

# CBSE Notes Class 6 History Chapter 6 - New Questions and Ideas

From Chapter 5, you know that some kings in the mahajanapadas were growing more powerful. New cities were developing, and life was changing in the villages. Many thinkers were trying to understand these changes in society. They also wanted to try and find out the true meaning of life. During this period, Buddha and Mahavira attained enlightenment and spread their knowledge and learning about the real meaning of life to common people.

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### The story of Buddha

About 2500 years ago, Siddhartha the founder of Buddhism was born. He was also known as **Gautama** Buddha. The Buddha belonged to a small gana known as the Sakya gana, and was a kshatriya. When he was a young man, he left the comforts of his home in search of knowledge. He meditated for days on end under a peepal tree at Bodh Gaya in Bihar, where he attained enlightenment. After that, he was known as the Buddha or the Wise One. He then went to Sarnath, near Varanasi, where he taught for the first time. He spent the rest of his life travelling on foot, going from place to place, teaching people, till he passed away at Kusinara.

### Buddha's Teaching

The Buddha taught that life is full of suffering and unhappiness. Even if we get what we want, we are not satisfied and want even more. The Buddha described this as thirst or tanha. He taught that this constant craving could be removed by following moderation in everything. He also taught people to be kind, and to respect the lives of others, including animals. He believed that the results of our actions (called karma), whether good or bad, affect us both in this life and the next.

### Upanishads

Upanishad means 'approaching and sitting near'. The texts contained in the Upanishad were the conversations between teachers and students.

1. Most Upanishadic thinkers were men, especially brahmins and rajas.
2. There is mention of women thinkers, such as Gargi, who was famous for her learning and participated in debates held in royal courts.
3. Many of the ideas of the Upanishads were later developed by the famous thinker Shankaracharya.

### Jainism

The last and 24th Tirthankara of the Jainas was **Vardhamana Mahavira**. He was a kshatriya prince of the Lichchavis, a group that was part of the Vajji sangha. At the age of 30, he left home and went to live in a forest. For 12 years he led a hard and lonely life, at the end of which he attained enlightenment.

He taught a simple doctrine: men and women who wished to know the truth must leave their homes. They must follow very strictly the rules of **ahimsa**, which means not hurting or killing living beings.

Followers of Mahavira, who were known as Jainas, had to lead very simple lives. They had to be absolutely honest and were especially asked not to steal. Also, they had to observe celibacy. And men had to give up everything, including their clothes. It was very difficult for most men and women to follow these strict rules. Jainism was supported mainly by traders. The teachings of Mahavira and his followers were transmitted orally for several centuries.

## The Sangha

Sangha was an association of those people who left their homes. The rules made for the Buddhist sangha were written down in a book called the **Vinaya Pitaka**. Men and women who joined the sangha led simple lives. They meditated for most of the time, and went to cities and villages to beg for food during fixed hours. That is why they were known as **bhikkhus** (the Prakrit word for renouncer - beggar) and bhikkhunis. Those who joined the sangha included brahmins, kshatriyas, merchants, labourers, barbers, courtesans and slaves.

## Monasteries

Both Jaina and Buddhist monks went from place to place throughout the year, teaching people. The only time they stayed in one place was during the rainy season, when it was very difficult to travel. Then, their supporters built temporary shelters for them in gardens, or they lived in natural caves in hilly areas. The permanent shelters which monasteries were built were known as **viharas**. The earliest viharas were made of wood, and then of brick. Some were even in caves, especially in western India. Over the centuries, Buddhism spread to many parts of the subcontinent and beyond. You will learn more about this in Chapter 9 of History.