

# Jainism and Buddhism

In the sixth century BC, the Aryan settlements expanded to the east, accompanied by rapid socio-economic and political changes. Society, at some places had traits of tribal political organisation while at some other places, kingdoms were on the rise.

The people in the Later Vedic Age began to use implements and tools **made of iron**. The iron tools enabled them to clear forests, bring more land under cultivation and lead a settled life. As a result there was surplus production of food grains. This surplus produce could be utilised by the kings to meet their military and administrative needs. It could also be used by the people in the towns who specialised in various arts and crafts. All these advantages enabled the people to lead a settled life and to expand further in neighbouring areas.

## SOURCES

The three important sources which provide information about Jainism and Buddhism are the following:

**(i) Angas:** Jain scriptures are popularly known as 'Aagamas', i.e., what comes out from the mouth of the Lord. It is generally accepted that whatever Lord Mahavira taught after gaining omniscience, was compiled by his disciples in 12 parts called Angas, Sanskrit word for parts.

**(ii) Tripitikas:** Tripitikas are the most important literary works of the Buddhists. The word Tripitikas' means Three Baskets' of Buddhist principles.

**(iii) Jatakas:** Jatakas refer to the tales which describe the previous births of Buddha, in both human and animal form. Each tale begins by noting the occasion that prompted its telling and ends with the Buddha identifying the lives of the people in the introductory story with such people from the past.

## CAUSES FOR THE RISE OF JAINISM AND BUDDHISM

The following factors favoured the rise and growth of Jainism and Buddhism:

**(i) Reaction against Ritualism:** Religious ceremonies by then had become very expensive, beyond the means of ordinary people. Some priests hardly realised the sufferings of the common man.

**(ii) Corruption in Religion:** Kshatriya rulers protected The priests and against the dominance of such practices. The common man could not reconcile to this attitude of the priests. Both Jainism and Buddhism were founded by two Kshatriya princes.

**(iii) Rigid Caste System:** The division of society into Brahmans, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras had become rigid.

**(iv) Difficult Language:** Sanskrit was considered a sacred language. Most of the Vedic literature was composed in Sanskrit. The priestly class gave speech and chanted mantras in this language, which the common people found difficult to understand.

## JAINISM

The doctrines of the Jains were preached by saints or acharyas called **tirthankaras**. Twenty three tirthankaras preceded **Mahavira**. The first tirthankara was **Rishabhadev** and the twenty third was **Parshvanath**.

### Vardhamana Mahavira

Mahavira was the twenty-fourth and the last of the tirthankaras. He made Jainism popular and systematic. That is why Mahavira is considered as **the founder of Jainism**.

**Preachings of Mahavira:** After becoming the Jina, Mahavira spent his life in preaching. He gave his **first sermon** at **Mount Vipul situated in Rajgriha**, the capital of Magadha. He was now a **Kevalin** (all-knowing) or **Lord Mahavira**. He had a large number of followers.

## MAIN TEACHINGS OF JAINISM

Jainism did not accept the authority of the Vedas. Jainism preaches five vows. It is said that only the fifth vow was added by Mahavira.

1. **The Five Vows:** A Jain householder has to take the following five vows:

- (i) **Ahimsa:** non-violence.
- (ii) **Asateya:** not stealing.
- (iii) **Satya:** not telling a lie.
- (iv) **Aparigraha:** not possessing property.
- (v) **Brahmacharya:** practising chastity.

2. **Nine Truths:** According to Jain philosophy, the knowledge of these Nine Truths is essential and only renunciation is the shortest way to salvation. They were: jiva, ajiva, punya, pap, ashra, sanvar, bandha, nirjara and moksha

## DOCTRINES OF JAINISM

**Triratnas:** Mahavira preached that the ultimate goal of man is to attain freedom from worldly bonds or to attain 'moksha'. It can be obtained by following triratnas or three jewels:

**(a) right faith, (b) right knowledge, and (c) right conduct.**

**(ii) Karma:** The Jains believe in the Karma theory of Hinduism and that one should be responsible for one's own Karma or actions.

**(iii) Equality:** He preached universal brotherhood. He considered all men equal irrespective of their caste or creed. Mahavira believed that the virtuous deeds could achieve ultimate salvation or nirvana. All living beings, from the tiny insect to the highest form of life, should be shown compassion.

**(iv) Eternal soul:** Mahavira believed in the immortality of the soul (atma). He said that the body dies but not the soul.

**(v) Salvation:** Like the Hindus, Jains believe in Moksha (Salvation) or freedom from the cycle of births and rebirths.

**(vi) Belief in Penance:** Jains believed in penance. To die of starvation, called santhara or sallekhana was considered a virtue.

## SPREAD OF JAINISM

Jainism had royal patronage. It spread easily around Kosala, Magadha, Mithila, Champa and other parts of the country, Lord Mahavira founded monasteries headed by learned munis. In South India, Jainism was patronised by the Rashtrakuta and Chalukya kings.

## CAUSES OF THE SPREAD OF JAINISM

**(i) Local Dialect:** Mahavira adopted the language of the common people, i.e., Prakrit instead of Sanskrit to preach his doctrines.

**(ii) Royal Patronage:** Jainism received royal patronage. Chandragupta Maurya is said to have been converted to Jainism in the later years of his rule. In 5th century AD Chalukyas and Rashtrakutas also patronised Jainism.

**(iii) Saints:** There were many devout Jain saints like Kalkacharya who lived in Ujjain and made it a centre of Jainism. Another Jain Saint Bhadrabahu took Jainism to Karnataka.

**(iv) Appeal to People:** People found the religion attractive as it was based on austerity, simplicity and spirituality. There were no animal sacrifices nor was there any class distinction.

### DIVISION INTO TWO SECTS

In the first Jain council held around 300 BC, these differences came to surface. As a result, Jains were divided into two groups.

**(a) Shvetambaras** or the white clads were led by Sthulabhadra.

**(b) Digambaras** followed Bhadrabahu.

### IMPACT OF JAINISM

**(a) Political Impact:** In early stages, its success was more remarkable than that of Buddhism. However, it was mainly the Kshatriyas who took to this new faith.

**(b) Social and Religious Impact:** Jainism discarded the system of casteism, removed rituals and encouraged social service.

**(c) Language and Literature:** Jain scholars have made an important contribution in literary field. The Jain texts were written in Prakrit, but at some places these texts were also written in the local languages.

**(d) Art and Architecture:** Jains constructed temples and monasteries. Jain relics are found in **Khandagiri and Udaygiri caves** in Odisha.

### DECLINE OF JAINISM

The following factors were responsible for the decline of Jainism:

(i) Jainism preached rigid austerity. It rose at a time when Buddhism also existed. The theory of ahimsa was extended even to wearing of clothes.

(ii) The religion did not spread to foreign countries. It did not have any missionary effort.

(iii) Jainism did not get royal patronage from contemporary rulers. In contrast, Buddhism received a large-scale support from Ashoka, Harsha and Kanishka.

(iv) Though Jainism advocated equality of men, it did not do away totally with the high and low positions in society.

(v) During the Gupta period and in later years, Hinduism once again became popular.

## BUDDHISM

It was a midway between Hinduism and Jainism. Buddhism presented the ascetic traditions to Indian society. It had more followers abroad than in India.

## GAUTAMA BUDDHA

Gautama Buddha was the founder of Buddhism. He belonged to the Kshatriya clan of Sakya. According to one legend he was born in 563 BC at Lumbini near Kapilavastu, in Nepal. His childhood name was Siddharth. An old man, A sick man, a dead man and an ascetic were the Four Great Sights. He left home and family to find a solution. This event is called The Great Renunciation.

## ENLIGHTENMENT

After leaving home in search of Truth, Gautama wandered from place to place. For some time he studied under renowned teachers of Rajgriha and then went to Gaya. He practised severe penance and led a life of extreme austerity. Finally at the age of thirty-five Gautama attained enlightenment at Bodh Gaya in Bihar. He came to known as Enlightened One or Buddha. He was called Tathagat- the founder of Truth.

When Buddha gave his first sermon in Sarnath to 5 disciples. This event in the history of Buddhism is known as Dharmachakrapravartana or the turning of the wheel of sacred law.

## TEACHINGS OF BUDDHISM

Buddha followed a simple path and inspired people to lead a simple life. His teachings have been reconstructed from stories, found mainly in the Sutta Pitaka.

## **Eightfold Path and Four-Noble Truths.**

**Four Noble Truths:** The essence of Buddhism lies in Four Noble Truths. They are:

- (1) The world is full of suffering.
- (ii) The suffering has a cause.
- (iii) Desire is the cause of suffering.
- (iv) If desire is stopped, suffering can also be stopped.

**Eightfold Path:** The way to nirvana, in Buddhism, or the path that leads to removal of suffering, is known as the Eightfold Path (Ashtangika Marg) or the middle path.

It is a path midway between luxurious living and hard penance. It includes:

- (i) Right action
- (ii) Right thought
- (iii) Right belief
- (iv) Right living
- (v) Right speech
- (vi) Right effort
- (vii) Right recollection
- (viii) Right meditation

**Attitude towards God:** Buddha held that the whole universe was controlled by Dharma, a universal law. He was silent about the existence of God, though he never formally denied it. He emphasised on non-violence.

### **CODE OF CONDUCT**

Buddha formulated a code of conduct for his followers. This included the following:

- (i) Not to tell a lie.
- (ii) Not to own property.
- (iii) Not to consume alcoholic drinks.
- (iv) Not to commit violence.
- (v) Not to indulge in corrupt practices.

Karma Like Hinduism, Buddhism believed in the theory of Karma. Buddhism said that man is the maker of his destiny and it believed in rebirth. The evil deeds will be punished.

**Nirvana:** The ultimate goal of life is to attain Nirvana or salvation. It is a peaceful state of mind, which conquers all diseases, makes the person free from the cycle of birth and death.

**Universal Brotherhood:** Lord Buddha preached universal brotherhood of mankind. He wanted people to live in peace, setting aside all their differences. He invited people of all classes and races to join Buddhism.

**No Faith in Rituals and Sacrifices:** Buddha said that yajnas cannot change a man's destiny. Sacrifices and rituals are empty ceremonies. Ahimsa Like Mahavira, Buddha attached importance to sanctity of life and followed the path of non-violence.

## ORGANISATION

**The Sangha:** The organisation for teaching of Buddhism came to be known as the Sangha. It was a monastic order established to spread Buddhism.

**1. Membership:** The members of the monastic order were called **Bhikshus (monks)** and Bhikshunis (nuns). They were required to renounce the world before joining the Sangha. The minimum age was 15 years during Buddha's time.

**2. Ten Commandments:** The members had to lead a disciplined life and follow the ten commandments (Paramita):

- (i). to speak the truth.
- (ii). to abide by Brahmacharya
- (iii). not to harm creatures.
- (iv) not to own property.
- (v) to shun music and dancing.
- (vi) to take meals only at fixed times.
- (vii) not to use intoxicants.
- (viii) not to use scented goods.
- (ix) Not to sleep on cushions

(x) Not to keep money.

**3. Viharas:** The Bhikshus and the Bhikshunis were required to roam about in different parts of the country for eight months of the year. They had to sleep in Viharas which had separate sections for men and women.

### SECTS OF BUDDHISM

During the deliberations of the 4th Buddhist Council, in the reign of Kanishka, Buddhism split into two sects-the Hinayana and the Mahayana.

**Hinayana:** Hinayana stood for following the doctrine of Buddha in letter and spirit. It denied the existence of God. Hinayana holds that the Eightfold Path is the only means of salvation. Regarded Buddha as human being. Did not practice Idol worship. Language Pali was used in scriptures.

**Mahayana:** The term Mahayana means the "Greater Vehicle" of salvation. It is a combination of Buddhism and Hinduism. Mahayana believes that Buddha was an incarnation of God and he was the one who could ensure salvation (swarga). Nagarjuna and Asanga founded Mahayana sect. Language Sanskrit was used in scriptures.

### IMPACT OF BUDDHISM

Buddhism made a lasting contribution to Indian culture, religion, art and social life in the following respects:

(i) **Ahimsa:** The doctrine of Ahimsa became a weapon against the ills in the society. After the rise of Buddhism, animal protection became a new culture.

(ii) **Influence on Religious Life:** Buddhism provided a challenge to Hinduism. There soon started a reform movement within Hinduism.

(iii) **Influence on Social Life:** Buddhism fostered intellectual tradition and exposed the weaknesses in our society.

(iv) **Political Impact:** The republics of Shakyas, Vajjis and Mallas embraced Buddhism. Ashoka and Kanishka made Buddhism their state religion.



**(v) Cultural Impact:** Buddhism spread far and wide in South-East Asia, China and Sri Lanka. It had a far-reaching cultural impact in raising the prestige of India.

**(vi) Language and Literature:** Buddhism made valuable contribution to the field of language and literature. A vast and varied nature of literature was produced in the language of the masses, i.e., Pali. *The Tripitakas and the Jatakas* are the most important literary works of the Buddhists.

**(vii) Art and Architecture:** Buddhism made immense contribution to the evolution of art and architecture. Stupas, chaityas, viharas and rock-cut cave temples were their unique contribution.

## DECLINE OF BUDDHISM

**(i) Split in Buddhism:** The division of Buddhism into Hinayana and Mahayana sects brought about many changes in Buddhism. Its popularity and prestige suffered.

**(ii) Language:** Buddha preached his teachings in Pali. After his death, Sanskrit, the language of the upper classes, also came to be adopted.

**(iii) Corruption in Sangha:** The monks and nuns started living a luxurious life. There was deterioration in the spiritual life. Buddhist Sanghas received patronage of royalty and had become very rich. The monks and nuns used the riches for their personal benefits.

**(iv) Reforms in Hinduism:** Reform movement in Hinduism started with full vigour once the appeal of new religions vanished. Hinduism assimilated the positive aspects of Buddhism.

**(v) Invasions:** From the eighth century AD the Turkish invasion dealt a blow to Buddhism. The monasteries, which had accumulated great wealth, were looted.

**(vi) End of Royal Patronage:** Rajput rulers were warlike and could not follow the policy of ahimsa. Besides, the kings of the Gupta period patronised temples in honour of Hindu gods and goddesses.

## **JAINISM AND BUDDHISM COMPARED**

### **SIMILARITIES BETWEEN JAINISM AND BUDDHISM.**

- (a) The founders of both religions, Mahavira and Gautam Buddha had similar backgrounds. Both of them belonged to the Kshatriya clan and followed the same path.**
- (b) Both sought the attainment of salvation (moksha) from the cycle of birth and death.**
- (c) Both did not accept the Vedas..**
- (d) Non-violence was their belief.**

### **Differences BETWEEN JAINISM AND BUDDHISM.**

- (a) Buddhism followed middle path where as Jainism followed severe penance**
- (b) Buddhism spread beyond the boundaries of India but Jainism didn't.**
- (c) Buddhism was new religion where as Jainism was old.**

**SIR TARUN RUPANI**