# Buddhism

These notes are your ultimate revision weapon to revise Buddhism history. We've distilled years of previous exam questions (PYQs) into one powerful, concise resource. Everything you need to know, nothing you don't.

- **PYQs, Decoded:** All key concepts from past exams, organized and simplified.
- **Revise in Record Time:** Short, precise, and designed for last-minute review.
- **Focus on What Matters:** Master high-probability topics and boost your confidence.

## The Life of Gautama Buddha

### 1. Early Life & Family

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- **Birth:**
  - Born in **563 B.C.** in **Lumbini** (modern-day Nepal).
  - Born into the **Shakya Kshatriya** clan.
- **Family:**
  - **Father:** King Shuddhodana (ruler of the Shakya clan).
  - **Mother:** Queen Mayadevi (from the Koliyan clan).
- **The Great Departure (Mahabhinishkramana):**
  - Left home at the age of **29**.
  - Departed on his horse **"Kantaka"** with his charioteer **Channa**.

### 2. Key Life Events

- **Enlightenment (Nirvana):**
  - Attained enlightenment at the age of **35**.
  - Location: Under a peepal tree (Bodhi Tree) in **Bodh Gaya**.
  - Defeated the demon **Mara**.
- **First Sermon (Dharmachakrapravartana):**
  - Delivered at **Deer Park, Sarnath**.

- **Final Days and Death (Mahaparinirvana):**
    - **Last Rainy Season:** Spent in **Vaishali**.
    - **Last Convert: Subhadda**.
    - **Last Meal:** Ate **Sukaramaddava** (likely pork), offered by the blacksmith **Chund** in **Pava**. This caused his illness.
    - Died at the age of **80** in **483 B.C.** in **Kushinagar** (capital of the **Malla** republic).

### 3. Core Teachings & Concepts

- **Fundamental Beliefs:**
    1. Believed in **Karma**, **Rebirth**, and the goal of attaining **Nirvana** (defined as "the extinction of the flame of desire").
    2. Did **not** believe in the power of a creator **God** or the authority of the **Vedas**.
    3. Core doctrines include **Anitya (अनित्य - Impermanence)**, **Anatmavada (अनात्मवाद - No-Self)**, **Kshanikavada (क्षणिकवाद - Momentariness)**, and **Pratityasamutpada (प्रतित्यसमुत्पाद - Dependent Origination)**.
- **The Four Noble Truths:**

    1. There is suffering (Dukkha).
    2. There is a cause of suffering (Dukkha Samudaya).
    3. There is a cessation of suffering (Dukkha Nirodha).
    4. There is a path leading to the cessation of suffering (the Noble Eightfold Path).
- **The Noble Eightfold Path:** The way to end suffering, central to the Dharmachakrapravartana Sutta.
- **The Triratna (Three Jewels): Buddha**, **Dhamma** (teachings), and **Sangha** (monastic community).
- **Nature of Teachings:** Focused on the **purity of personal conduct** over religious rituals.

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## The Buddhist Community (Sangha) & Texts

### 1. The Sangha

- **Leadership:**
  - **Devadatta** tried to take over the leadership during Buddha's lifetime.
  - Buddha did **not** appoint a successor after his death.
- **Inclusion:** Women were allowed to join as **Bhikshunis** at **Vaishali**. The first ordained woman was **Mahaprajapati Gautami** (Buddha's foster mother).
- **Practices:**
  - **Pavarana Ceremony:** Held at the end of the rainy season retreat (Varshavas) for monks to confess offenses.

### 2. Buddhist Scriptures (Tripitaka)

- **Vinaya Pitaka:** Rules for monastic life.
- **Sutta Pitaka:** Sermons and ethical teachings of Buddha.
- **Abhidhamma Pitaka:** Philosophical analysis and doctrine (contains texts like *Yamaka*).

## Buddhist Councils

| Council | Location | Presiding King | Presiding Monk | Key Outcome |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| First | Rajgriha (Saptaparni Cave) | Ajatashatru | Mahakashyapa | Recitation of teachings; compilation of Vinaya & Sutta Pitaka. |
| Second | Vaishali | Kalasoka | Sabakami | Settled disputes on monastic rules; first major schism. |
| Third | Pataliputra | Ashoka | Mogaliputta Tissa | Compilation of Abhidhamma Pitaka; |

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| | | | | sent missionaries abroad. |
| Fourth | Kashmir (Kundalavana) | Kanishka | Vasumitra (Asvaghosha as deputy) | Division into Mahayana & Hinayana; commentaries written. |

## Major Buddhist Sects

### 1. Hinayana (Theravada)

- **Sects:** Sthaviravadins, Sautrantika, Sammitiya.
- **Features:** Focus on original teachings, monastic discipline, and individual liberation. **Did not** practise idol worship.
- **Site:** The largest rock-cut **Chaitya hall** of this phase is at **Karle** (Maharashtra).

### 2. Mahayana

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- **Formal Emergence:** During the reign of **Kanishka** at the **Fourth Council**.
- **Features:**
  - **Deification of Buddha** and beginning of **idol worship** (the first human statues worshipped in India were of Buddha).
  - **Concept of Bodhisattva** (a compassionate being who delays their own salvation to help others) is central.
  - Path of **Paramitas** (perfections) leading to Bodhisattvahood.
- **Sects:** Lokottaravadin (an offshoot of the Mahasanghika sect), Sarvastivadin.
- **Bodhisattva: Avalokitesvara** (also known as **Padmapani** - Lotus-Bearer).

### 3. Others

- **Vajrayana:** Prominent from the 8th century onwards.

- **Neo-Buddhism:** Modern reinterpretation by **B.R. Ambedkar**, focusing on social equality and rejecting karma, rebirth, and monasticism.

## Sacred Sites, Architecture & Art

### 1. The Four Main Pilgrimage Sites & Symbols

- **Lumbini: Birthplace**. Symbolized by a **Lotus**. (Confirmed by Ashoka's Rummindei Pillar Inscription).
- **Bodh Gaya: Place of Enlightenment**. Symbolized by the **Bodhi Tree**.
    - Situated on the bank of the **Niranjana River**.
    - The current Bodhi tree is the **fifth-generation** descendant (original destroyed by King Shashank).
    - **Mahabodhi Temple** built here to mark the site.
- **Sarnath: Place of First Sermon**. Symbolized by a **Wheel (Dharma Chakra)** and **Deer**.
- **Kushinagar: Place of Death (Mahaparinirvana)**. Symbolized by a **Stupa**. Home to the Mahaparinirvana Temple.

### 2. Other Key Sites & Universities

- **Rajgir:** A major Buddhist holy place. Home to the world's highest **Vishwa Shanti Stupa (World Peace Pagoda)**.
- **Nalanda:** Great seat of Buddhist learning, founded by **Kumargupta I**.
- **Vikramshila, Vallabhi, Odantapuri:** Other major ancient centers of Buddhist learning.
- **Ajanta Caves:** Lie in the gorge of the **Waghora River**.

### 3. Stupas & Architecture

- **Etymology:** The word **'Stupa'** first appears in the **Rigveda**, meaning a mound or heap.
- **Chaitya:** Prayer hall.
- **Vihara:** Dwelling place for monks.

- **Chronological Order of Stupas:** Bharhut → Sanchi (ancient name: *Kaknam*) → Amaravati → Dhamekh.
- **Sanchi Stupa** is **not** directly connected to any event in Buddha's life.

### 4. Buddhist Art & Iconography

- **Origin:** The first **standing Buddha statues** emerged during the **Kushana period** (Gandhara & Mathura schools).
- **Mudras (Hand Gestures):**
  - **Dharmachakra Mudra:** Turning the Wheel of Law (First Sermon at Sarnath).
  - **Bhumisparsha Mudra:** Earth-touching gesture (calling the Earth to witness his enlightenment at Bodh Gaya). The famous Sarnath image in this mudra is from the **Gupta period**.

## Historical Context, Figures & Spread

### 1. Associated Kingdoms and Patronage

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- Buddha was primarily associated with the kingdoms of **Kosala** and **Magadha**.
- He did **not** have direct associations with Avanti or Gandhara during his lifetime.
- **Key Royal Patrons:**
  - **Ashoka:** Built the **Ashokaram Monastery** in Pataliputra.
  - **Kanishka:** Convened the 4th Council; patronized Mahayana.
  - **King Udayana** of Kaushambi (contemporary of Buddha).
  - **Balaputradeva,** ruler of **Suvarnabhumi** (Sriwijaya Empire, Sumatra), built a monastery at Nalanda.
- **Ruler who persecuted Buddhists: Pushyamitra Shunga**.

### 2. Key Figures

- **Teachers: Alara Kalama** taught Buddha meditation and Samkhya philosophy.
- **Philosophers:**

    - **Nagarjuna:** Propounded the **Madhyamika** school and the **Doctrine of Void (Shunyata)**. Major work: *Madhyamika Karika*.
    - **Adi Shankaracharya:** Later Hindu philosopher sometimes called a 'Crypto-Buddhist' for incorporating Buddhist concepts.
- **Tibetan Buddhism:** The **Karmapa Lama** belongs to the **Kangyupa** sect.

### 3. Terminology

- **Parivrajaka / Shramana:** A wandering ascetic or monk (not a high-status priest).
- **Upasaka:** A lay follower of Buddhism.
- **Maitreya:** The future Buddha, yet to come.

### 4. Spread and Decline

- **Reasons for Expansion:**
    - Simplicity of teachings (Middle Path, Non-violence).
    - Appeal to lower castes (challenged Brahmin authority).
    - Use of **Pali** (a regional language).
    - Missionary efforts.
- **Reasons for Decline in India:**
    - **Absorption of Buddha into Vaishnavism** as an incarnation of Vishnu.
    - Loss of state patronage & Muslim invasions (e.g., decline of Nalanda).

### 5. Buddhism vs. Jainism

- **Commonalities:**
    - Indifferent to Vedas; denied efficiency of rituals.
    - Believed in **Ahimsa**, **Karma**, and **Transmigration**.
    - Founded by Kshatriyas in 6th century BCE Northern India.
    - Non-theistic (no creator God).

- **Differences:**
    - **Mortification:** Jainism advocates self-mortification; Buddhism preaches the **Middle Path**.
    - **Soul:** Jainism believes in it; Buddhism denies it (**Anatmavada**).
    - **Varna System:** Jainism did not outright condemn it; Buddhism challenged Brahmin supremacy.
    - **Salvation:** In Jainism, only after death; in Buddhism, possible in one's lifetime.

**Know More about Buddhism:**

- Buddhism One Liner Questions & Answers
- Buddhism – Old Year Questions and Answers

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