

ATOMIC ENERGY EDUCATION SOCIETY, MUMBAI

Class VI- Social Science

New Questions and Ideas- Handout-II

Content:

- **The Sangha**
- **Monasteries**
- **The system of Ashramas**
- **Basic tenets of Zoroastrianism**

The Sangha:-

- The **Sangha** is an association of those who left their homes to gain true knowledge.
- Both **Mahavira** and the **Buddha** felt that only those who left their homes could gain true knowledge
- The rules made for the **Buddhist sangha** were written down in **Vinaya Pitaka**.
- There were separate branches for men and women.
- They led a simple life and they went from cities to villages to beg for food
- Monks were called as **Bhikkhus** whereas nuns were called as Bhikkhunis
- They wrote about the teachings of the Buddhas and composed beautiful poems describing their life in Sanghas

Monasteries:-

- Both Mahavira and Buddhist monks went from place to place throughout the year, teaching people.
- They stayed in one place during the rainy seasons.
- Their supporters built permanent shelters for them.
- These shelters of the monks and nun were called as Monasteries. These were also known as Viharas.
- Viharas were made of wood and then in brick and even in caves.
- Very often Viharas were donated rich merchants or landowners.
- There was no caste discrimination.

The system of Ashramas:-

- The word Ashrama is derived from the Sanskrit root 'Shrama' which means to exert oneself. It does not mean a place where people live and meditate. Ashramas are regarded as different stages in the life of an individual. According to the system, life is divided into four stages- ***Brahmacharya, Grihastha, Vanaprastha and Sanyasa***. Every stage has its own duties and functions. By passing through these Ashramas and by performing the prescribed duties, a man can prepare himself for Moksha.
- ***Brahmacharya Ashrama or the Student Stage:*** It was the first stage of life. It was a period of formal education lasting up to around age 25, during which, the student would leave home to stay with a guru and attain both spiritual and practical knowledge. A Sudras would not be allowed to go through the first stage as it Vedas were taught only to Brahmins.
- ***Grhasthashrama or the Householderhood*** : It was the second stage of a human being's social life commencing with marriage. It involved a householder performing religious and duties associated with the protection and care of the family.
- ***Vanaprastha Ashram:*** It is the third stage of life. At this age, one should leave the home for a forest hut, where he could spend his time in meditation and prayers. He was allowed to take his spouse
- ***Samnyasa:*** At this stage, a person was supposed to be totally devoted to God. In this Ashrama, a person would break away from all the attachments with the world and was expected to devote his entire time towards meditation to attain moksha
- Women had to follow the ashramas chosen by their husbands. The system of Ashrama was not allowed for Shudras.

Zoroastrianism :-

- **Zoroastrianism** is one the oldest religions in the world. An Iranian prophet **Zoroaster** was the founder of this religion. The teachings are contained in a book called **Avesta** Zoroastrianism believes in one god called **Ahura Mazda**. The language of the **Avesta**, and the practices described in it are very similar to those of the Vedas.
- Zoroastrianism advocates principles of living based on ***Good thoughts, Good Words, and Good Deeds that a believer is supposed to follow.***
- For more than a thousand years, Zoroastrianism was a major religion in Iran. Later, some Zoroastrians migrated from Iran and settled down in the coastal towns of **Gujarat and Maharashtra**. They were the ancestors of today's **Parsis**.
