

## Chapter – 6: New Questions and Ideas

### The Story of the Buddha

- Siddharth – also known as Gautam – founder of Buddhism – born – 2500 years ago – period – rapid change – lives of people
- Some kings – *mahajanapadas* – growing powerful
- New cities – developing – life in villages – changing
- Many thinkers – trying to understand changes – find out true meaning of life
- Buddha – was a *kshatriya* – belonged to *sakhya gana*
- He was young man – left his house – search of knowledge
- He wandered for many years – meeting and holding discussions – other thinkers – decided to find his own path
- He meditated for days – under *peepal* tree – at Bodh Gaya, Bihar – attained (gained) enlightenment (knowledge)
- After that – known as *Buddha* (wise one) – went to Sarnath (near Varanasi) – taught for 1<sup>st</sup> time
- Rest of life – travelled on foot, place to place, taught people – passed away at Kusinara
- Buddha taught – life – full of suffering and unhappiness – caused by cravings and desires
- Sometimes – we get what we wanted – not satisfied – we want more
- Buddha – described this as – thirst or *tanha*
- He taught – this craving can be removed – follow moderation in everything
- He also taught – be kind – respect other people's lives
- He believed – results of our action (*karma*) – good or bad – affect us in this and next life
- He taught in *Prakrit* – language of ordinary people – everybody can understand
- Encouraged people – think for themselves – do not follow him blindly

### The story of Kisagotami

- There was a woman – Kisagotami – her son died
- She roamed the cities – carrying her child – asking to revive him
- Someone took her to Buddha
- Buddha said – bring him some mustard seeds, he will revive her son – BUT – bring seeds from the house where no one has died
- Kisagotami – wandered house to house – everywhere – someone had died
- Buddha – trying to teach – life and death – part of life

### Six Schools of Indian Philosophy

- Over centuries – India's intellectual exploration of truth – represented by 6 systems –
  - Vaisheshika – sage Konad
  - Nyaya – sage Gotam
  - Samkhya – sage Kapil
  - Yoga – sage Patanjali
  - Purva Mimansa – sage Jaimini
  - Vedanta (Uttara Mimansa) – sage Vyas
- These philosophies – guide scholars and their discussions

- German-born British Indologist (someone who studies Indian culture) – Friedrich Max Muller – observed – 6 systems – developed over many generations
- Today – some harmony (agreement) in understanding of truth – seem different from each other

## Upanishads

- This period – many other thinkers – tried finding answers
- Some wanted to know – about afterlife – others wanted to know – why sacrifice is imp?
- Many thinkers – believed – something permanent – exist even after death
- Described this as – *atman* (individual soul) and *brahman* (universal soul) – ultimately both were one
- Many ideas – recorded in *Upanishads* – part of later Vedic texts
- Upanishad – meaning – coming and sitting near – contains conversations – teachers and students – simple dialogues
- Most thinkers – men – mostly *brahmins* and *rajas*
- Occasionally – mention of women thinkers – Gargi, Apala, Ghosha, Maitreyi
- Poor people – rarely part of it – exception – Satyakama Jabala – named after his mother – Jabali (slave woman)
- He had deep desire to learn – accepted as student by *brahmin* teacher – Gautam – became well-known thinker
- Many ideas of *Upanishads* – later developed by Shankaracharya

## The wise beggar

- This is a dialogue – based on story from – *Chhandogya Upanishad*
- Shaunaka and Abhipratarn – 2 sages – worshipped universal soul
- They sat down to eat – a beggar arrived – asked for food
- They refused to share – beggar asks – whom do they worship
- They reply – they worship universal soul
- Beggar says – universal soul – someone – fills the entire world – he is also part of the world – part of universal soul
- Sages realized – truth of whatever beggar said – shared their food

## Panini – the grammarian

- Many scholars – working in this period
- One of them – Panini – created grammar for Sanskrit
- Arranged – vowels and consonants – special order – used them – create formulae like Algebra
- Used these formulae – create rules of Sanskrit language in short formulae (around 3000)

## Jainism

- Last and 24<sup>th</sup> *thirthankar* of Jains – Vardhaman Mahavir – *kshatriya* prince of Lichchhavis – part of Vajji *sangha* – spread his message – this time (around 2500 years ago)
- At age of 30 – left home – went to forest – after 12 years – attained enlightenment
- He believed – men and women – wish to attain truth – must leave homes – must follow rules of *ahimsa* – not hurting any living being
- He taught – life is imp. to all

- Mahavir – taught in Prakrit – everyone could understand
- Prakrit – various forms – according to places – Prakrit in Magadh – Magadhi
- Followers of Mahavir – *Jainas* – lead very simple lives – beg for food – be absolutely honest – do not steal – observe celibacy (never marry and never reproduce)
- Also – men – gave up everything (including clothes)
- Very difficult – follow these strict rules – 1000s of people – left houses – many stayed behind – support monks and nuns – provided food
- Jainism – mainly supported by traders – farmers – had to kill insects – protect crops – found it difficult to follow
- Over 100s of years – Jainism – spread in North India, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka
- Their teachings – transmitted orally – several centuries
- Written down – 1500 years ago – at Valabhi, Gujarat

## The Sangha

- Mahavir and Buddha – both believed – those who left home – gained true knowledge
- They arranged for them to live in *sangha* – group of all those who left home
- Rules – Buddhist *sangha* – written down in book – *Vinaya Pitaka*
  - Separate branches – men and women
  - All men – can join *sangha*
  - Children – take permission from parents
  - Slaves – take permission from masters
  - Who worked for king – take permission from him
  - Those in debt (took loan) – take permission from creditors (gave loan)
  - Women – take permission from their husbands
- Men and women – joined *sangha* – led simple lives – meditated most of the time – went to towns and cities – beg for food
- Known as – *bhikkhus and bhikkhunis*
- They taught others – helped each other – held meetings – settle quarrels (fights)
- Who joined – *brahmins, kshatriyas*, merchants, labourers, barbers, courtesans, slaves
- Many – wrote down – teachings of Buddha – some – composed poems – describing life inside *sangha*

## Viharas

- Jain and Buddhist monks – travelled – place to place – taught people
- Rainy season – difficult to travel – stayed in one place – supporters – built temporary shelters – gardens or natural caves
- Time went by – many people thought – permanent shelters needed – monasteries were built – known as *viharas*
- Earliest *viharas* – made of wood – afterwards – made of bricks – some – inside caves – especially in western India
- Land – *vihara* built – donated by rich merchant or king or landowner
- Local people – brought gifts – monks and nuns – taught them
- Over centuries – Buddhism – spread to many parts in subcontinent
- New form of Buddhism – Mahayana Buddhism – developed

- 2 new features –
  - Earlier – Buddha's presence – shown using some signs – attainment of enlightenment – shown by *peepal* tree – NOW – statues of Buddha were made – mainly in Mathura and Taxila
  - Second feature – belief in *Bodhisattvas* – persons – attained enlightenment
- Once attained enlightenment – can live in isolation – BUT – they chose to live with people – teach them
- Worship of Bodhisattvas – became popular – spread to Central Asia, China – later to Korea and Japan
- Buddhism – spread to western and southern India – many caves were dug out for *bhikkus*
- Buddhism – also spread to – south-east Asia – Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Thailand, Indonesia – older form – Theravada Buddhism – more famous here

### A Buddhist text tells us –

- Rivers – lose their names and separateness – merged into ocean
- Same way
- Ranks, *varna*, family – forgotten – followers join monks

### Stages of life – Ashramas

- Ashram – stage of life
- 4 *ashramas* – *brahmacharya*, *grihastha*, *vanaprastha*, *samnyasa*
- *Brahmans*, *kshatriyas*, *vaishyas* – expected to lead simple lives – learn *vedas* – early years (*brahmacharya*)
- Afterwards – marry and live married life (*grihastha*)
- Afterwards – live in forest and meditate (*vanaprastha*)
- Finally – give up everything – become *samnyasins*

### Pilgrims

- Men and women – travel to holy (religious) places – offer worship
- Best-known – Chinese Buddhist pilgrims –
  - Fa Xian – came around 1600 years ago
  - Xuan Zang – came around 1400 years ago
  - I-Qing – came around 50 years after Xuan Zang
- These – visited places – associated with life of Buddha – famous monasteries
- All of them – wrote books – dangers they encountered during travels (several years) – countries and monasteries they visited – books they took back with them

### Nalanda – A unique centre of Learning

- Xuan Zang and others – studied in Nalanda (Bihar) – most famous Buddhist monastery – he describes the moment as –
  - Teachers – men – highest ability and talent
  - Follow teachings of Buddha
  - Rules – very strict – everyone has to follow
  - Discussions – throughout the day – everyone helped each other
  - Learned men – different cities – visited here
  - Gatekeeper – asks difficult questions – those who answer correctly – can enter
  - 7/10 or 8/10 – not able to answer