

Unit -3

Jainism, Buddhism and Ajivika Philosophy in Tamil Nadu



Learning Objectives

- ❖ To know the sources and literature of heterodox religious sects: Jainism, Buddhism and Ajivikam
- ❖ To gain knowledge of the teachings of Mahavira, Buddha and Gosala, the founder of Ajivika sect.
- ❖ To acquaint ourselves with the monuments of the above-mentioned religious sects in Tamil Nadu.



Introduction

During the 6th century BC (BCE), according to the *Bigha Nitaya* (an ancient Buddhist tract), as many as 62 different philosophical and religious schools flourished in India. However, among these numerous sects, only the Ajivikas survived till the late medieval times. But Jainism and Buddhism continued to flourish until the modern times. Buddha and Mahavira, the founders of these two faiths, based their ethical teachings against the sacrificial cult of the Vedic religion. Their teachings were preserved and passed on through monks, who were drawn from various social groups.

Sources and Literature: Jainism

Mahavira's preaching was orally transmitted by his disciples over the course of

about one thousand years. In the early period of Jainism, monks strictly followed the five great vows of Jainism. Even religious scriptures were considered possessions and therefore knowledge of the religion was never documented. Two hundred years after the attainment of *nirvana* (death) of Mahavira, Jain scholars attempted to codify the canon by convening an assembly at Pataliputra. It was the first Jain council to debate the issue, but it ended as a failure because the council could not arrive at a unanimous decision in defining the canon. A second council held at Vallabhi, in the 5th century AD (CE) was, however, successful in resolving the differences. This enabled the scholars of the time to explain the principles of Jainism with certainty. Also, over time, many learned monks, older in age and rich in wisdom, had compiled