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CULTURE AND HERITAGE IN INDIA–I: HINDUISM, JAINISM AND BUDDHISM

Beginning with the Indus valley civilization, in ancient times we have read that there were constant progressive changes in the Indian civilization. Brahmins dominated the society. The Kshatriyas controlled the polity and Vaishyas economy; Shudras comprised the lowest members in the society and rendered services to the people of the other varnas. By the 6th century B.C. we see a profound change in society. The orthodox manner in which the Brahmins tried to control the people, led to the rise of new religions like Buddhism and Jainism. In this lesson, we shall also read about the Hindu way of life, and how two prominent religions, Buddhism and Jainism, came up as separate religions.



OBJECTIVES

After studying this lesson, you will be able to:

- explain about the religion of the Hindus as well as their religious places;
- describe the teachings of Jainism as well as their religious places and
- discuss the teachings of Buddhism as well as their religious places.

9.1 HINDU

The Hindu way of life is quite flexible in all respects, as it accepts into its fold almost any god and all devotees. There is no dogma and no single god or religious leader. Their rituals are colourful and festivities very active. Through

MODULE – 3

Cultural and Heritage Aspects of Tourism in India



Notes

Culture and Heritage in India-I: Hinduism, Jainism and Buddhism

their rituals, Hindus interact closely with the divine images which are often housed in temples. Seeing the divine images is important. Even the gods look back at the devotee with equal regard and concern. To see these divine images and to have close personal contact with them, Hindus often travel for pilgrimages to holy rivers, mountains and temples in all corners of the country. Hindus call them sacred places or *Tirtha* and the act of going on a pilgrimage is called *Tirtha-yatra*. The word *tirtha* means river ford, steps to a river, or place of pilgrimage. In Vedic times the word may have concerned only those sacred places associated with water, but by the time of the Mahabharata, *tirtha* had come to denote any holy place, be it a lake, mountain, forest, or cave. *Tirthas* are more than physical locations, however, the Hindus believe them to be spiritual places, the meeting place of heaven and earth, the locations where one crosses the endless cycle of birth, death and rebirth to reach the shore of liberation. Their visit to these places is called *tirth yatra*.

9.1.1 Sacred Places and Heritage Sites of Hindus

For the Hindus, to visit the holy places is an act of great religious merit, once in a life-time for the attainment of salvation. Four of the holy places or *mathas* were established by Adi Shankaracharya, a great saint. Since these are situated in the four corners of India, it shows the socio-cultural integration and in the long run making India as a nation.

Besides the establishment of these *mathas* there were four *Dhams*, Badrinath, Puri, *Dwarka* and Rameshwaram. The devotees visiting these *Mathas* and *Dhams* can be categorized as religious tourists.

Dwaraka

Dwaraka in Gujarat is a very important shrine associated with Lord Krishna. The city is located on the Western coast of India. It was the capital of Krishna's kingdom and has some very important temples. The main temple is popularly known as Jagat Mandir.

Puri and Divine Chariots

Puri has the beautiful temple of Lord Jagannath who is the guardian deity of Odisha. It is one of the major centres chosen by Adi Shankaracharya in the 8th century A.D. to spread the eternal values of Hinduism. These are Badrinath in the Himalayas in the North, *Dwarka* on the sea in the west and Kanchi in the South Shringeri in Karnataka. The idol of Lord Jagannath, his brother Balram,

his sister Subhadra are placed side by side. One of the most interesting events associated with Puri is the annual Rath Yatra which is not only a major tourist attraction but a place for massive gathering of devotees who gather there. In this Rath Yatra, the three idols are taken out in their respective Rathes, pulled by thousands of people on the streets of Puri. They are taken to the Gundicha temple and after some days are brought back to their eternal place. (Figure 9.1)



Notes



Figure 9.1 Puri

Sringeri

Sringeri is regarded as one of the most sacred Hindu pilgrimages in South India. It is in Kadur district of Mysore, situated on the left bank of the river Tunga. The main deity is Saraswati or Saradamba or Sarad Amma. It is believed that the Math is nonsectarian in practice and preaching. The mosque in the outskirts is known to have been built at the orders of one of the gurus for the Muslim employees. The Tunga river flows past the temple and thousands of fishes in the river gather at the Ghats to be handfed by the devotees who come here in very large numbers.

Jai Badri Vishal

‘Jai Badri Vishal’ is the Part of the pilgrims visiting Badrinath, the home of Lord Vishnu. It is situated in the state of Uttarakhand. According to legend, Vishnu and his wife came to the right bank of river Alaknanda for meditation. The meditation undertaken by Vishnu was so long, that his wife Laxmi took the form of Badri tree to shelter her husband. Therefore the town came to be known as

MODULE – 3

Cultural and Heritage Aspects of Tourism in India



Notes

Culture and Heritage in India-I: Hinduism, Jainism and Buddhism

Badrinath. The present Badrinath temple was built by the Gaharwals. It has three sections like other Hindu temples:

- (i) Holy centre where the deity is erected.
- (ii) the area where rituals are performed.
- (iii) where pilgrims and worshippers gather. Pilgrims visit the place to worship the deity, which is carved of black stone in a seated position. Many of the pilgrims bathe in the Alaknanda river and take water from the hot spring in front of the Vishnu temple. Because of heavy snowfall the temple opens from May to October every year. A very large number of religious tourists throng to this place. For some it is an annual event which they look forward to.

Varanasi, earlier known as Banaras or Kashi is the most sacred among the holy places. It is the city of Shiva, having over two thousand temples and over half a million idols, most of them dedicated to Shiva and his family. It is situated on the banks of the holy river, the Ganga. French traveller, Francois Bernier (1656-1668 AD) in addition to the religious significance, explains the educational importance of Banaras. There were many *Gurukuls* in Banaras. In his words, “The town of Banaras, seated on the Ganges, in a beautiful situation, and in the midst of an extremely fine and rich country, may be considered the general school of the Gentiles (Hindus). It is the Athens of India. The town contains no colleges or regular classes, as in our universities (European universities), but



Figure 9.2 Temple at Kashi



Notes

resembles rather the schools of the ancients; the masters being dispersed over different parts of the town in private houses, and principally in the gardens of the suburbs, which the rich merchants permit them to occupy. Some of these masters have four disciples, others six or seven, and this is the largest number. It is usual for the pupils to remain ten or twelve years under their respective preceptors.” It is hoped that this information will make you read and gather more information on these religious places.

Gaya is the place where it is believed that if rituals are performed here the soul of the dead is supposed to attain salvation. Gaya is visited by many Hindus who wish that their ancestors may attain Moksha.

Haridwar: It is situated at the foothills of the Himalayas in Uttarakhand and is the place where the Ganga enters the plains. It is also called the ‘Gateway of the Ganga’. Haridwar is one of the most important Hindu pilgrim places of India. Haridwar has a very rich religious and cultural heritage. In the Hindu scriptures, Haridwar is known by the name of Mayapur. It is also considered to be the entry point i.e. Hari ka dwar, to the abode of God.

Ayodhya is one of the major holy cities of the Hindus. It has a central role in the ancient Indian epic, the Ramayana, whose protagonist, Lord Rama is God, incarnated on Earth as the prince of Ayodhya.

The city also figures in several other traditions. As per Jain tradition it is recognized as the birthplace of the first and the fourth *tirthankaras*. Buddhist tradition mentions it as a city visited by the Buddha.

Kanchipuram: Kanchipuram in Tamil Nadu is one of the seven Indian cities which should be visited to reach final attainment. It has the Varadharaja Perumal Temple, Ekambareswarar Temple, Kamakshi Amman Temple and Kumara Kottam which are major Hindu temples. The city is a holy pilgrimage site for both Saivites and Vaishnavites. Of the 108 holy temples of the Hindu god Vishnu, 14 are located in Kanchipuram.

Kedarnath, in Uttarakhand, is the most remote of the Char Dham sites. It is located in the Himalayas near Chorabari Glacier on the head of river Mandakini. It hosts one of the holiest Hindu temples. The Kedarnath Temple is a popular destination for Hindu pilgrims from all over the world, being one of the four major sites in India’s Chota Char Dham pilgrimage. Kedarnath is named in honour of King Kedar, who ruled in the Satya Yuga. He had a daughter named Vrinda who was believed to be a partial incarnation of goddess Lakshmi.

The Somnath Temple is located in the Prabhas Kshetra on the western coast of Gujarat, India. It is one of the twelve Jyotirlinga shrines of Lord Shiva. It

MODULE – 3

Cultural and Heritage
Aspects of Tourism
in India



Notes

Culture and Heritage in India-I: Hinduism, Jainism and Buddhism

means “The Protector of moon god. The Somnath Temple is known as “the Shrine Eternal” and is considered a very sacred Hindu Pilgrimage site.

Amarnath cave is a famous hindu shrine located in Jammu and Kashmir. It is dedicated to Lord Shiva. The shrine forms an important part of Hinduism and is considered to be one of the holiest shrines of the Hindus. The cave is surrounded by snowy mountains. The cave itself is covered with snow most of the time of the year except for a short period in summer when it is open for pilgrims. An annual pilgrimage is made to the Amarnath cave by lakhs of Hindu devotees on challenging mountainous terrain to see an ice stalagmite (Shivling) formed inside the cave.

Kamakhya is an important goddess that evolved in the Himalayan hills. She is closely identified with Kali and Maha Tripura Sundari. Her name means “renowned goddess of desire.”. She resides at presently rebuilt Kamakhya Temple and is worshiped in the form of a stone yoni (female generative organ) symbolic of the goddess. The temple is primary amongst the 51 Shakti Peethas related to the myth of Sati. It is one of the most important Shakti temples and Hindu pilgrimage site in the world.

Mount Kailash is a sacred pilgrimage place of Asia and lies in the South-West of Tibetan region of China-Nagri, towering 6714 meters above the Tibetan Plateau. According to the Hindu mythology, it is said to be the home of Lord Shiva



Figure 9.3 Mount Kialash

Mathura is located on the highway between Delhi and Agra, on the river Yamuna. It is the birth place of Lord Krishna, a beloved god of the Hindus. Many beautiful stories are related to him including protecting the people in times

of calamity. His dance with *gopis* or the female milkherds are to be taken as of the sacred dance between the deity and the worshippers. Eager pilgrims visit places around Mathura and nearby Brindavan. Two of the most important festivals of the Hindus i.e. Holi and Janamashtami are the times when Mathura and Brindavan are flooded by tourists both Indian and foreign. Travellers and tourists visiting Mathura should also know that they will find temple courtyards full of pious hymn singing of worshippers who often include women. At some famous temples like that of Banke Bihari temple, pilgrims sometimes dance with the joy of feeling the presence of their Lord.

It is known as Brajbhoomi - the land where Lord Krishna was born and spent his youth. It is also famous for the celebration of the festival of Holi.

Nashik is one of the important pilgrimage centers of India. According to mythology Rama, the king of Ayodhya, made Nashik his temporary residence during the 14 years of his exile.

Prayag, where the rivers' Ganga and Yamuna meet, is one of the ancient pilgrimage centers of India. Prayag is situated in Allahabad (the city of Allah). Prayag is venerated in the hymns of the Rig Veda. The famous Kumbh mela is also held here in which lakhs of devotees take a dip in the holy Ganga.



Figure 9.4 Holy Ganga

Jagannath Puri a large number of foreign tourists come to witness the event when thousands of devotees help to pull the carts on its divine journey. Puri is among the four sacred “Dhams” (Puri, Dwarka, Rameswaram and Badrinath) of the Hindus.

Rameshwaram is situated at the tip of the Indian peninsula. It is considered a sacred place for the Hindus. As per legend Lord Ram built a bridge over the sea to Sri Lanka when he went in search for his wife, Sita.



Notes

MODULE – 3

Cultural and Heritage
Aspects of Tourism
in India



Notes



Figure 9.5 Temple of Rameshwaram

Ujjain is situated on the eastern bank of River Shipra. It is one of the oldest cities of India. It is located in the Malwa region of Madhya Pradesh. In ancient times, Ujjain was known by the names of Ujjayini and Avanti.



Figure 9.6 Temple at Ujjain

Pushkar: Located in Rajasthan, Pushkar pilgrimage site is one of the holiest destinations. This small town has around 500 temples and is considered to be the most sacred by the Hindus. The only temple dedicated to Lord Brahma is situated at Pushkar.



Figure 9.7 Pushkar

Tirupati Balaji Temple: Located in a small district called Chittoor in southern Andhra Pradesh, is the famous Tirupati Balaji Temple of India. This temple is believed to be the richest temple in India because of the rich offerings made by the devotees.

Vaishno Devi Temple: Located in the mighty Trikuta Mountains at a distance of 60 kilometers from Jammu, is the famous Vaishno Devi Temple. It is one of the most visited and worshipped pilgrimages in India.



Figure 9.8 Vaishno Devi



Notes

MODULE – 3

Cultural and Heritage
Aspects of Tourism
in India



Notes



INTEXT QUESTIONS 9.1

- (i) Describe the significance of Banaras for Hindus.
- (ii) Describe the sacred value of Mathura.
- (iii) Describe the religious heritage values of Dwarka, Puri and Somnath.



ACTIVITY 9.1

Collect pictures of Hindu deities and heritage sites and paste them in your scrap book.

9.2 JAINISM

Vardhaman Mahavira has been accepted as the founder of Jainism. He was the 24th and the last *Thirthankara* (teacher) of the jains. He was born at *Vaishali*, the capital of the Vajji tribe. His father *Siddhartha* was the chief of a clan of Kshatriyas.

At the age of thirty, Vardhaman left his house in search of truth. He gave up the life of ease and pleasure and became an ascetic. He undertook penance and meditation for twelve years before the truth was revealed to him. This enlightenment made him a conqueror or *a Jina*. Therefore, his followers are called Jains and his philosophy, Jainism.

9.2.1 Mahavira's Teachings

- Mahavira did not believe in the existence of God and had no faith in yagna, sacrifices and rituals.
- He had no faith in the caste system and preached the equality of all human beings.
- He told his followers to take four vows: (i) *not to injure life*, (ii) *not to tell lies*, (iii) *not to own property*, (iv) *not to steal*.
- Mahavira also asked people to follow the *threefold* path of *Right Belief*, *Right Knowledge* and *Right Conduct*. According to him, this was the path to reach the highest goal of *Siddha Sila* and *Moksha*, *i.e.*, freedom from the cycle of birth and rebirth. One of the most important principles of Mahavira's teachings was *Ahimsa* or *non-violence*. If you talk to your Jain friends, they will tell you that they do not eat or even touch meat. Some of them even tie a piece of cloth on their mouth so that no germs enter their

mouth and should not be killed. Since Mahavira preached in the language of the common people, i.e., *Ardha Magadhi or Prakrit*, he was well understood. His concept of equality was well received by the people. After his death Jainism was divided into two sects *Digambaras*, i.e., the sky clad who did not wear any clothes and the *Swetambaras* who wear white clothes. Several kings adopted Jainism as their state religion especially the rulers of Magadha i.e. Bimbisara and Ajatsatru. Jain art, architecture and literature were patronised by these rulers. The *Dilwara Temple* at Mount Abu is one of the most beautiful of Jaina temples. Mahavira spent his entire life preaching his philosophy in Anga, Mithila, Magadha and Kosala. He died at a place called Pawapuri near Rajagriha, at the age of 72, in 527 B.C.



Notes

9.2.2 Jain Religious Heritage Sites in India

There are many places in India, which are of special importance to Jains because of associations with holy persons of the past. Some of these are places where the enlightened ones left this world and achieved final liberation, some are places where celebrated religious events have occurred, or others a famous temples which are often a group of temples or images which draw the pilgrims. In addition to the Jains, tourists from different parts of the world are also attracted to visit these religious heritage monuments. Some of the important Jain religious heritage sites are as follows:

Mount Parsvanatha, Bihar one of the greatest places of Jain Heritage of unequalled sanctity is Mount Parsvanatha or Sametsikhara in Bihar. It is believed that here no fewer than twenty of the twenty-four Tirthankara left their last earthly bodies and achieved moksha. The mountain rises handsomely from forested lower slopes to its rugged peak and the summit is covered with temples. Large numbers of pilgrims come to this place and after visiting every shrine conclude their pilgrimage by walking the thirty-mile circuit of the base of the hill.

Pawapuri, Bihar is a place of great scenic beauty particularly when the lotus flowers are in bloom on the large lake. The lake was formed over many centuries by countless pilgrims taking up a pinch of dust to mark their foreheads. A temple stands at the place where Mahavira is reputed to have achieved moksa and another at the site where his body was cremated. Latter on, an island in the lake connected by a causeway with the shore and the gleaming structure reflected in the lotus-strewn waters, is a splendid sight. The festival of Diwali, the annual remembrance of Mahavira's nirvana, is celebrated here with great fervour.

MODULE – 3

Cultural and Heritage
Aspects of Tourism
in India



Notes

Culture and Heritage in India-I: Hinduism, Jainism and Buddhism

Jaisalmer in Rajasthan is the place which attracts many scholars to its famous library of Jain manuscripts as well as many thousands of religious books. Not only scholars but also many other Jains make the pilgrimage to the splendid intricately carved temples of yellow stone.

The magnificent temple complex Ranakpur, Rajasthan dates from the fifteenth century A.D. It covers 40,000 square feet on a lofty base surrounded as is common with Jain temples by a high wall. The main sanctuary has four six-foot white marble statues of Rsabha, the first Tirthankara, facing the four directions, so the complex plan of the temple provides four approaches. Innumerable pillars which are said to be 1444 in number are richly carved and provide unending view through the twenty-nine halls interrupted by open courts.

Dilwara Temples on Mount Abu, Rajasthan are undoubtedly the masterpieces of Jain architecture and almost unequalled in India for beauty and delicacy of carving. The masons scraped away the marble rather than chiseled it and are said to have been paid according to the weight of marble dust removed. There are two major temple complexes. One was built around 1030 A.D. by Vimala Shah, a wealthy merchant, and dedicated to the first Tirthankara, it was restored in 1322 A.D. The forty-eight pillars of the main hall are probably unequalled anywhere for their decoration; the dome of eleven rings, alternate ones of which are decorated with human and animal figures, is impressive. The later temple, dedicated to the Tirthankara Neminatha is larger i.e. 155 feet long. It was founded around 1230 A.D. by Tejapala who, with his brother Vastupala, prime minister to the regent of Gujarat, was responsible for more than fifty religious edifices including foundations at Satrunjaya and Girnar. Each temple complex stands in a rectangular walled area decorated with statues in niches around the circumference. Not only the temples but also the splendid panoramic view from 4000 feet above sea level makes this site a remarkable showpiece as well as a place of Jain heritage site of deep religious significance attracting innumerable tourists to Mount Abu.

Girnar in Gujarat is so rich in temples and shrines that it has been described as a temple city. It is celebrated as the place where the Tirthankara Neminatha achieved *moksha*. One famous temple at the top of Mount Girnar is over a thousand years old. An inscription found there recording that it was repaired in 1278 A.D. The temple is in a rectangular courtyard surrounded by some seventy Tirthankara images. This is the largest temple but there are many others, including one founded by Vastupala in 1231 A.D. and dedicated to the nineteenth Tirthankara, Mallinatha.

Satrunjaya, Gujarat Satrunjaya is an ancient Jain place of pilgrimage of Heritage value as it was here that the first Tirthankara, Risabha as well as his chief follower is said to have achieved *moksha*. Hundreds of temples and smaller shrines are contained within the nine walled enclosures. A new temple of Risabha replaced the old one in the mid-twelfth century and seven shrines were placed in front of it in 1231 A.D. by Vastupala. Some of the temples can trace their origins, if not their present form, back to the tenth century. From the late seventeenth century Satrunjaya became more and more important. It became a very major and popular tourist place. People visit this place in larger number. Guide books have been written for them marking the routes by which the pious pilgrim may visit and pray before the many images. On a certain date every year pilgrims to the number of nearly 20,000 undertake a twelve- mile round trip: the hardships are great but the bliss experienced makes it worthwhile.

Sravana Belgola is sixty- two miles from Mysore. Here on a hill 470 feet high and reached by nearly five hundred steps stands the massive statue of Bahubali which is fifty-seven feet high and twenty- six feet across the shoulders. It was carved out from solid rock around the year 980 A.D. It is the biggest free-standing monolithic statue in the world. In a Jain temple the consecrated image is ritually bathed every day as part of the worship paid to it. The statue at Sravana Belgola is so huge that this ritual can be carried out only on the feet of the image. At certain intervals however between twelve and fifteen years a great structure of scaffolding is erected and the figure is ceremonially showered from pots of water mixed with sandalwood, coconut and sugar.

Ranakpur Temple: Ranakpur is a small village in Rajasthan. The temple of Ranakpur, which has some splendid carvings and architecture is proof of the profound piety and riches of the Jain faith. It is a famous Jain pilgrimage centre.



INTEXT QUESTIONS 9.2

1. Describe the main sects of Jainism.
2. Describe the significance of Jain heritage site of Parsvanatha in Bihar.
3. Why is the Jain temple at Mount Abu, Rajasthan famous?



Notes

MODULE – 3

Cultural and Heritage
Aspects of Tourism
in India



Notes



ACTIVITY 9.2

Collect the pictures of other Jain Heritage sites of India and paste them in your note book and write a few lines about each of them. Also highlight these on the map of India.

9.3 BUDDHISM

Gautama Buddha, the founder of the religion, belonged to the *Shakya tribe*. His father was the chief of that tribe. Gautama was born near the Lumbini (garden) at Kapilavastu in 567 B.C.

His father did not want him to become a saint; he tried to give him all the luxuries and comforts that he had at his command.

It is believed that one day while he was out on a trip, he saw an old man, a sick man and a dead man. Till then the prince had only seen pleasures and happiness. He could not bear the sight of such human suffering. He decided to leave home in search of truth and salvation. So one night while his wife and child were sleeping, he quietly slipped out of the house to become an ascetic.

He talked to many learned persons but did not succeed in his search for truth. Then, he meditated for a long time under a *pipal* tree in Bodh Gaya. Finally, he understood the cause of suffering. He became *Buddha-the Enlightened one*. He gave his first sermon at the Deer Park at *Sarnath*, which is near Varanasi. There he also gathered his first five disciples. The Buddha attained *Mahaparinirvana* (great salvation) at Kushinagara at the age of 80. Gautama Buddha's religious philosophy is called Buddhism.

9.3.1 Buddha's Teachings

Buddha taught that the cause of all human suffering is desire. It is important to control and overcome desire.

- This could be achieved by following the *Eightfold Path*, which means *Right Conduct, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Means of Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, Right Meditation, Right Resolution* and *Right View*. Buddha also preached in the language of the common people, i.e., *Pali* and *Prakrit* and laid stress on *a life of virtues and morals*.

Buddhism was an organized religion. There were *Sanghas* for the Buddhist monks. *Viharas* were made for the monks to live in. Education was given state patronage along with the Sangha as a result of which great universities like

Nalanda came up over a period of time. Buddhism spread into many countries of the world.

As a student of this subject or even if you wish to adopt tourism as a profession you should be familiar with these places so that you can guide the tourists or visitors to these places and the importance of these places. Hence we will discuss the Buddhist pilgrimage sites of India.



Notes

9.3.2 Buddhist Heritages/Sites in India

Sarnath: Only a few miles away from Varanasi is Sarnath where Buddha preached his first sermon after attaining enlightenment. In Sarnath there are remains of great stupas. A pillar carried with an edict of King Asoka of the Maurya dynasty stands in front of the main shrine Sarnath museum has a beautiful display of five sculptures. It provides history especially of the Maurya and the Gupta dynasties, Sarnath also has the Dhamekh Stupa which is believed to be the site where Buddha preached first sermon.

Amravati Stupa: It dates from the 2nd C. BC and many of the remains are on view in the Chennai museum. The Bharhut Stupa also dates from the 2nd C. BC and many of the remains are on view in the Kolkata Museum.

Sanchi, Madhya Pradesh: Main Toranas added by the Andhras (Satavahanas) in the 1st C. BC (or possibly later). Stylistically reminiscent of Amravati, Nagarjunakonda was once a flourishing Buddhist centre. Remains of this extensive Buddhist site dating from the 3rd C AD are housed in the site museum.

Harwani: The third Century Kushan site of Harwan (from Jammu and Kashmir) was once a thriving Buddhist centre. Surviving tiles from the Stupa display a variety of sculptural and decorative motifs - both naturalistic and abstract. These include representations of human figures including dancers and musicians, warriors on horses and conversing couples. Birds, animals, flower pots, vines and creepers are also depicted. Sanchi is famous in the world for stupas, monolithic Asokan pillar, temples, monasteries and sculptural wealth. It was Emperor Asoka who laid the foundation of a religious centre at Sanchi fascinated probably by the location of the hill. He erected the Great Stupa here after redistribution of mortal remains of Lord Buddha for erecting several stupas all over the country in order to spread Buddhism. This stupa was originally a low structure of brick, half the diameter of the present edifice hemispherical in shape with raised terraces at the base. It was enclosed by a wooden railing and a stone umbrella at the top. This Great Stupa served as a nucleus to the large Buddhist establishment during the later period.

MODULE – 3

Cultural and Heritage
Aspects of Tourism
in India



Notes

Culture and Heritage in India-I: Hinduism, Jainism and Buddhism

Ajanta, Aurangabad, Maharashtra: The original Buddhist caves date from the Second and First Century BC. The caves have paintings and sculptural additions made during the time of the Guptas. The Ajanta Caves (75°40' E; 20°30' N) are situated at a distance of 107 km north of Aurangabad. The caves got the name from a nearby village named Ajanta located about 12 kms. These caves were discovered by an Army Officer in the Madras Regiment of the British Army in 1819 during one of his hunting expeditions. Instantly the discovery became very famous and Ajanta became a very important tourist destination in the world. The caves, famous for its murals, are the finest surviving examples of Indian art, particularly painting.



Figure 9.9 Ajanta Caves

9.3.3 Rock-cut Carvings, Bhagalpur Region

These fine Gupta period (5th-7th C AD) carvings from the Bhagalpur and Sultanganj region of Bihar depict Buddha.

Nalanda, Bihar: Nalanda gained prominence as an important centre of Buddhist learning from 4th to 12th C. AD. Nalanda is famous as the ancient seat of learning. The ruins of the world's most ancient university lie here which is 62 kms from Bodhgaya and 90 kms south of Patna. Though the Buddha visited Nalanda several times during his lifetime, this famous center of Buddhist learning shot to fame much later, during 5th-12th centuries. Chinese traveller, Hieun Tsang stayed here in the 7th century AD and left detailed description of the excellence of education system and purity of monastic life practised here. He also gave a vivid account of both the ambience and architecture of this unique

university of ancient times. 2,000 teachers and 10,000 monk students from all over the Buddhist world lived and studied in this first residential international university of the world.

Udaygiri in Ratnagiri is a Buddhist site not too far from Cuttack (Odisha) and dates from the 6th C. AD. In the 8th C. it became an important center of the Vajrayana school of Buddhist art and philosophy. At Sirpur and Chattisgarh you can see ruins of an 8th C. Buddhist monastery.

Bodh Gaya is one of the four most sacred pilgrimage places for the Buddhists. Followers of Buddhism from all across the world consider it pious to visit Bodh Gaya.

The founder of Buddhism, Gautama Buddha, attained enlightenment under the sacred Bodhi tree at Bodh Gaya. The Mahabodhi Temple at Bodh Gaya in Bihar was originally built in the 2nd C. AD during the Kushan period but extensively refurbished by the Pala and Sena rulers between the 8th century and 12th century. Additional restoration work was carried out by Myanmar Buddhists in 1882 A.D.

Rajgir was the ancient capital city of the kings of Magadha. The name Rajgir literally means “House of the King”. It is a very important Buddhist site because Lord Buddha spent 12 years at Rajgir.

Monasteries and Vihars: At Mcleod Ganj in Himachal Pradesh lies Dalai Lama’s temple called Tshglagkhang. Here you can find three magnificent images including an enormous three meter high gilt statue of Shakyamuni i.e. Buddha. To the left facing Tibet are the statues of Avalokiteshwara and that of Padmasambhava or guru Rinpoche, the Indian scholar who introduced Buddhism and Tantric teachings to the people of Tibet in the eighth century. Ki Gompa is the largest and oldest Gompa in spiti. It is famous for its priceless collection of ancient Thangkas and frescoes. You will also find many gompas on the trade routes extending from Kashmir valley to western Tibet, that is Lamaguru spituk, phayang, Thiksay, Hemis etc. These are located along the Tibet and its tributaries and are usually situated on steep slopes of hills. It is believed that the gompas played a very important role in the life of the Ladakhis. Though every festival in Leh has a religious background and all of them attract people from all castes and creeds who take part in them freely.

There are noteworthy monasteries and Viharas in the Buddhist region of Himachal Pradesh in the Kinnaru, Lahaul and Spiti areas bordering Tibet. A very famous monastery in this region which will be of great interest to the tourists in the Tabo monastery built by the Tibetan scholar and religious leader Rin Chan Sang Po on the banks of river Spiti. This monastery is more than one thousand



MODULE – 3

Cultural and Heritage
Aspects of Tourism
in India



Notes

Culture and Heritage in India-I: Hinduism, Jainism and Buddhism

years old and has a very religious and spiritual atmosphere surrounding it. It celebrated its thousand years in June 1996. Another important visiting site for the tourists is the Bhimakali temple in Sarahavi village. But the oldest religious place is the Vias Gufa which has an underground passage to the Markanday temple whose saint Markandey stayed in penance.

The Rumtek Monastery west of Gangtok in Sikkim has fierce deities guarding heavenly and earthly spheres. The monastery was built in the 1960's as a replica of a Tibetan Monastery destroyed by the Chinese.

Similarly one can hear Copper trumpets sounds at Yiga-Choeling Buddhist Monastery in Ghoom, a few miles outside Darjeeling. Founded a century ago, the monastery houses a huge gilded image of Maitriya i.e. a future Buddha, reflecting the faith of the people of this region.

Vaishali: A small village in the state of Bihar, Vaishali is a very famous Buddhist pilgrimage in India. The name "Vaishali" means prosperity and the place seems to live upto its name.



INTEXT QUESTIONS 9.3

1. Describe the four noble truths of Buddhist philosophy.
2. According to Buddhism, how can a person attain Nirwana?



ACTIVITY 9.3

- On the map of India mark popular Buddhist Heritage sites and write a few lines about each.
- Try to find the name of a District, Tourist circuit and Tourist Train having their names associated with Buddhism.



WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNT

- There are three important and well-known religions that originated in India in the ancient times. These are Hinduism (Brahmanism), Jainism and Buddhism.
- Later on the brahmins made the Vedic religion or Brahmanism very complex and complicated. They introduced many rites and rituals for their own material gains.

- This led to the rise of new religions like Jainism and Buddhism as a reaction. Vardhaman Mahavira is accepted as the founder of Jainism.
- Jainism teaches the people to take four vows. These are: (i) not to injure life, (ii) not to tell lies, (iii) not to own property, (iv) not to steal.
- Mahavira preached the threefold path. This was right belief, knowledge and aspects of true conduct. Siddha Sila is the highest goal according to Jainism.
- Gautama Buddha was the founder of Buddhism. According to Buddha, desire is the cause of all suffering.
- He preached the eightfold path, which meant right conduct, speech, action, means of livelihood, effort, mindfulness, meditation, resolution and view.
- Buddha is accepted as one of the ten avatars of God along with Rama and Krishna. You will be familiar with the most popular religion tourist sites of Hindus, Jains and Buddhas.



TERMINAL EXERCISE

1. Point out the striking difference between Jainism and Buddhism.
2. Explain the significant values of Hindu culture.
3. Discuss any ten Hindu religious heritage sites in India.
4. Discuss the various teachings of Jainism.
5. Throw light on the major Jain heritage sites of India.
6. Discuss the main characteristics of Buddhist culture.
7. List any ten most popular Buddhist heritage sites in India.



ANSWER TO INTEXT QUESTIONS

9.1

1. It is the place where Hindus like to die to attain moksha (Salvation). It is also known for temple of Lord Vishwanath (Shiva) as well as the centre of education.
2. It is the birth place of Lord Krishna.
3. These are mathas established by Aadi Shankaracharya.

MODULE – 3

Cultural and Heritage
Aspects of Tourism
in India



Notes

MODULE – 3

Cultural and Heritage
Aspects of Tourism
in India



Notes

Culture and Heritage in India-I: Hinduism, Jainism and Buddhism

9.2

1. There are two sects in Jainism (1) Digambara (2) Svetambara.
2. Ranakpur has the famous marble statue of Risabh Dev and at Girnar, another Tirthankar called Neminath.
3. Mount Abu, Rajasthan is famous for Dilwara Jain Temples which are masterpieces of Jain architecture.

9.3

1. Right belief, right conduct, right speech and right knowledge.
2. By following Eight Fold Paths one reaches the highest goal of *Moksha*.