

# UNIT

## 3

# Rise of Territorial Kingdoms and New Religious Sects

## Learning Objectives

To acquaint the students with knowledge on

- migration of Aryans towards Ganges Plains and the use of iron technology
- second urbanization and emergence of Mahajanapadas
- socio-economic changes associated with changes in polity
- intellectual ferment and new consciousness stirred up by Buddhism, Jainism and Ajivikam
- heterodox faiths in the Tamil country



## 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 the several competing alternate beliefs, only Jainism and Buddhism touched the hearts of the people. In this lesson we focus on the territorial identities and the new heterodox religious sects that emerged during this period.

## 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.

## 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 Niharranjan Ray.



1. Iron objects such as hoes, sickles, knives, hooks, nails, arrowheads, vessels and mirrors confirm the widespread use of iron technology.
2. Textiles, beads, pottery, ivory objects, ceramics and glassware and artefacts of other metals are found.
3. 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:

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

### 3.1 Developments in the 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 axe 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:

1. Political and administrative centres such as Rajagriha, Shravasti, Kaushambi and Champa
2. Centres of trade and commerce such as Ujjain and Taxila
3. Holy centres such as Vaishali.



Vaishali

### 3.2 Janapadas to Mahajanapadas

The Later Vedic period (1000–600 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 Jaina traditions, there were sixteen *mahajanapadas*.

- |                    |                   |
|--------------------|-------------------|
| 1. Gandhara        | 9. Kuru           |
| 2. Kamboja         | 10. Panchala      |
| 3. Asmaka (Assaka) | 11. Matsya        |
| 4. Vatsa           | 12. Vajji (Vriji) |
| 5. Avanti          | 13. Anga          |
| 6. Shurasena       | 14. Kasi          |
| 7. Chedi           | 15. Kosala        |
| 8. Malla           | 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 Vrijiis 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 *Shulka* 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.

### 3.3 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 polity, 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.
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 had not yet permeated into the society, 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 *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.

“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, Former President of India.

### 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 longstanding (*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.

### 3.4 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.

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.”

### 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.

### Lokayata and Carvaka

The term “lokeyata” 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 Jaina texts not only mention other heterodox sects but also belittle them. For example, *Bhagavatisutra*, a Jaina text, provides a poor account of Makkhali Gosala.

Buddhagosa also ridicules Gosala in his commentaries. 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”.

## 3.5 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

Nirgranthas (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. According to Jaina 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 a *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



Jaina Painting portraying Mahavira's birth

unto death according to Jaina 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 Jaina 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, Shulabhadra held a Great Council at Pataliputra, which compiled the Jaina 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 Jaina monks not only wrote religious treatises but also promoted secular literature. *Acharrangasutra*, *Sutrakritanga*, and *Kalpasutra* are the earliest Jaina texts. Most of the early Jaina 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



Mahavira

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

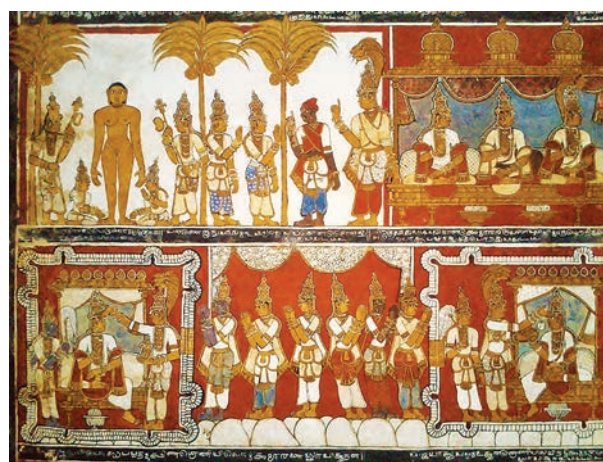
The five vows are common to both the monks and lay followers. The monks were to observe the vows more rigorously than the lay followers. As Jainism placed great emphasis on non-violence, strict observers of the faith wear a muslin cloth around their mouth and nose so that they would not inhale small 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 a 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 Tamilnadu

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 *Purananuru* is considered by some to be similar to Jaina practice of *sallekhana*. Jaina influence is strong in early Tamil literature. *Naladiyar*, *Palamoli*,



Jaina Kanchi, Tiruparuthikunram



*Jivaka Chinthamani*, *Yapperunkalam Karikai*, *Neelakesi* are some of the prominent Jain works in Tamil. As early as c. 470 CE a Jain Dravida Sangha was established in Madurai by Vajranandi, a disciple of Boojya Padha. Jainism has survived in Tamil Nadu and there are several Jain temples. One of the Jain temples is at Tiruparuthikunram near Kanchipuram with beautiful ceiling paintings. This part of Kanchipuram was known as Jain Kanchi.

### Decline of Jainism in India

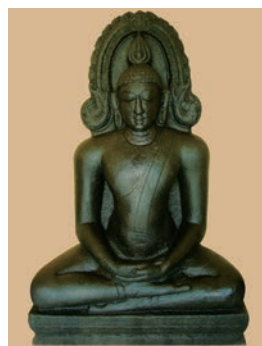
1. Absence of royal patronage
2. Split amongst Jains as Digambaras and Svetambaras
3. Lack of missionary zeal
4. Factionalism
5. The severity of practices and
6. Spread of Buddhism as a rival faith led to the decline of Jainism

## 3.6 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 Sudhodhana 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



Gautama Buddha

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 Channa 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.



Mahabodhi temple, Gaya

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, Maha-moggallana,

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 Rajagriha after Buddha's death, under the patronage of Ajata Satru. 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 *Mahavibhasa*.



Buddhist Council

### Buddhist Sects

In course of time, *Mahasanghikas*, *Sthaviravadins* and *Sarvastivadins* emerged as major sects of Buddhism. New ideas emerged among the *Mahasanghikas* and *Sarvastivadins*.

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. *Mahayana* 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*.

#### 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.



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).

### 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.

### Buddha's Middle or Eightfold Path (Astangika Marga)

(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 Kaveripoompattinam, who were vegetarians, 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 Dharmapala, 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.



Toramana Coins

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 non-violence, 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.

## SUMMARY

- Between 1000-700 BCE iron played a significant role in extending the area of cultivation.
- Agricultural surplus, growth of crafts, trade and the growing population led to the emergence of towns and exchange centres in the Gangetic plains.
- The Mahajanapadas are classified as gana-sangas and chiefdoms based on the nature of their polity.
- According to Ajivikas, gain and loss, joy and sorrow and life and death were the six inevitable factors of life.
- Mahavira's three principles and Buddha's eight fold path created a new intellectual awakening in India during the sixth century BCE.
- Influence of Jainism and Buddhism spread to Tamilnadu from about the third century BCE.



## EXERCISE



### I. Choose the correct answer

1. Buddha delivered his first sermon in \_\_\_\_\_.  
(a) Sanchi (b) Benaras  
(c) Saranath (d) Lumbini
2. \_\_\_\_\_ is the Buddhist text that makes a reference to Ajatashatru's meeting of Buddha  
(a) Jivakasinthamani  
(b) Acharrangasutra  
(c) Kalpasutra  
(d) Samannapha Sutta
3. *Bhagavatisutra* is a \_\_\_\_\_ text  
(a) Buddhist (b) Jaina (c) Ajivika (d) Vedic
4. \_\_\_\_\_ played an important role in improving the method of cultivation.  
(a) Iron (b) Bronze (c) Copper (d) Brass
5. Among the 16 *mahajanapadas*, \_\_\_\_\_ emerged as the most powerful in northern India.  
(a) Kosala (b) Avanti (c) Magadha (d) Kuru

### II. Write brief answers

1. Write the tripitakas that serve as the source for our study.
2. What do you know about Carvaka Philosophy?
3. Explain the core of Mahavir's teachings.
4. Distinguish the difference between janapadas and mahajanapadas.
5. Write the importance of Nagapattinam in the Buddhist history of Tamilnadu.

### III. Write short answers

1. Write a note on the use of iron in clearing the forest critically.
2. Analyse the factors responsible for the rise of towns and cities in the Ganges Plains.
3. Mention some of the rising towns and cities in the aftermath of second urbanization.
4. Identify the heterodox thinkers of fifth and sixth century BCE.

5. Point out the influence of Jainism in Tamilnadu.

#### IV. Answer the following in detail

1. Discuss the causes of intellectual awakening in the sixth century BCE.
2. Give an account of Ajivikam and its spread in India.
3. Explain the schism in Jainism pointing out its implications.
4. List out the eightfold path of Buddha.
5. Account for the decline of Buddhism in India.

#### Activity

1. Locating the 16 mahajanapadas on the outline map of India.
2. Preparing a chart with information on Buddhist monuments in India.



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#### INTERNET RESOURCES

1. <http://www.philtar.ac.uk>
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3. <http://www.himalayanart.org>

#### A-Z GLOSSARY

scepticism	doubt	அவநம்பிக்கை
pervade	spread	பரவு
moat	a deep wide trench filled with water	அகழி
lineage	ancestry	பரம்பரை
primogeniture	An exclusive right of inheritance by the first son	மூத்த மகனுக்கு மட்டுமே வாரிசுரிமை என்ற கோட்பாடு
coercion	compulsion	கட்டாயப்படுத்துதல்
preeminent	famous	புகழ்வாய்ந்த
stratified	having a class structure	வர்க்க அடிப்படையில் அமைக்கப்பட்ட
contemplating	meditating/pondering	சிந்தனை செய்தல்
espousing	supporting	ஆதரித்தல்
belittle	degrade	சிறுமைப்படுத்துதல்
contemptible	hated	வெறுக்கத்தக்க
heretics	a person who differs in opinion from established religion/dogma	வைதீகத்திற்கு எதிரான
refrain	avoid	தவிர்
schism	division	பிளவு
frugality	economical	சிக்கனமான
vouch	confirm	உறுதிப்படுத்து
smother	suppress	நசுக்கு அல்லது அடக்கு



#### ICT CORNER

#### Rise of Territorial Kingdoms and New Religious Sects

Browse in the link

Web link: <http://geacron.com/home-en/>



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