.

Siddhartha wandered about and joined Alara Kalama as a disciple for a brief period. He also sought guidance from a hermit Uddaka Ramaputta. Siddhartha was not satisfied with their path and practised severe austerities, which left him nearly dead. One day, he ate rice boiled in milk given by a milkmaid named Sujata and began meditation under a pipal tree in Bodhgaya. After 49 days of meditation, he attained enlightenment, at the age of 35. Thereafter, he came to be called Buddha or the Enlightened. He then delivered his first sermon in a deer park in Sarnath near Varanasi. This event is described as Dharmachakra-parivartana or 'wheel of the great law'. He spoke about the Four Noble Truths and the Middle Path. He established Sangha and spread his ideas far and wide. Buddha and his followers travelled for eight months of the year and stayed at a place for four months of the rainy season. At the age of 80, he passed away in Kusinagara. This is known as Parinirvana. The prominent disciples of Buddha were Sariputta, Mahamoggallana, Mahakaccayana and Ananda. Buddha had a huge following among both the royalty and lay persons.

Buddhist Councils

After the death of Buddha, the tenets and other aspects of Buddhism were decided upon in the councils of Buddhist monks. Over a period of time, four

Buddhist councils were held. The First Buddhist Council was held at Rajgriha after Buddha's death. It was headed by Upali. In this council, Upali recited the Vinaya Pitaka. Ananda recited Sutta Pitaka. The Second Buddhist Council met at Vaishali a century after Buddha's death. The Buddhist Order split into two later. One was called the Sthaviravadins or 'Believers in the Teachings of the Elders' and the other known as Mahasanghikas or 'Members of the Great Community'. The Third Buddhist Council was held at Pataliputra. It was convened by Asoka. The Sthaviravadins established themselves strongly and expelled the heretics. The last section called "Kathavatthu" was added to Abhidhamma Pitaka. The Fourth Buddhist Council was held at Kashmir during the reign of Kanishka. Sarvastivadins were an important sect of Buddhism. Its doctrines were compiled in Mahavibhassa.

Buddhist Sects

In course of time, Sthaviravadins, Mahasanghikas and Sarvastivadins emerged as major sects of Buddhism. New ideas emerged among the Sarvastivadins and Mahasanghikas. It led to the emergence of Mahayana and Hinayana (the Great and Lesser Vehicles) in Buddhism. Mahayana or the Great Vehicle became popular and influential in India. Nalanda University was an important centre of Buddhist learning and was patronised by the Palas. It spread to China and Japan. Hinayana or the Lesser Vehicle became popular in Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand and other South-east Asian countries. By the end of the Gupta period, Vajrayana or the Vehicle of the Thunderbolt emerged. It was popular in Bengal and Bihar. It was influenced by primitive local cults and spread to Tibet in the 11th century CE. The Vikramasila University in Bihar was an important centre of Vajrayana Buddhism. Buddhism in India began to decline with the onset of the Bhakti movement. Slowly Buddhism came to be influenced by Hindu practices. Soon, Buddhism was incorporated into Hinduism, and Buddha came to be considered as an avatar of Vishnu in some traditions.

Buddhist Literature

The Buddhist texts were compiled in Pali. The Pali canons are called as the Tripitakas (Three Baskets). They are Vinaya Pitaka, Sutta Pitaka and Abhidhamma Pitaka. Vinaya Pitaka deals with monastic rules and moral disciplines. Sutta Pitaka dwells upon discourses and teachings of Buddha. Abhidhamma Pitaka expounds Buddhist philosophy. The Sutta Pitaka, which contains the teachings of Buddha, is divided into five groups or Nikayas. They contain popular works such as Theragatha and Therigatha (Hymns of the Elder Monks and Nuns) and Jataka tales (Buddha's deeds in previous births as Bodhisattva). Other important Buddhist works include Milinda Panha, a discussion between Greco-Bactrian king Menander and Buddhist monk Nagasena, and Ceylonese chronicles Dipavamsa (Island Chronicles), Mahavamsa (Great Chronicle) and Culavamsa (Lesser Chronicle).

The Starving Tigress:

A Jataka Tale Born in a family renowned for purity of conduct and great spiritual devotion, the Bodhisattva became a great scholar and teacher. With no desire for wealth, he went to a forest and led a life of an ascetic. It was in this forest he encountered a starving tigress, which after giving birth to cubs was about to eat her own new born cubs for survival. With no food in sight, the Bodhisattva offered his body as food to the tigress out of compassion

Four Noble Truths of Buddha

The four noble truths prescribed by Buddha are as follows:

1. The Noble Truth of Suffering: Birth, age, death, unpleasantness, separation, unfulfilled wish.
2. The Noble Truth of the Origin of Suffering: thirst for pleasure, power, long life, etc. are the causes for sorrow.
3. The Noble Truth of the Cessation of Suffering (Nirvana): complete stopping or release from sorrow.
4. The Noble Truth of the Path Leading to Cessation of Suffering: the Noble Eight fold Path or the Middle Path.

Buddhism believed in karma and the doctrine of rebirth. Past actions determine one's condition in this birth. To be free from karma or the cycle of rebirth is to attain nirvana. It can be attained by following the Middle Path.

Buddha's Middle or Eightfold Path

(1) Right Views; (2) Right Resolve; (3) Right Speech; (4) Right Conduct; (5) Right Livelihood; (6) Right Effort; (7) Right Recollection; (8) Right Meditation.

Hence Buddha did not mention or talk about God. He neither accepted nor denied the existence of God. Buddhism advocated equality. It preached non-violence or ahimsa and love towards all. However, it was a moderate religion compared to Jainism's insistence on ahimsa. It promoted trade and capitalism as it was against waste and advocated frugality. Jobs involving any form of killing were forbidden. Trade in weapons, living beings, meat, liquor and poison were not permitted.

Buddhism in Tamilnadu

Buddhism spread to Tamizhagam from about third century BCE. Asokan inscriptions found in the Deccan region vouch for the spread of Buddhism to southern parts of India. Archaeological evidences also reveal the existence of a Buddhist complex of the fourth century CE in Kaveripattinam. Quoting Pattinapalai, Noboru Karashima refers to merchants in Kaveripattinam who as vegetarians were opposed to animal sacrifice. From this one could presume the influence of Buddhism in Tamil country. Manimekalai by Sattanar one of the twin

epics of the post-Sangam age is a Buddhist literature. Similarly the now extinct Kundalakesi is a Buddhist epic. Kanchipuram in the early Christian era was a flourishing Buddhist centre. Dinnaga and Dhammapala who headed the famous Nalanda University were renowned Buddhist scholars from Kanchipuram. Hiuen Tsang who visited Tamil country mentions in his travel accounts about several Buddhist stupas built by Asoka in Kanchipuram.

A Buddhist temple was built in Nagapattinam at the request of a Chinese ruler during the reign of Pallava king Narasimhavarman II (CE 695-722). Chinese monk Wu-hing visited the monastery. In CE 1006, during the reign of Rajaraja I, Srivijaya King Mara-wijayottunga-varman built a Buddhist temple in Nagapattinam. It is called the Soolamani-varma-vihara.

Decline of Buddhism in India

Buddhism faced divisions from time to time. Division into various splinter groups like 'Hinayana', 'Mahayana', 'Vajrayana', 'Tantrayana' and 'Sahajayana' led Buddhism to lose its originality. Pali and Prakrit were the spoken languages of people of north India and it was through these languages the message of Buddhism was spread. But ever since the times of Fourth Buddhist Council held during the reign of Kanishka, Sanskrit had come to be adopted. Buddhism thereupon became unintelligible to common people.

Buddhism also lost its royal patronage after Harshavardhana. In contrast, the Vedic religion got royal patronage first from Pushyamitra Sunga and later from imperial Guptas. The role of the exponents of Bhakti movement like Ramanuja, Ramananda also helped to restore the glory of Vedic religion.

The invasion of Huns gave a deathblow to Buddhism. Toramana and Mihirakula, the two Hun chiefs had a deep-seated hatred for the Buddhists and they almost liquidated the Buddhists living in the north-west India. To make matters worse, the Rajput rulers who could not reconcile to the Buddhist concept of nonviolence, and as ardent advocates of Vedic religion started persecuting the Buddhists. Finally the invading Arabs and Turks forced the Buddhist monks to flee from India and seek asylum in Nepal, Tibet and Ceylon. In consequence Buddhism faded away in India.