

CHAPTER-6

JAINISM AND BUDDHISM

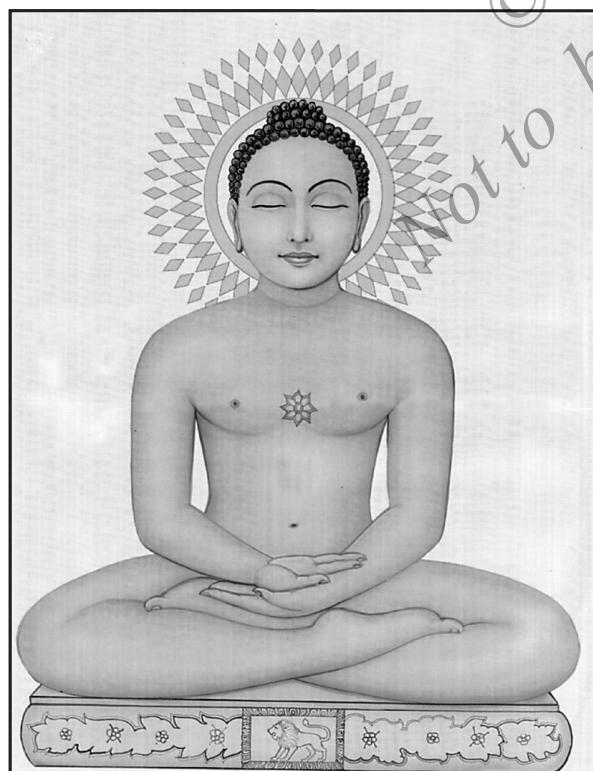


After studying this chapter you learn :

- Learn about Jainism and Buddhism.
- Understands the principles of Jainism and Buddhism.
- The spread of Jainism and Buddhism.

Jainism

Jainism is one of the very ancient religions. Traditionally, the Jains believed in the existence of 24 Tirthankaras. Rishabha was the first Tirthankara whereas Parswanatha was the 23 Tirthankara. Parswanatha was born as the son of King Aswasena in the 8th century B.C.E. It is believed that he renounced all luxury and indulgence, and attained immortality. He renounced society and became a hermit. He preached four principles for a peaceful life.



Vardhamana Mahaveera

The four principles preached by Parswanatha, were :

1. Non-violence
2. Truth
3. Astheya (not to steal)
4. Aparigraha
(not to own property)

The fifth principle of Bramhacharya was taught by Vardhamana. He was the 24th Tirtankara.

**Vardhamana Mahaveera
(599-527 B.C)**

Vardhamana was born in Kundala grama in Vaishali, one of the republics. His father was Siddhartha, the king of the

Gnatrika tribe. His mother was Trishaladevi, the princess of the Republic of Licchavi.

At the age of 30 Vardhamana set out in search of truth and renounced his family and house. He wandered for 12 years in this quest, and meditated. He punished his body by fasting. At the age of 42, he achieved enlightenment (Kaivalya). Vardhamana controlled his senses and achieved power over comfort and pain. Due to this achievement, he came to be known as 'Mahaveer' and became a 'Jina'. A Jina was one who had overcome his senses and become victorious. Thus his followers came to be called Jains.

Mahaveera spent thirty years, i.e., the rest of his life preaching his knowledge to the people around the Ganga and Yamuna rivers. He travelled towards Western India preaching his thoughts. He attained nirvana in his 72nd year in Pavapuri of Bihar.

Mahaveer taught five vows and three principles of behaviour. The latter are called Triratnas.

The 5 vows are as follows :

- | | |
|-----------------|---------------|
| 1. Non-violence | 2. Truth |
| 3. Astheya | 4. Aparigraha |
| 5. Brahmacharya | |

The triratnas are as follows :

- | | | |
|---------------|------------------|-------------------|
| 1. Samyakgyan | 2. Samyakdarshan | 3. Samyakcharitra |
|---------------|------------------|-------------------|

Jainism does not reject the existence of God completely, yet it advocates atheism. It denies the role of God in the daily affairs of people. It places God at a lower level than Jina.

The Jains believe that every animate and inanimate thing possesses a soul. They also believe that it is only through purification of the soul that one can achieve freedom from rebirth and attain nirvana. Purification is possible through meditation, fasting, punishment of the body and thereby, destruction of the body. This process is known as sallekhana. The concept of Karma is a very important aspect of Jainism. According to this, a human being can attain salvation only through good and holy acts. To attain enlightenment, the soul had to achieve freedom from the bondage of the body.

Traditionally, we get to see two important sects among Jains called Swethambars and Digambars. Those saints and their followers who wear white clothes are called Swethambars, whereas those saints and their followers who do not wear any clothes are called Digambars. After the first Jain council, the preachings of Mahaveer were compiled in 12 volumes. These were called 12 angas by the Jains. They are in Prakrit language.

Very early, one group of Jains migrated to the South due to the famine in Bihar, and settled down at Shravanabelagola. Thus even here, Jainism spread and many works were written in Kannada, Telugu and Tamil languages. The famous Kannada poets Pampa, Ranna, Janna and Ponna were Jains.

Buddhism



Goutam Buddha

and the Eightfold Path.

Siddartha who later became known as Gautam Buddha was born in the 6th century B.C.E. His father Shuddodana was the king of the republic of Shakya. Renouncing royal luxury and familial pleasure, Siddartha became a hermit. Disillusioned with the prevailing ways of life, he embarked upon a quest for truth. Attaining enlightenment, he became Buddha. After becoming Buddha, the ‘Enlightened One’, he first went to Sarnath near Banaras. There, in the deer park, he gave his first sermon. This has been called Dharma Chakra Pravarthana. Here he preached the Four Noble Truths

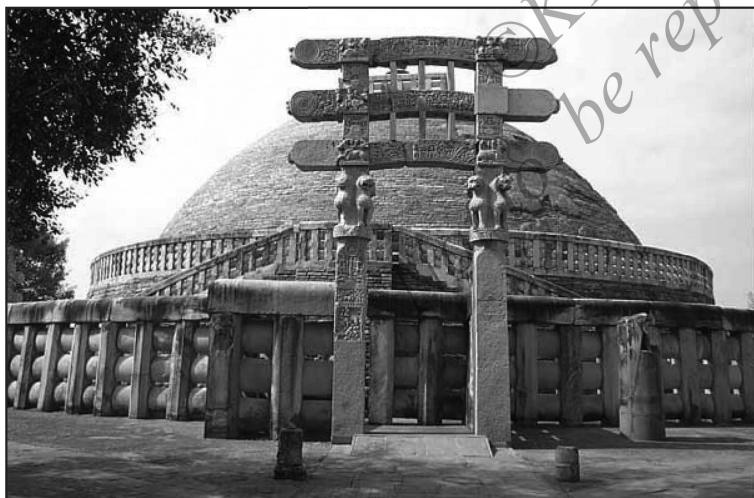
The Four Noble Truths declare that the whole world is full of sorrow and suffering. They also explain the root cause of sorrow. Buddha realized that desire was the root cause of sorrow. Only by the liberation of excessive desires could a peaceful life be led. Buddha preached the Eight Fold Path for eliminating desires. This is called the Middle Path.

The Eight Fold Paths are :

- Right 1. Action
 2. Speech
 3. Vision
 4. Livelihood
 5. Effort
 6. Recollection
 7. Resolve
 8. Thought.

Followers of the New Religion

Wealthy merchants, artisans and common people were inspired by the new teachings. Buddha gave his messages in Prakrit, the language of the common man and related them to various aspects of their tradition. The atmosphere of the new cities changed the ways of life of the people. The new religions became a ray of hope in the changed circumstances. Buddhism, especially, took on a new role of transforming the lives of people.



Sanchi Stupa

Buddha and his followers visited Kosala, Magadha and many cities on the Gangetic plain and spread his messages there. They walked from one city to another and devoted their lives for others. In his 80th year, Buddha's glorious life of selfless service came to an end at Kushinagar.

This has been called 'Mahapari nirvana'.

Viharas were constructed in all the areas in which Buddha wandered. People preserved his relics and bones in chaityalayas and stupas, and in memory of his accomplishments started worshipping him in chaityalayas and stupas. This was how the first temples, idols and idol-worship began.

Buddhism spread not only in India but also in foreign countries. Chinese travellers like Fa Hien, It Sing and Hiuen Tsang have described vividly the glory of Buddhism. Buddhism had spread to Malaya, Burma, Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia, Sri Lanka and Bamiyan too. Boulders have been cut from mountains and shaped into statues of Buddha. Even today we can see gigantic statues of Buddha in Angkor Vat of Cambodia and Bamiyan of Afghanistan. Unfortunately, the huge statues of Buddha in Bamiyan came under attack and were destroyed in recent times.

In 1956, inspired by Buddha's teachings, India's prominent social philosopher and architect of the constitution, Baba Saheb Dr. B.R.Ambedkar embraced Buddhism.

Dharma and Religion

The concept of religion is a European one. It refers to an individual's beliefs regarding man and society. It is centered around God. When it is not centered around life in this world, it becomes philosophy. Each religion has sacred books of its own. These books reveal the thoughts of the person responsible for the birth of the religion. As religions grew, different sects developed among them. In the Indian context, Judaism, Islam and Christianity can be called religions. Here a distinction can be made between theists and atheists. Traditions that approve vedic authority or faith in the existence of god are considered theistic traditions. Traditions denying the vedas or having no faith in the existence of god are considered atheist. The concept of Dharma is related to a way of life.

After Buddha's death, his followers collected his teachings and tradition in the form of Tripitakas. These are Vinaya, Dhamma and Abhidhamma pitakas. Over a period of time, disagreements developed in the teachings and different branches of Buddhism sprang up. Thus Hinayana, Mahayana, Vajrayana and their sutras came into being. Today we see many organizations across the globe adopting different ways of realizing Buddha.

Foreign Invasions

During this period, there sprang up city-states in Greece. Ancient Persia had grown into a powerful empire. These two areas engaged in continual conflicts. The Akhimenians were one group who ruled Persia. In 6th century B.C.E. King Darius of this dynasty established a strong empire. His kingdom extended up to the Indian border during his time. In 4th century B.C.E. the Macedonian king Alexander won over the Greek city-states and captured Persia. Thus even the part of the Persian kingdom which had spread up to the Indian border, came under the control of Alexander. After overpowering Persia, Alexander entered India through the passes in Kandahar and Hindu Kush. He advanced till Ravi and Beas rivers, and unable to proceed further, he crossed the Indian border through river Jhelum, and on his way back home, he died at Babylon.

The battle between Alexander and Paurava:

When Alexander accepted the invitation of Ambhi, the king of Taxila, and came to India, it was with Paurava that he had to confront. Paurava was also called Porus. The two armies faced each other on the banks of the river Jhelum which was flooded and wild at that time. Alexander's army attacked Paurava who had never expected anyone to cross the swollen river, and won. Alexander asked the captured Paurava how he desired to be treated. Paurava replied with pride and courage, "As one king deserves to be treated by another". Paurava's brave adventures have been immortalized in Greek writings. Alexander's attack led to the consolidation of small and big republics and the establishment of the Mauryan dynasty. The arrival of the Greeks influenced North Indian art and science. Proof of this influence can be found in the famous art form known as Gandhara art which existed at that time.

EXERCISES

I Complete the following sentences by using suitable words in the blanks:

- 1 The first Jain Tirthankara was _____.
- 2 Vardhamana was born at _____.
- 3 Mahaveera attained _____ in his 42nd year.
- 4 Mahaveera attained Nirvana at _____ in his 72nd year.
- 5 The original name of Gautama Buddha was _____.
- 6 Buddha delivered his first sermon at _____.
- 7 The first sermon of Buddha is called _____.

II Answer in brief the following questions:

- 8 Write in detail about Mahaveera's life.
- 9 What are the triratnas?
- 10 Name the sects among the Jains.
- 11 What is the middle path?
- 12 Who were the people influenced by the new religion?
- 13 Write a note on the Tripitikas.

III Activities :

- 14 Collect information about the life of Mahaveera.
- 15 Collect pictures relating to the life of Gautama Buddha.
- 16 Learn the meanings of words like dharma, sect, theism and atheism.

* * *