

Unit 16

Jainism and Buddhism

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Learning Objectives

After you have studied this unit you should be able to:

- outline the history of Jainism;
- describe the doctrine of Jainism;
- discuss doctrine of Buddhism;
- trace the diffusion of Buddhism; and
- Present Buddhism in the West.

16.1 Introduction

The conditions underlying the emergence of Buddhism and Jainism in ancient India were those generally characteristic of a wider process of socio-cultural transition which took place in the first millennium B C across the face of the civilized world, from Greece to China. In the principal centers of the high cultures, archaic social and religious institutions were breaking down under the pressure from more complex forms of economic and political activity, associated with urban revolution and the territorial expansion of new imperial states. In all cases, apparent economic and political advances were mixed with serious social disorders, hardship, and loss of traditional religious moorings. In this process of transformation, new philosophical and religious solutions were sought and attained by the formative thinkers whose teachings still lie behind the institutions and way of life of the world today.

The 6th Century B.C was a period of religious turmoil in India. Simple Religious life of ancient India had become complex, elaborate and expensive in due course of time. The prevalence of the Brahmanical system based on the complicated sacrifice and elaborate ceremonies created unrest among the common people. Further, caste system became rigid creating

inequalities in the society. The Brahmins who now adorned the status of being the highest in the society provoked religious propagators to preach a new philosophy of life and death. Many sects arose which were advocating diverse opinions about God and ways of attaining Moksha. The prevailing ethos common to all these religious perspectives was asceticism, which stood in contrast to the ritualistic Brahmanic schools associated with the earliest period of classical Hinduism. Prominent among them were Buddhism and Jainism which emerged in India around 800-600 BC. They denied the ultimacy of the Vedas and the ritual significance of caste and gave messages of salvation based on personal conversion, usually without ascriptive limitations of caste, class, sex. Their teachings found rich soil among the upwardly mobile urban commercial groups.

Action and Reflection 16.1

Discuss the conditions which led to the rise of Jainism and Buddhism?

16.2 Jainism: The History

We now turn to the history of Jainism. Jainism, as believed by its followers is said to have originated in the antiquity. Mahavira was the 24th and last Tirthankara (literally "Ford-maker") of the current age (kalpa) of the world. Tirthankaras, also called Jinas, are revealers of the Jaina religious path (dharma) who have crossed over life's stream of rebirths and have set the example that all Jainas must follow. Born as the son of a Kshatriya chieftain, Vardhman Mahavira renounced his princely status to take up the ascetic life at the age of 30. Over a period of 12 years, he suffered the most self-denying hardships until he finally reached enlightenment and began to teach others. There remains no objective document concerning the beginnings of Jainism. The date of Mahavira's death ("entry into Nirvana"), which is the starting point of the traditional Jain chronology, corresponds to 527/526 BCE. However some scholars believe it occurred about one century later.

Mahavira's acknowledged status as the 24th Tirthankara (or *Jina*) means that Jainas perceive him as the last revealer in this cosmic age of the Jaina Dharma. Mahavira had eleven disciples (called *ganadharas*), all of whom were Brahmin converts to Jainism. All of them founded monastic lineages, but only two- Indrabhuti Gautama and Sudharman, disciples who survived Mahavira- served as the points of origin for the historical Jaina monastic community.

The community appears to have grown quickly in number. However it was subject to a several schismatic movements. The most significant division was that between the *Svetambaras* (literally, "white-robed") and the *Digambaras* ("sky-clad"; i.e. naked) which persists till today. The major points of difference between the two concern the question of proper monastic attire and whether or not a soul can attain liberation from a female body (a possibility the Digambaras deny). These differences were formalized through a series of councils that met to preserve and codify the teachings of Mahavira in written form. It was felt that the teachings, preserved orally since his death, were in danger of being lost. Four councils were held between the 4th century B C and the 5th century A D. The last one held at Valabhi in Saurashtra (modern day Gujarat) codified the Svetambara canon that is still in use. However the Digambaras deny the authenticity of this corpus and instead recognize the authority of "pro-canonical" treatises.

After Mahavira's time the Jain community spread along the caravan routes from Magadh (Bihar) to the west and south. They claimed to have enjoyed

the favor of numerous rulers, including king Bimbisara of Magadh and later the Mauryan Emperor Chandragupta Maurya. By the 5th century, the Digambaras were influential in the Deccan, especially in Karnataka. Under the Ganga, Rashtrakutas and other Dynasties, Jain culture undoubtedly flourished. As for Svetambaras, they were especially successful in Gujarat where their famous pontiff, Hemachandra served as a minister in the kingdom. Elaborate sanctuaries were erected, such as that on Mount Abu, now in Rajasthan. The rise of several sects testifies to the vitality of the Svetambaras, who even succeeded in interesting the Mughal Emperor Akbar in the Jain doctrine.

Although the Jain community never regained its former splendor, it did not disappear entirely. Nowadays, the Digambaras are firmly established in Maharashtra and Karnataka and the Svetambaras in Punjab, Rajasthan and Gujarat. In modern times, Svetambaras Jainism has maintained a more effective organization and has a larger monastic community than its Digambara counterpart. Both communities devote much energy to maintaining temples and publishing critical editions of their religious texts.

Jainas have traditionally been professional and mercantile people. These trades have made them adaptable to other environments and societies besides those of India. Many Jains have migrated overseas, and this has had the result of increasing international awareness of Jainism.

16.3 Religious Practices

All Jains are members of the four-fold congregation (*samgha*), composed of monks and nuns, laymen and laywomen. They share a common belief in the *triratna* (three jewels): *samyagdarsana* ('right faith'), *samyagjnana* ('right knowledge') and *samyakcaritra* ('right conduct'). Observance of the "three jewels" provides the conditions for the attainment of the goal, which is liberation from bondage. Deliverance can be attained only by the *nirgrantha*, the Jain monk free from bonds both external and internal. Ideal practices are thus in force in the (male) religious community. Nevertheless, householders are permitted certain ceremonies such as the worship of images (a practice borrowed from Hinduism). Both the lay and the monastic followers must take solemn vows (*vratas*), which form the basis of Jain ethics and guides the pious believers' lives.

The monks and nuns take the five 'great vows' (*mahavratas*), pledging to abstain from: injuring life; false speech; taking what is not given; unchastity; appropriation. A sixth vow consists of abstaining from taking food and drink at night with the aim to avoid injury to insects which might go unnoticed at night.

Ordinary monks and nuns live in a 'company' (*gana*) where they benefit from the advice of their superiors and from the active solidarity of their brethren. The *gana* is further subdivided into smaller units.

Box 16.1 Ordination in Jainism

Religious age and hierarchy play a great role. Elders look into the material and spiritual welfare of the company. *Upadhyaya* is a specialist in teaching the scripture and *Acharya* acts as a spiritual master. Full ordination of a member takes place after a short novitiate that lasts approximately four months. Full admission entails taking the five great vows mentioned above. The *nirgranthas* (monks) are also called *bhikshu* (mendicant) or *sadhu* (pious); the *nigranthis* (nuns) are called *bhikshuni* or *sadhvi*. Monks and nuns must observe the utmost reserve. The nuns' status however is always inferior to that of the monk.

Right religious conduct is minutely defined, giving rules for habitation and wandering, begging, study, confession and penances. The begging tour is important in a community where the religious members have no possessions, hence it is minutely codified. Begging and fasting must be conducted with great care and preceded confession (*alocana*) and repentance (*pratikramana*), which are deemed essential activities.

Called *sravakas* ("listeners") or *upasakas* ("servants"), the lay believers also take five main vows, similar to the *mahavratas*, and hence termed *anuvratas* ("lesser vows"). These include *ahimsa*, (non-violence), *satya* (truthfulness), *dana*(charity) etc.

These practices are evidently relevant in a doctrine that emphasizes individual exertion, and that considers the *jinas* to be inaccessible, liberated souls. On the other hand, the Jain church has not been able to ignore the devotional aspirations of the laity, who are also attracted by Hindu ritual. All these practices are believed to lead the soul to achieve its own "perfection" (*siddhi*), acting as vehicles through which one crosses the stream of the innumerable rebirths.

16.4 Doctrine of Jainism

The Jainas religious goal is the complete perfection and purification of the soul. This can only occur when the soul is in a state of eternal liberation from and nonattachment to corporeal bodies. To understand how the jainas perceive and address the problem of impediments towards the liberation of soul, it is imperative to explain the Jaina conception of reality.

Time, according to jainas, is eternal and formless. It is conceived as a wheel with 12 spokes called *aras* (ages), six making an ascending arc where man progresses in knowledge, age, stature and happiness and six a descending one where he deteriorates. The two cycles joined together make one rotation of the wheel of time, which is called a *kalpa*.

Jainas divide the inhabited universe into five parts. The lower world (*adhloka*) is subdivided into seven tiers, each one darker and more tortuous than the one above it. The middle world (*madhyaloka*) consists of numberless concentric continents separated by seas, the centre continent which is called *jambudvipa*. Human beings occupy *jambudvipa*, the second continent and half of the third; the focus of Jaina activity, however, is *jambudvipa*, the only continent on which it is possible for the soul to achieve liberation. The celestial world (*urdhvaloka*) consists of two categories of heaven. At the apex of the occupied universe is the *siddhasila*, the crescent-shaped abode of liberated souls (*siddhas*)

Jain reality is constituted by *jiva* (soul or living substance) and *ajiva* (non-soul or inanimate substance). The essential characteristics of *jiva* are consciousness, bliss and energy. In its pure state, *jiva* possesses these qualities in infinite measure. The souls, infinite in number, are divisible in their embodied state into two main classes, immobile and mobile, according to the number of sense organs possessed by the body they inhabit. The jainas believe that the four elements (earth, fire, water, air) are also animated by souls. Moreover the universe is full of an infinite number of minute beings, *nigodas*, which are slowly evolving.

Matter furnishes to the soul a body in which to be incorporated and the possibility of corporeal functions. There are five kinds of bodies, each having different functions. All corporeal beings possess at least two of them, the 'karmic' and the 'fiery'. The karmic body results from previous actions; it is intimately attached to the *jiva*, for whom it causes servitude. Hence arise incarnation and transmigration, that is, the law of the universe.

Bondage occurs because the subtle matter resulting from anterior intentions and volitions is attracted to the soul exercised by the means of speech, body and mind. The subtle matter that has been attracted becomes *karman* when entering the soul. The pious Jain strives to get rid of these material extrinsic elements. When life ends, the *jiva*, if it has recovered its essential nature, immediately rejoins the other *siddhas* at the pinnacle of the universe, otherwise takes rebirth determined by its *karman*.

The process of bondage and liberation then may be summarized in the following categories: 1) *jiva* 2) *ajiva* 3) influx of karmic matter into the *jiva* 4) bondage 5) stoppage of the karmic influx (*samvara*) 6) expulsion (*nirjara*) of previously accumulated karmic matter 7) total liberation.

Action and Reflection 16.2

How, according to Jainism can one achieve liberation of soul which was their ultimate goal?

16.5 Religious Symbolism and Iconography

Image worship was introduced at an early stage in Jainism. However, *jina* himself appears to have made no statement regarding the worship of images. Descriptions of stupas, commemorative pillars and tree shrines appear early in Jain texts, which also refer to the worship in the heavens by gods of images of the four legendary *sasvata jinas* ("eternal victors")

The distinctive feature of the Jain shrine is the image of the tirthankara to whom it is dedicated and the idols of the prophets who flank him or occupy the various surrounding niches. Secondary divinities are frequently added. There are also auspicious and symbolic diagrams: the wheel of Jain law, and the "five supreme ones"- *arhats*, *siddhas*, *acaryas*, *upadhyas*, and *sadhus*. There are also conventional representations of Continents, of Holy places and of the great festive congregation in the middle of which the Jina is said to have delivered his sermon for the benefit of all creatures. In effect, the Jain temple is often said to be a sort of replica of this assembly.

Stupas were among the first monuments to be erected by the Jain community. Soon the Buddhists alone continued this tradition, so that in effect, the Jains have two main types of architectural masterpieces: rock-cut and structural temples. It is probably in western India that the Jain temples are the most numerous and impressive

Through the ages the Jainas, though a minority, have clearly occupied a major place in Indian history. Their culture is both original and influenced by the Brahmanic society surrounding them. Conversely, their presence has probably encouraged certain tendencies of Hinduism, perhaps the most outstanding of which are the high value set on asceticism and the faith in *ahimsa*. The spread of Jainism remained largely confined to India where they form an admittedly small but nonetheless influential and comparatively progressive community of 2,604,837 people (1981 census).

16.6 Buddhism: Main Traditions

We now turn to the main traditions of Buddhism. Buddhism focuses on the teachings of Gautama Buddha, who was born in Kapilavastu (now Nepal) with the name Siddhârtha Gautama around the fifth century BC. Buddhism spread throughout the Indian subcontinent in the five centuries following the Buddha's passing, and propagated into Central, Southeast, and East Asia over the next two millennia. It underwent a massive process of missionary diffusion throughout the Asian world, assimilating new values and undergoing major changes in doctrinal and institutional principles.

The traditional distinction between the major historical forms of Buddhism has centred on a three-fold typology. It is based on doctrinal and institutional differences which seem to fall within relatively homogeneous geographical areas. They are:

- 1) The *Theravada* ("teaching of the elders"), located in Southeast Asia—especially in Ceylon, Burma, Thailand, Laos, Vietnam and Cambodia
- 2) *Mahayana* ("great vehicle") in Nepal, Sikkim, China, Korea and Japan
- 3) *Tantrayana* ("esoteric vehicle") formerly prevalent in Tibet, Mongolia and parts of Siberia

Today *Theravada* represents the sole survivor of the numerous ancient Indian schools. It has a fixed body of canonical literature, a relatively unified orthodox teaching and a clearly structured institutional distinction between the monastic order and laity. On the other hand, the Mahayana is a diffuse and a vastly complex combination of several schools and sects based on a heterogeneous literature of massive proportions. Certain key scriptures exist which are regarded as typifying the more universal thrust of Mahayana principles over the Theravada teachings. The *Theravada* teachings have traditionally been stigmatized as Hinayan ("small vehicle") by the Mahayanists. Tantric Buddhism, dominantly identified with Tibetan Lamaism and its theocracy, is equally ambiguous. The esoteric tantric teachings, which originated in India, persisted in several so-called Mahayan schools in China and Japan. In its Tibetan form Tantric Buddhism was richly fused with a native primitivism, and it underwent important and very divergent sectarian developments.

Amid this diversity there are few central elements which can be considered as the general characteristic of Buddhism throughout the larger part of history. Symbol of Buddha is the common point of unity—revered chiefly as a human teacher in *Theravada* and worshipped as a supreme deity in certain forms of theistic *Mahayana*. The voluntary act of personal conversion in response to the teaching irrespective of the social, ethnic or geographic origin is commonly prevalent.

16.7 Doctrine of Buddhism

The term Buddha, meaning "Enlightened one", refers to the spiritual awakening of an Indian prince, named Siddhartha Gautama, who lived in the 6th century BC. Renouncing the privileges of his royal life, he sought to investigate spiritual truth. On so doing, he passed into the state of enlightenment, known as *nirvana*, which literally means "without desire". Soon he inspired many disciples and came to be known as the "Sage of the Sakya tribe" or Sakyamuni and evolved his own teaching (*Dharma*). He then embarked on a missionary career, preaching his message of salvation openly to all. He formed an ever widening community (*sangha*) of mendicant disciples from all castes, including women and lay devotees.

The major forms of tradition represent the Buddha as teaching an exoteric, practical Yoga which followed the so-called middle path—a means between the extremes of bodily indulgence, self-mortification and speculative philosophy. It is based on the conviction that neither ritual manipulation of external physical forms (including radical asceticism eg. Jainism), nor abstract intellectualism can touch the real core of the human problem.

The Buddha taught that in life there exists sorrow / suffering which is caused by desire and it can be cured (ceased) by following the Noble Eightfold Path. This teaching is called the "Four Noble Truths". The Four Noble Truths was the topic of the first sermon given by the Buddha after his enlightenment¹, which was given to the ascetics with whom he had practiced austerities:

- 1) Suffering: All creatures' existence is marked by suffering, an agonized bondage to the meaningless cycle of rebirths amid a transitory flux which is impermanent (*anitya*) and without essential being (*anatman*).
- 2) The cause of suffering: The desire which leads to renewed existence (rebirth).
- 3) The cessation of suffering: The cessation of desire.
- 4) The way leading to the cessation of suffering: The Noble Eightfold Path;

The Noble Eightfold Path is the way to the cessation of suffering, the fourth part of the Four Noble Truths. In order to fully understand the noble truths and investigate whether they were in fact true, Buddha recommended that a certain path be followed which consists of: Right Viewpoint - Realizing the Four Noble Truths ;Right Values - Commitment to mental and ethical growth in moderation ;Right Speech - One speaks in a non hurtful, not exaggerated, truthful way ;Right Actions - Wholesome action, avoiding action that would do harm ;Right Livelihood - One's job does not harm in any way oneself or others; directly or indirectly (weapon maker, drug dealer, etc.) ;Right Effort - One makes an effort to improve ;Right Mindfulness - Mental ability to see things for what they are with clear consciousness ;Right Meditation - State where one reaches enlightenment and the ego has disappeared

The solidarity of the earliest mendicant community was centred on the charisma and teaching of the buddha. However the growing number of converts, the addition of lay devotees and the settlement of a number of communities forced the routinization of discipline and teaching.

16.8 Historical Development in India

During the first several centuries after the buddha's death, the story of his life was remembered and embellished, his teachings were preserved and developed and the community that he had established became religious force. Many of the followers of the Buddha who were wandering ascetics began to settle in permanent monastic institutions and to develop the procedures needed to maintain large monastic institutions. At the same time, the Buddhist laity came to include important members of the economic and political elite.

Box 16.2 The Buddhist Tradition

During the first century of its existence, Buddhism spread from its place of origin in Magadha and Kosala throughout much of Northern India, including the areas of Mathura and Ujjayini in the west. According to the Buddhist tradition, invitations to the council of Vaisali, held just over a century after Buddha's death, were sent to monks living in many distant places throughout Northern and Central India. The third ruler of the Mauryan empire, King Ashoka converted to Buddhism and promoted Buddhist missionary movements. Subsequently Buddhism succeeded in maintaining and even expanding its influence. Buddhist monastic centres and magnificent Buddhist monuments such as the Great Stupa at Barhut and Sanchi were established. It benefited from extensive royal and popular support in Northwestern India under the Pala dynasty from the eighth to the twelfth century, but Hindu philosophy and theistic (bhakti) movements were critics of Buddhism.

Hardly any distinct Buddhist presence continued in India after the last of the great monasteries were destroyed by the Muslims. Since the early 1900s, however, a significant Buddhist presence has been re-established. A number of Buddhist societies were organized by Indian intellectuals who found

Buddhism as an alternative to a Hindu tradition that they could no longer accept. Following the Chinese quest of Tibet in the late 1950s, there was an influx of Tibetan Buddhists who established a highly visible Buddhist community in Northern India. In addition to the incorporation of Sikkim in 1975 into the Republic of India, a strong Buddhist tradition related to the *Vajrayana* Buddhism of Tibet has been brought to India.

The major component in the contemporary revival of Buddhism in India has been the mass conversion of large number of people from the scheduled castes. This conversion movement, originally led by Dr. B. R. Ambedkar began in the 1950s. In October 1956 Ambedkar and several thousands of his followers converted to Buddhism and the group has continued to grow since then.

16.9 Diffusion of Buddhism

The first clear evidence of the spread of Buddhism outside India dates from the reign of King Ashoka (3rd century B C). According to his inscriptions, Ashoka sent Buddhist emissaries not only to many different regions of the sub-continent but also into certain border areas as well.

SRI LANKA

Sri Lankan Buddhism belongs to the Theravada tradition. About 69% of the country adheres to Buddhism. Sri Lanka is the country with longest continuous history of Buddhism. Theravada has been the major religion in the island since soon after its introduction in the 2nd century BC by Venerable Mahinda, the son of the Emperor Ashoka of India during the reign of Sri Lanka's King Devanampiyatissa. During this time, a sapling of the Bodhi Tree was also brought to Sri Lanka and became known as Sri Maha Bodhi.

The different orders of the Theravada are referred to as *Nikayas*, and in Sri Lanka there are three: 1) *Siam Nikaya*, founded in the 18th century by a Thai monk who perceived corruption in the sangha and wished to purify its practices 2) *Amarapura Nikaya*, founded in 1800 after ordination within Burma by lower-caste Buddhists who objected to the previously dominant practice of selective ordination from the higher-castes 3) *Ramanna Nikaya*, founded in 1864 by Ambagahawatte Saranankara.

SOUTHEAST ASIA

Through trade connection, commercial settlements, and even political interventions, India started to strongly influence Southeast Asian countries. Trade routes linked India with southern Burma, central and southern Siam, lower Cambodia and southern Vietnam, and numerous urbanized coastal settlements were established there.

From the 5th to the 13th century, South-East Asia had very powerful empires and became extremely active in Buddhist architectural and artistic creation. The main Buddhist influence now came directly by sea from the Indian subcontinent, so that these empires essentially followed the Mahayana faith. The Sri Vijaya Empire to the south and the Khmer Empire to the north competed for influence, and their art expressed the rich Mahayana pantheon of the Bodhisattvas. Following the destruction of Buddhism in mainland India during the 11th century, Mahayana Buddhism declined in Southeast Asia, to be replaced by the introduction of Theravada Buddhism from Sri Lanka.

In the areas east of the Indian subcontinent (today's Burma), Indian culture strongly influenced the Mons. The Mons are said to have been converted to Buddhism around 200 BCE under the proselytizing of the Indian king

Ashoka, before the scission between Mahayana and Hinayana Buddhism. The Buddhist art of the Mons was especially influenced by the Indian art of the Gupta and post-Gupta periods, and their mannerist style spread widely in Southeast Asia following the expansion of the Mon kingdom between the 5th and 8th centuries. The Theravada faith expanded in the northern parts of Southeast Asia under Mon influence, until it was progressively displaced by Mahayana Buddhism from around the 6th century CE.

Buddhism in Cambodia dates back to at least the 5th century A.D. Jayavarman of Fu-nan, Suryvarman I and Jayavarman VII were Buddhists. Up to the 13th century, Cambodia was primarily influenced by Mahayana Buddhism and Saivism. After the 13th century Theravada Buddhism became the main religion of Cambodia

Three schools of Mahayana Buddhism, now most influential, were imported into Vietnam: Zen Buddhism, Pure Land Buddhism, and Vajrayana Buddhism. Zen Buddhism, known as ThiÁn in Vietnam, is a branch of Buddhism created by the Indian monk Bodhidharma in China at the beginning of the 6th century. Zen is an abbreviation of *Dhyana*.

CENTRAL ASIA

Central Asia long played the role of a meeting place between China, India and Persia. During the 2nd century BC, the expansion of the Former Han to the west brought them into contact with the Hellenistic civilizations of Asia, especially the Greco-Bactrian Kingdoms. Thereafter, the expansion of Buddhism to the north led to the formation of Buddhist communities and even Buddhist kingdoms in the oases of Central Asia. Some Silk Road cities consisted almost entirely of Buddhist stupas and monasteries, and it seems that one of their main objectives was to welcome and service travelers between east and west.

The Hinayana traditions first spread among the Turkic tribes before combining with the Mahayana forms during the 2nd and 3rd centuries BCE to cover modern-day Pakistan, Kashmir, Afghanistan, eastern and coastal Iran, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan. These were the ancient states of Gandhara, Bactria, Parthia and Sogdia from where it spread to China. Among the first of these Turkic tribes to adopt Buddhism was the Turki-Shahi who adopted Buddhism as early as the 3rd century BCE. It was not, however, the exclusive faith of this region. There were also Zoroastrians, Hindus, Nestorian Christians, Jews, Manichaeans, and followers of shamanism, Tengrism, and other indigenous, nonorganized systems of belief.

Buddhism in Central Asia started to decline with the expansion of Islam and the destruction of many stupas in war from the 7th century. The Muslims accorded them the status of dhimmis as "people of the Book", such as Christianity or Judaism and Al-Biruni wrote of Buddha as prophet "burxan".

Buddhism saw a surge during the reign of Mongols following the invasion of Genghis Khan and the establishment of the Il Khanate and the Chagatai Khanate who brought their Buddhist influence with them during the 13th century, however within a 100 years the Mongols would convert to Islam and spread Islam across all the regions across Central Asia

KOREA

Buddhism was introduced around 372 CE, when Chinese ambassadors visited the Korean kingdom of Goguryeo, bringing scriptures and images. Buddhism prospered in Korea, and in particular Seon (Zen) Buddhism from the 7th

century onward. However, with the beginning of the Confucian Yi Dynasty of the Joseon period in 1392, Buddhism was strongly discriminated against until it was almost completely eradicated, except for a remaining Seon movement. As it now stands, Korean Buddhism consists mostly of the Seon lineage. Seon has a strong relationship with other Mahayana traditions that bear the imprint of Chinese Ch'an teachings, as well as the closely related Japanese Zen. Other sects, such as the Taego, and the newly formed Won, have also attracted sizable followings.

CHINA

When the Han Dynasty of China extended its power to Central Asia in the first century B.C., trade and cultural ties between China and Central Asia also increased. In this way, the Chinese people learnt about Buddhism so that by the middle of the first century C.E., a community of Chinese Buddhists was already in existence.

As interest in Buddhism grew, there was a great demand for Buddhist texts to be translated from Indian languages into Chinese. This led to the arrival of translators from Central Asia and India. With a growing collection of Chinese translations of Buddhist texts, Buddhism became more widely known and a Chinese monastic order was also formed. The first known Chinese monk was said to be Anshigao's disciple.

The earliest translators had some difficulty in finding the exact words to explain Buddhist concepts in Chinese, so they made use of Taoist terms in their translations. As a result, people began to relate Buddhism with the existing Taoist tradition. It was only later on that the Chinese came to understand fully the teachings of the Buddha.

In the middle of the ninth century, Buddhism faced persecution by a Taoist emperor. He decreed the demolition of monasteries, confiscation of temple land, return of monks and nuns to secular life and the melting of metal Buddha images. Although the persecution lasted only for a short time, it marked the end of an era for Buddhism in China. Following the demolition of monasteries and the dispersal of scholarly monks, a number of Chinese schools of Buddhism, including the Tian-tai School, ceased to exist as separate movements. They were absorbed into the Chan and Pure Land schools, which survived. The eventual result was the emergence of a new form of Chinese Buddhist practice in the monastery. Besides practising Chan meditation, Buddhists also recited the name of Amitabha Buddha and studied Buddhist texts. It is this form of Buddhism, which has survived to the present time.

Just as all the Buddhist teachings and practices were combined under one roof in the monasteries, Buddhist lay followers also began to practice Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism simultaneously. Gradually, however, Confucian teachings became dominant in the court, and among the officials who were not in favor of Buddhism.

Buddhism, generally, continued to be a major influence in Chinese religious life. In the earlier part of the twentieth century, there was an attempt to modernize and reform the tradition in order to attract wider support. In the nineteen-sixties, under the People's Republic, Buddhism was suppressed. Many monasteries were closed and monks and nuns returned to lay life. In recent years, a more liberal policy regarding religion has led to a growth of interest in the practice of Buddhism.

KOREA

When Buddhism was originally introduced to Korea from China in 372, or

about 800 years after the death of the historical Buddha, Shamanism was the indigenous religion. As it was not seen to conflict with the rites of nature worship, it was allowed to blend in with Shamanism. Thus, the mountains that were believed to be the residence of spirits in pre-Buddhist times became the sites of Buddhist temples.

During the sixth and seventh centuries, many Korean monks went to China to study and brought back with them the teachings of the various Chinese schools of Buddhism. Towards the end of the seventh century, the three kingdoms which existed in Korea were unified under the powerful Silla rulers. From then onwards, Buddhism flourished under their royal patronage. Great works of art were created and magnificent monasteries built. Buddhism exerted great influence on the life of the Korean people. In the tenth century, Silla rule ended with the founding of the Koryo Dynasty. Under this new rule, Buddhism reached the height of its importance. With royal support, more monasteries were built and more works of art produced. From this period onwards, there was a revival of Buddhism in Korea. Many Buddhists in Korea have since been actively involved in promoting education and missionary activities. They have founded universities, set up schools in many parts of Korea and established youth groups and lay organizations. Buddhist texts, originally in Chinese translation, are now being retranslated into modern Korean. New monasteries are being built and old ones repaired. Today, Buddhism is again playing an important role in the life of the people.

JAPAN

Japan discovered Buddhism in the 6th century when Korean monks traveled to the islands together with numerous scriptures and works of art. The Buddhist religion was adopted by the state in the following century. Being geographically at the end of the Silk Road, Japan was able to preserve many aspects of Buddhism at the very time it was disappearing in India, and being suppressed in Central Asia and China.

From the very beginning, the establishment of Buddhism depended on the protection and support of the Japanese rulers. Among these, Prince Shotoku deserves special mention for his great contribution to the early growth and expansion of Buddhism in Japan during the early part of the seventh century. His devotion and royal patronage of Buddhism helped to make it widely known. Many Buddhist temples were built and works of art created. Monks were also sent to China to study. Besides encouraging Japanese monks to read the scriptures, Prince Shotoku lectured and later wrote commentaries on some of these scriptures. His commentaries are said to be the first ever written in Japan and are now kept as national treasures.

The history of Buddhism in Japan can be roughly divided into three periods, namely the Nara period (up to 784), the Heian period (794-1185) and the post-Kamakura period (1185 onwards). Each period saw the introduction of new doctrines and upheavals in existing schools. In modern times, there are three main paths of Buddhism, to which all schools of Japanese Buddhism belong: the Amidist (Pure Land) schools, Nichiren Buddhism, and Zen Buddhism.

Buddhism remains very active in Japan to this day. Around 80,000 Buddhist temples are preserved and regularly restored.

TIBET

Tibetan Buddhism is the body of religious Buddhist doctrine and institutions characteristic of Tibet, the Himalayan region (including northern Nepal, Bhutan, and Sikkim and Ladakh), Mongolia, Buryatia, Tuva and Kalmykia

(Russia), and northeastern China (Manchuria: Heilongjiang, Jilin). It is a multifaceted and integrated teaching, naturally implementing methods for all human-condition levels: *Hinayana, Mahayana, Vajrayana*

When Buddhism was introduced into Tibet in the seventh century under King Songtsen Gampo, it was apparently centered in the royal court and did not, at first, put down deep roots. Almost a century passed until it found favor again under King Trisong Detsen, who with the aid of Padmasambhava strengthened its position. But even after that “first diffusion,” the new religion lost ground, and it was not until the “second diffusion” of Buddhism in the ninth and tenth centuries that it became firmly and finally established as the majority religion of Tibet.

Buddhism, a comparatively late import to Tibet, was ideologically attractive to the intellectual elite with the innovation of Tantric techniques by which individuals could attain enlightenment within their lifetime. This esoteric doctrine, in large part confined to monastic activities, was made palatable to the general populace in combination with the appropriation of many trappings of the indigenous Pre-Buddhist Tibetan belief system. As a result Tibetan Buddhism amalgamates both elitist and populist traditions to satisfy the different requirements of its two audiences as well as to respond to both religious and mythological dimensions of the Tibetan psyche.

NEPAL

According to archaeological and historical records, Gautama Buddha, the founder of Buddhism, was born in Lumbini, Nepal in 563 BCE. After enlightenment at the age of 35 he returned back to the place. His and his disciples’ preaching soon spread Buddhism in the surrounding areas.

It was believed that Gautama Buddha visited Nepal several times. It is said that upon the expansion of the Mauryan dynasty into the Terai plains in Nepal, Buddhism was adopted by the ancestors of the Tharu and flourished until the Licchavis came. The Licchavi period saw the flourishing of both Hinduism and Buddhism in Nepal. Excellent examples of Buddhist art of the period are the half-sunken Buddha in Pashupatinath, the sleeping Vishnu in Budhanilkantha, and the statue of Buddha and the various representations of Vishnu in Changu Narayan. After the overthrow of Rana dynasty, Buddhism gradually developed in the country. Theravadins played a great role for the revival campaign. Presently, there are three main Buddhist schools; Tibetan Buddhism, Newar Buddhism and Theravada Buddhism.

16.10 Buddhism in the West

During the long course of Buddhist history, Buddhist influences have from time to time reached the western world. However, not until the modern period is there evidence for a serious Buddhist presence in the western world. The movement of Buddhism from Asia to the west that took place in the 19th and 20th century, Buddhism was introduced in the United States and other Western countries by large number of immigrants, first from China and Japan but more recently from other countries of SouthEast Asia. Buddhism gained a foothold among a significant number of Western intellectuals and particularly during the 1960s and early 1970s among young people seeking new forms of religious experience and expressions.

Action and Reflection 16.3

Give an account of the spread of Buddhism outside India

16.11 Conclusion

The Buddhist tradition has been more accretive in its doctrine than the other great missionary religions. It has shown an enduring tendency to adapt to local forms, as a result of which one can speak of a transformation of Buddhism in various cultures.

Jainism has been largely confined to India, although the migration of Indians to other, predominantly English speaking countries has spread its practice in many Commonwealth nations and to the United States. Its continuous existence in India for some 2,500 years gives it a unique status as the only Sanskritic non-Hindu religious tradition to have survived in India to the present. In sharp contrast, Buddhism which is widespread in Asia is no longer widely practiced in India. This propagation to foreign countries like Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Thailand, China, Nepal, Tibet, Japan etc helped in the exchange of ideas in art, architecture and literature, thus enhancing the cultural heritage of India. Along with Hinduism, Jainism and Buddhism remain the most ancient of India's religious traditions still in existence.

16.12 Further Reading

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