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Anagha's school trip

This was the first time Anagha was going on a school trip. They boarded the train from Pune (in Maharashtra) late at night, to go all the way to Varanasi (in Uttar Pradesh). Her mother, who came to see her off at the station, told the teacher: "Do tell the children about the Buddha, and take them to see Sarnath as well."

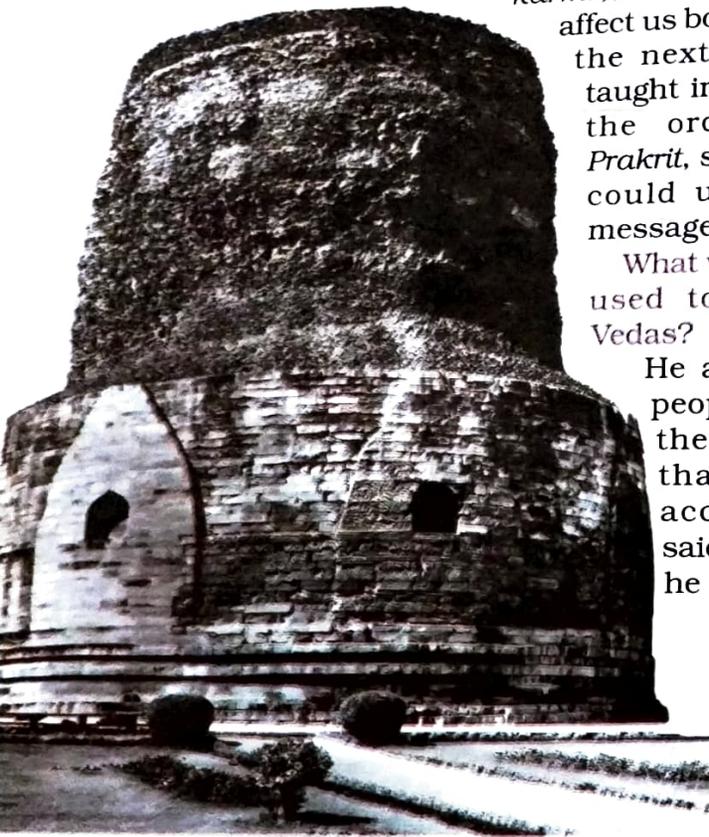


The story of the Buddha

Siddhartha, also known as Gautama, the founder of Buddhism, was born about 2500 years ago. This was a time of rapid change in the lives of people. As you saw in Chapter 5, some kings in the *mahajanapadas* were growing more powerful. New cities were developing, and life was changing in the villages as well (see Chapter 9). Many thinkers were trying to understand these changes in society. They also wanted to try and find out the true meaning of life.

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 wandered for several years, meeting and holding discussions with other thinkers. He finally decided to find his own path to realisation, and 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.

the stupa at Sarnath. This building, known as a stupa, was built to mark the place where the Buddha first taught his message. You will learn more about stupas in chapter 11.



The Buddha taught that life is full of suffering and unhappiness. This is caused because we have cravings and desires (which often cannot be fulfilled). Sometimes, even if we get what we want, we are not satisfied, and want even more (or want other things). 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. The Buddha taught in the language of the ordinary people, *Prakrit*, so that everybody could understand his message.

What was the language used to compose the Vedas?

He also encouraged people to think for themselves rather than to simply accept what he said. Let us see how he did this.

The story of Kisagotami

Here is a famous story about the Buddha. Once there was a woman named Kisagotami, whose son had died. She was so sad that she roamed through the streets of the city carrying the child with her, asking for help to bring him back to life. A kind man took her to the Buddha.

The Buddha said: "Bring me a handful of mustard seeds, and I will bring your child back to life."

Kisagotami was overjoyed and started off at once, but the Buddha gently stopped her and added: "The seeds must come from the house of a family where nobody has died."

Kisagotami went from door to door, but wherever she went, she found out that someone or the other — father, mother, sister, brother, husband, wife, child, uncle, aunt, grandfather, grandmother — had died.

What was the Buddha trying to teach the sorrowing mother?

Upanishads

Around the time that the Buddha was preaching and perhaps a little earlier, other thinkers also tried to find answers to difficult questions. Some of them wanted to know about life after death, others wanted to know why sacrifices should be performed. Many of these thinkers felt that there was something permanent in the universe that would last even after death. They described this as the *atman* or the individual soul and the *brahman* or the universal soul. They believed that ultimately, both the *atman* and the *brahman* were one.

Many of their ideas were recorded in the Upanishads. These were part of the later Vedic texts. Upanishad literally means 'approaching and

Six Schools of Indian Philosophy

Over centuries, India's intellectual exploration of truth has come to be represented by six systems of philosophy. These are known as *Vaisheshika*, *Nyaya*, *Samkhya*, *Yoga*, *Purva Mimansa* and *Vedanta* or *Uttara Mimansa*. These six systems of philosophy are said to have been founded by sages Konada, Gotama, Kapila, Patanjali, Jaimini and Vyasa, respectively. These philosophies still guide scholarly discourse in the country. German-born British indologist, Friedrich Max Muller, has observed that the six systems of philosophy were developed over many generations with contributions made by individual thinkers. However, today, we find an underlying harmony in the understanding of truth, although they seem distinct from each other.

The wise beggar

Here is a dialogue based on a story from one of the most famous Upanishads, the Chhandogya Upanishad.

Shaunaka and Abhipratarin were two sages who worshipped the universal soul.

Once, as they sat down to eat, a beggar came and asked for some food.

"We cannot spare anything for you," Shaunaka said.

"Learned sirs, whom do you worship?" the beggar asked.

"The universal soul," Abhipratarin replied.

"Ah! It means that you know that the universal soul fills the entire world."

"Yes, yes. We know that." The sages nodded.

"If the universal soul fills the whole world, it fills me too. Who am I, but a part of the world?" the beggar asked.

"You speak the truth, O young *brahmin*."

"Then, O sages, by not giving me food, you are actually denying food to the universal soul."

The sages realised the truth of what the beggar said, and shared their food with him.

How did the beggar convince the sages to share their food with him?

sitting near' and the texts contain conversations between teachers and students. Often, ideas were presented through simple dialogues.

Most Upanishadic thinkers were men, especially *brahmins* and *rajas*. Occasionally, there is mention of women thinkers, such as Gargi, who was famous for her learning, and participated in debates held in royal courts. Poor people rarely took part in these discussions. One famous exception was Satyakama Jabala, who was named after his mother, the slave woman Jabali. He had a deep desire to learn about reality, was accepted as a student by a *brahmin* teacher named Gautama, and became one of the best-known thinkers of the time. Many of the ideas of the Upanishads were later developed by the famous thinker Shankaracharya, about whom you will read in Class VII.

23/08

*> How did men become rulers around 3,000 years ago?

Ans By ashvamedha yajna

*> They ~~allowed to pass 'horse'~~. What did it mean?

*> Who brought gifts for the rulers?

Ans Vaishyas

*> Where is Hastinapur located?

Ans Near Meerut-

*> Where is Purana Qila situated?

Ans Delhi

*> About 2,500 years ago where was Kaushambi situated?

Ans Allahabad in UP