

6. RISE OF NEW RELIGIOUS IDEOLOGIES

In the previous chapter we read about the political and economic changes which had taken place during the Mahajanapada era. In this chapter we shall try to understand the religious changes which came about during this period. About 2600 years ago several evils had crept into the society, as well as into the Vedic religion. Vedic religion had become very expensive. Yajna, which had a prominent place in the Vedic religion, had gone out of reach of the common people because of the various rites, rituals and animal sacrifices.

Discrimination among the varnas resulted in conflicts in the society. Common people were fed up with the mutual wars among the powerful rulers. Government employees too were exploiting the common people. Under such conditions many new reformative ideas grew and became popular among the common people.

The rites and rituals in Vedic religion made the common people ask several questions like- Where does a man go after death? What is 'atma' (soul)? How can one attain moksha (salvation)? etc. The ideas which emerged now were much simpler. These ideas have been compiled in the Upanishads.

New religions, different from the Vedic path, emerged which were against the outward show and rituals prevailing in society. Jainism and Buddhism are prominent among them. We shall read about them in a little detail.

SWAMI MAHAVEER AND THE TEACHINGS OF JAINISM

Jain religion's great persons are called Tirthankara. Swami Mahaveer was the 24th Tirthankara. He gave a new look to Jainism.

Swami Mahaveer was born near Vaishali in 540 B.C. His father's name was Siddhartha and mother's name was Trishala. As a child he was called Vardhaman. At the age of thirty years he took permission from his elder brother and took Sanyasa. For the next twelve years, he meditated and led a life of severe austerity. He finally attained 'kaivalya' or perfect knowledge. Because of severe austerity he was called 'mahaveer' and 'Jina' because he had conquered his sense organs. His followers were called Jains. He died at Pawapuri at the age of 72.



Pic. 6.1 MAHAVEER SWAMI



TEACHINGS OF JAINISM

According to Jainism a person must try to attain Triratna (or three jewels) in his life. One can attain Triratna by following Panchamahavrat, that is five rules. By following these rules a person can attain both knowledge and salvation.

First of the Triratna is 'Samyak gyana' - that is - right knowledge (knowledge of truth and untruth). Second is 'Samyak - philosophy- that is true knowledge. The Third is 'Samyak Charitra' - that is to do good deeds and leave the wrong ones. To achieve this 'Triratna' there were five rules which were to be followed. They were:-

1. **Satya- To always speak the truth.**
2. **Ahimsa- Not to harm anyone with thought, word or deed.**
3. **Asteya- Not to steal.**
4. **Aparigraha - Not to collect wealth,**
5. **Brahmacharya - To control the sense organs.**

Mahaveer Swami laid more emphasis on ahimsa. Speaking rudely was also considered a 'himsa' by him. He preached that all human beings are equal. The teachings of Jainism are compiled in the 'Aagam'. Mahaveer Swami's teachings influenced several people and it spread far and wide. The rulers and the businessmen gave patronage to Jainism.



**Pic. 6.2 Nagapura
UvasangharParshvanath Pilgrimage**

In Chhattisgarh this religion has been followed from ancient times. There is an ancient Jain temple at Aarang in Raipur district. An ancient temple of the 23rd Tirthankara Parshvanathji is in a village named Nagapura in Durg district. It is called Uvasanghar Parshvanath. People from all over India come to visit this temple.

MAHATMA GAUTAM BUDDHA AND BUDDHISM

The founder of Buddhism was Mahatma Gautam Buddha. Gautam Buddha was a contemporary of Mahaveer Swami. He was born in 563 B.C. at Lumbini near Kapilvastu. His childhood name was Siddhartha. His father's name was Shuddhodhana and Mayadevi was the name of his mother.



According to the legend, one day when he came out of his palace, first he saw a sick man, then an old man, lastly a dead man. He thought “Will he also fall ill, become old and die?” These questions disturbed him. Then he saw an ascetic. Thus at the age of 29 years he left his home and took sanyasa.

After wandering for six years he finally attained enlightenment under a peepal tree which is called Sambodhi. From then on that peepal tree is also called, ‘Bodhi Vriksha’. The place where Mahatma Gautama Buddha attained enlightenment is called BodhGaya.

Buddha delivered his first sermon at Sarnath. He died at Kushinagar at the age of 80.

TEACHINGS OF BUDDHISM

Buddhism is based on four noble truths. They are- (i) there is suffering in this world, (ii) there is a cause for the suffering (iii) the cause is desire and (iv) desire can be overcome by following the middle path. Buddha advised his disciples to follow the middle path - that is - neither to give up all worldly possessions, nor to live in luxury. Buddha preached equality of all human beings. He rejected the caste system as well as all rituals. He did not accept the existence of God and the atma. Buddha told his disciples that he has not started a new religion. This religion has always been here.



Pic. 6.3
MAHATMAGAUTAMBUDDHA



Pic. 6.4
Sirpur idols of bouddh period

Buddha preached in Pali, the common person’s language. Men and women of all castes were welcomed in the monasteries. Buddhism flourished not only in India but even in China, Japan, Korea, Tibbet, Sri Lanka etc. where even today there are several followers of this faith. The teachings of Buddhism are compiled in three texts called ‘Tripitikas’.

There was a time when Chhattisgarh was a big centre of Buddhism. Huan Tsang, the Chinese pilgrim, who had visited India in the 7th century has written that Sirpur, the capital of Southern Kaushal, was a big education centre of Buddhism.



There were several monasteries here where about ten thousand monks lived. This is confirmed as several statues of Buddha and remains of temples have been found in the excavation at Sirpur.

We have read about Jainism, Buddhism, Mahaveer Swami and Mahatma Buddha. Besides these two there were several other religious thinkers too. Each one taught about non-violence, love, compassion and equality of human beings. All religions teach us to do good and to keep away from evil. We must respect and honour all religions.

EXERCISE

I. Fill in the blanks:

1. Mahaveer Swami was born in _____ B.C.
2. Mahatma Buddha was born at _____.
3. Mahatma Buddha delivered his first sermon at _____.
4. Teachings of Mahatma Buddha are compiled in the _____.
5. Right faith, right knowledge and right action are called _____ in Jainism.

II. Answer the following question:

1. Write biography about Mahaveer swami ?
2. Describe the teachings of Jainism?
3. Describe the life sketch of Mahatma Buddha ?
4. Write the teachings of Buddhism ?

III. Write short notes on:

1. Triratna (Three jewels)
2. Four noble truths.
3. Five Mahavratas.
4. Eight fold path

IV. Eligibility extension

Make a list of the ancient Jain temples and Buddhist monasteries in Chhattisgarh.

