

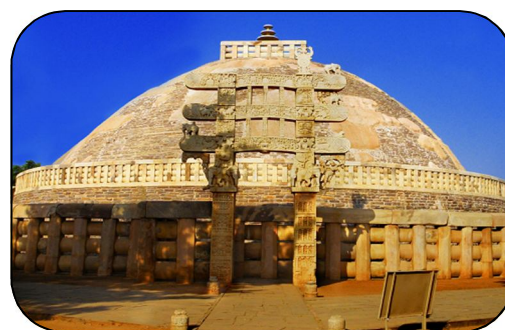


RISE AND DEVELOPMENT OF BUDDHISM IN ANCIENT INDIA

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ABSTRACT

Buddhism emerged in ancient India during the sixth century BCE in a period of significant social, economic, political, and religious transformation. It was founded by Siddhartha Gautama, known as the Buddha, whose teachings offered an alternative to several prevailing religious practices and emphasized ethical conduct, compassion, self-discipline, and the pursuit of liberation from suffering. The Buddha's teachings, particularly the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path, provided a systematic approach to understanding human suffering and achieving Nirvana. The development of Buddhism was closely connected with the growth of urban centres, trade, new social groups, and intellectual movements in the Gangetic plains. The Sangha, consisting of monks and nuns, played an important role in preserving and spreading Buddhist teachings. The patronage of rulers, merchants, and ordinary followers further contributed to its expansion. Emperor Ashoka's support in the third century BCE greatly strengthened the institutional and geographical development of Buddhism and encouraged its spread beyond the Indian subcontinent. Subsequently, Buddhism developed into different traditions and schools, including Theravada and Mahayana, and contributed significantly to Indian art, architecture, literature, education, philosophy, and social thought. This study examines the historical origins, major teachings, institutional development, royal and popular patronage, geographical expansion, and cultural contributions of Buddhism in ancient India.



KEYWORDS: Buddhism, Ancient India, Gautama Buddha, Four Noble Truths, Noble Eightfold Path, Sangha, Ashoka, Mauryan Empire, Theravada, Mahayana, Buddhist Philosophy, Buddhist Culture.

INTRODUCTION

Buddhism emerged in northern India during the sixth century BCE against the background of major changes in ancient Indian society. This period witnessed the expansion of agriculture, growth of towns, development of trade, emergence of new political states, and increasing social differentiation. At the religious and intellectual level, various movements questioned established practices and explored alternative approaches to spiritual liberation. Buddhism developed within this broader environment and became one of the major religious and philosophical traditions of ancient India.

Siddhartha Gautama, who later became known as the Buddha, was born into the Shakya community in the region of present-day Nepal and northern India. According to Buddhist tradition, his encounters with sickness, old age, death, and renunciation led him to search for an explanation of human suffering. After

attaining enlightenment at Bodh Gaya, he began teaching a path that emphasized ethical behaviour, mental discipline, wisdom, and liberation. His first sermon at Sarnath marked the beginning of his teaching career and the establishment of the Buddhist Sangha.

The central principles of Buddhism are expressed through the **Four Noble Truths** and the **Noble Eightfold Path**. The Four Noble Truths explain the nature of suffering, its causes, its cessation, and the path leading to its cessation. The Noble Eightfold Path emphasizes right understanding, intention, speech, action, livelihood, effort, mindfulness, and concentration. Buddhism also emphasized concepts such as karma, rebirth, impermanence, dependent origination, and Nirvana. Its ethical teachings encouraged compassion, non-violence, self-control, and responsible conduct.

The establishment of the Sangha was an important factor in the institutional development of Buddhism. Monks and nuns devoted themselves to religious practice, learning, teaching, and preservation of Buddhist traditions. Lay followers also played an important role by providing material support to monasteries and religious communities. Buddhist monasteries gradually became centres of learning, religious activity, and cultural interaction.

The social and economic environment of the period also contributed to the expansion of Buddhism. The growth of towns and commercial networks created new groups of merchants, artisans, and traders who supported Buddhist institutions. Buddhist teachings and institutions attracted followers from different sections of society. However, the nature and extent of Buddhism's relationship with social hierarchy and caste should be understood through careful examination of different textual and historical sources.

Royal patronage played a major role in the subsequent development of Buddhism. The Mauryan emperor **Ashoka** became particularly important in Buddhist history after his conversion and support for Buddhist institutions and ethical principles. His inscriptions provide valuable evidence concerning his ideas of *Dhamma*, moral conduct, religious tolerance, and concern for the welfare of people and animals. Buddhist missions and networks expanded during and after the Mauryan period.

Following Ashoka's reign, Buddhism continued to develop under different political and cultural conditions. Monastic institutions expanded, Buddhist councils and scholarly traditions contributed to the preservation and interpretation of teachings, and different schools developed. The emergence of Mahayana Buddhism introduced new devotional and philosophical developments, while earlier traditions continued to flourish in different regions.

Buddhism also made important contributions to ancient Indian culture. Stupas, monasteries, rock-cut caves, sculptures, paintings, inscriptions, and narrative literature became important expressions of Buddhist culture. Centres of learning associated with Buddhism contributed to intellectual exchange and education. Buddhist ideas also travelled through trade and missionary networks to Sri Lanka, Central Asia, Southeast Asia, and other parts of Asia.

Therefore, the rise and development of Buddhism in ancient India must be understood as a multidimensional historical process. It involved religious teachings, social change, political patronage, economic networks, institutional development, intellectual debate, and cultural interaction. Studying this development provides important insights into the religious and social history of ancient India and the wider historical influence of Buddhism.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The major aim of this study is to examine the rise, development, expansion, and historical significance of Buddhism in ancient India. The study focuses on the religious, social, political, economic, and cultural factors that contributed to the emergence and growth of Buddhism.

The specific objectives are:

1. To examine the historical background and circumstances that contributed to the emergence of Buddhism in ancient India.
2. To study the life, teachings, and activities of Gautama Buddha.
3. To understand the Four Noble Truths, Noble Eightfold Path, Middle Way, Karma, Rebirth, and Nirvana.
4. To examine the formation and development of the Buddhist Sangha and its role in preserving and spreading Buddhist teachings.
5. To study the relationship between Buddhism and the social conditions of ancient Indian society.
6. To examine the role of merchants, artisans, urban communities, and ordinary followers in the development of Buddhist institutions.
7. To analyse the contribution of royal patronage, particularly the role of Emperor Ashoka, to the expansion of Buddhism.
8. To study the development of Buddhist schools and traditions and the emergence of Mahayana Buddhism.
9. To examine the geographical expansion of Buddhism within India and beyond the Indian subcontinent.
10. To assess the contributions of Buddhism to ancient Indian art, architecture, literature, education, philosophy, and social thought.
11. To examine the factors responsible for the later decline and transformation of Buddhism in India.
12. To understand the historical significance and long-term influence of Buddhism on Indian civilization and Asian societies.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The history and development of Buddhism have been examined by historians, archaeologists, philosophers, and scholars of religion from different perspectives. Their works provide important information about Buddhist teachings, institutions, society, political patronage, and cultural development.

T. W. Rhys Davids made significant contributions to the study of early Buddhism through his examination and translation of Pali Buddhist literature. His works are useful for understanding early Buddhist doctrines and the historical development of Buddhist traditions.

Hermann Oldenberg studied the life and teachings of the Buddha and the early Buddhist community. His work provides an important historical and textual perspective on the origins of Buddhism and the development of the Sangha.

A. L. Basham examined Buddhism within the wider framework of ancient Indian civilization. His work discusses religious developments, social institutions, political changes, and cultural achievements of ancient India.

R. S. Sharma analysed Buddhism in relation to the material and social conditions of ancient India. His historical approach helps explain the relationship between urbanization, economic changes, social groups, and the emergence of new religious movements.

Romila Thapar studied the political, social, and cultural transformations of early Indian history. Her work provides a broader framework for understanding the emergence of Buddhism and the Mauryan period, particularly the historical significance of Ashoka.

Upinder Singh provides a comprehensive account of ancient and early medieval India, including the emergence of Buddhism, Buddhist institutions, archaeological evidence, inscriptions, and the development of religious traditions.

D. D. Kosambi approached ancient Indian history through social and material conditions. His analysis is useful for understanding the relationship between economic development, social transformation, urbanization, and the growth of Buddhism.

Richard Gombrich examined Buddhist teachings, religious practices, and the intellectual context of early Buddhism. His studies contribute to a deeper understanding of Buddhist doctrines and their historical development.

Gregory Schopen emphasized archaeological and epigraphic evidence in the study of Buddhist monastic institutions. His research has encouraged historians to examine material evidence alongside traditional Buddhist texts.

Peter Harvey provides a systematic study of Buddhist philosophy, ethics, institutions, and historical development. His work is useful for understanding both the fundamental teachings of Buddhism and the development of Buddhist traditions.

The existing literature demonstrates that Buddhism should be studied not only as a religious movement but also as a historical institution connected with social change, economic networks, political authority, and cultural development.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a **historical, descriptive, analytical, and interpretative methodology** to examine the rise and development of Buddhism in ancient India. The research is primarily based on secondary and textual sources, supported where appropriate by archaeological and epigraphic evidence.

The study uses **primary sources** such as Buddhist canonical literature, including the *Vinaya Pitaka*, *Sutta Pitaka*, and *Abhidhamma Pitaka*. Other important sources include the *Jataka* literature, Buddhist chronicles, inscriptions, coins, stupas, monasteries, sculptures, and archaeological remains.

Secondary sources include books, research articles, historical studies, archaeological publications, and scholarly works dealing with Buddhism and ancient Indian history. The works of historians and scholars are critically examined to understand different interpretations of Buddhist development.

A **chronological approach** is used to trace Buddhism from its emergence in the sixth century BCE through the Mauryan period and subsequent phases of development. Particular attention is given to the life and teachings of Gautama Buddha, the formation of the Sangha, the role of Ashoka, the development of Buddhist schools, and the geographical expansion of Buddhism.

A **comparative approach** is also employed to examine differences between Early Buddhism and later Buddhist traditions, particularly in relation to religious practices, philosophical ideas, institutional structures, and social relationships.

The research also uses **textual criticism** to distinguish between religious traditions, later interpretations, and historical evidence. Archaeological and inscriptional evidence is considered alongside literary sources to develop a balanced understanding of Buddhist history.

The methodology therefore combines historical evidence, textual analysis, archaeological interpretation, and secondary scholarship to examine the complex process through which Buddhism emerged and developed in ancient India.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The rise of Buddhism was one of the major religious and intellectual developments in ancient Indian history. However, understanding its emergence and subsequent development presents several historical problems. Buddhism arose during a period of considerable social, economic, political, and

religious transformation, making it necessary to examine multiple factors rather than explaining its emergence through a single cause.

One important problem concerns the **historical background of Buddhism**. The sixth century BCE witnessed the growth of agriculture, towns, trade, new political states, and social differentiation. The relationship between these changes and the emergence of new religious movements requires careful historical examination.

Another problem concerns the distinction between **Buddhist tradition and historical evidence**. Much information about the Buddha and early Buddhism comes from religious texts that were transmitted orally and compiled over time. Therefore, the historical reliability, chronology, and interpretation of these sources require critical analysis.

The development of the **Buddhist Sangha** also raises important questions concerning its organization, economic support, relationship with lay followers, and role in spreading Buddhist teachings. The contribution of merchants, artisans, women, and different social groups to Buddhist institutions requires further examination.

The role of **royal patronage**, particularly that of Ashoka, is another important area of inquiry. Although Ashoka's inscriptions provide valuable evidence, the relationship between imperial policy, Dhamma, and the institutional expansion of Buddhism needs to be examined carefully.

The emergence of different Buddhist schools also presents a historical problem. The development from early Buddhist traditions to Mahayana and other forms involved changes in doctrine, religious practice, monastic institutions, and devotional traditions. Understanding these developments requires comparison of textual, archaeological, and historical evidence.

Finally, the **decline and transformation of Buddhism in India** cannot be explained by a single factor. Political changes, transformations within religious traditions, institutional conditions, changing patterns of patronage, and the growth of other religious traditions have all been discussed by scholars. Therefore, the central problem of this study is to understand the rise, development, expansion, transformation, and historical significance of Buddhism in ancient India through a critical and multidimensional examination of available evidence.

NEED OF STUDY

The study of the rise and development of Buddhism is important for understanding the religious, social, political, economic, and cultural history of ancient India. Buddhism emerged during a period of significant transformation and became an influential religious and intellectual tradition within India and across Asia.

The study is needed to understand the historical circumstances that contributed to the emergence of Buddhism during the sixth century BCE. Changes in agriculture, urbanization, trade, political organization, and social relationships created an important background for the development of new religious and philosophical ideas.

The study also helps to understand the life and teachings of Gautama Buddha. The Four Noble Truths, Noble Eightfold Path, Middle Way, Karma, Rebirth, and Nirvana represented important developments in the religious and philosophical thought of ancient India.

The formation of the Buddhist Sangha is another important reason for studying Buddhism. The organization of monks and nuns, together with the participation of lay followers, created institutional networks through which Buddhist teachings were preserved and transmitted.

The study is also necessary to examine the relationship between Buddhism and different social groups. Merchants, artisans, rulers, women, and other sections of society contributed to Buddhist

institutions in different ways. Buddhist monasteries also became important centres of learning, religious activity, and cultural exchange.

The role of royal patronage, particularly the contribution of Emperor Ashoka, requires detailed study. Ashoka's inscriptions provide significant evidence about moral governance, religious tolerance, welfare activities, and the historical context of Buddhism during the Mauryan period.

The study further helps explain the development of Buddhist schools, the emergence of Mahayana traditions, and the geographical expansion of Buddhism. Its contributions to art, architecture, literature, education, philosophy, and international cultural exchange make Buddhism an important subject of historical research.

Therefore, the study of Buddhism provides a broader understanding of social and religious change in ancient India and the long-term development of Indian and Asian civilization.

FURTHER SUGGESTIONS FOR RESEARCH

1. Future research should undertake detailed comparative studies of Early Buddhism and later Buddhist traditions.
2. Greater attention should be given to the role and experiences of women in Buddhist communities, including Buddhist nuns and female lay followers.
3. The contribution of merchants, artisans, traders, and urban communities to the growth of Buddhist monasteries should be examined in greater detail.
4. Further studies should investigate the organization, administration, property, economic resources, and daily life of Buddhist monasteries.
5. The relationship between Buddhism and political authority should be studied through inscriptions, literary sources, and archaeological evidence.
6. More research is needed on Ashoka's Dhamma, distinguishing the evidence provided by his inscriptions from later Buddhist traditions concerning his life and activities.
7. Archaeological research should be used to investigate stupas, monasteries, caves, sculptures, inscriptions, and other Buddhist sites.
8. Regional studies should examine the development of Buddhism in areas such as Magadha, Gandhara, Mathura, Andhra, Maharashtra, and other parts of ancient India.
9. Further research should examine the development of Buddhist philosophy, literature, art, architecture, and educational institutions.
10. Digital humanities and computational methods can be used to analyse Buddhist texts, inscriptions, trade routes, and the geographical expansion of Buddhist institutions.
11. Comparative research may examine the movement of Buddhism from India to Sri Lanka, Central Asia, Southeast Asia, and East Asia.
12. Further interdisciplinary studies combining history, archaeology, anthropology, sociology, religious studies, and linguistics can provide a more comprehensive understanding of Buddhist development.

SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS

Scope

The study covers the emergence and development of Buddhism in ancient India, beginning with the historical background of the sixth century BCE and extending through major phases of Buddhist development in subsequent centuries. It examines the life and teachings of Gautama Buddha, the establishment of the Sangha, Buddhist philosophy, religious practices, institutional development, royal patronage, and the geographical expansion of Buddhism.

The study includes the social, political, economic, religious, and cultural factors associated with the growth of Buddhism. It also considers the contribution of Buddhist institutions to education, literature, art, architecture, philosophy, and social thought.

The study uses Buddhist literary sources, inscriptions, archaeological evidence, coins, monuments, and modern historical scholarship. Particular attention is given to the Mauryan period and the role of Ashoka, as well as the later development of Buddhist schools and traditions.

Limitations

One major limitation is the nature of the available sources. Many Buddhist texts were transmitted orally before being written down and underwent processes of compilation and interpretation. Consequently, it can be difficult to establish precise dates for some events and traditions.

Another limitation is that religious texts often contain theological, ethical, and idealized descriptions that may not always represent everyday historical realities. Therefore, textual evidence needs to be examined critically and compared with archaeological and inscriptional evidence.

The study covers a very long historical period and a geographically diverse region. It is therefore not possible to examine every Buddhist community, institution, text, or archaeological site in equal detail.

There are also differences among scholarly interpretations regarding the chronology of Buddhist developments, the nature of early Buddhist society, the relationship between Buddhism and caste, the extent of Ashoka's personal commitment to Buddhism, and the causes of Buddhism's later decline in India.

The study primarily focuses on Buddhism in ancient India and therefore does not provide an exhaustive history of its subsequent development in every Asian region.

SCOPE OF STUDY

The scope of the study includes the following major areas:

1. **Historical Background:** Examination of the social, economic, political, and religious conditions that contributed to the emergence of Buddhism.
2. **Life of Gautama Buddha:** Study of the major events associated with Buddha's life, enlightenment, teachings, and missionary activities.
3. **Buddhist Philosophy:** Examination of the Four Noble Truths, Noble Eightfold Path, Middle Way, Karma, Rebirth, Nirvana, and related philosophical concepts.
4. **Buddhist Sangha:** Study of the organization and development of monks, nuns, monasteries, and lay communities.
5. **Social Dimensions:** Examination of Buddhism's relationship with different social groups, including merchants, artisans, women, rulers, and other communities.
6. **Political Development:** Study of the relationship between Buddhism and rulers, with particular attention to the Mauryan Empire and Ashoka.
7. **Economic Factors:** Examination of trade, urbanization, donations, patronage, and the economic foundations of Buddhist institutions.
8. **Development of Buddhist Schools:** Study of the emergence and development of different Buddhist traditions, including Theravada and Mahayana.
9. **Art and Architecture:** Examination of stupas, monasteries, rock-cut caves, sculptures, paintings, and other forms of Buddhist artistic expression.
10. **Literature and Education:** Study of Buddhist scriptures, narrative literature, monastic education, and the preservation and transmission of knowledge.

11. **Geographical Expansion:** Examination of the spread of Buddhism within different regions of India and its connections with wider Asian networks.
12. **Decline and Transformation:** Study of the historical processes that contributed to the transformation and decline of Buddhism as a major institutional tradition in India.

FINDINGS

1. **Historical Background of Buddhism:**

Buddhism emerged in the sixth century BCE during a period of significant social, economic, political, and religious change in northern India. The growth of agriculture, towns, trade, and new political states created conditions in which new religious and philosophical movements developed.

2. **Contribution of Gautama Buddha:**

Siddhartha Gautama played the central role in the emergence of Buddhism. His teachings focused on understanding suffering, its causes, its cessation, and the path toward liberation.

3. **Importance of Buddhist Teachings:**

The Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path formed the foundation of Buddhist thought and practice. Concepts such as the Middle Way, Karma, Rebirth, impermanence, and Nirvana contributed to the development of a distinctive religious and philosophical tradition.

4. **Development of the Sangha:**

The establishment of the Buddhist Sangha was a major factor in the institutional development of Buddhism. Monks and nuns preserved teachings, followed disciplinary rules, and participated in teaching and missionary activities.

5. **Role of Lay Followers:**

Buddhism developed through the interaction between monastic communities and lay followers. Donations and patronage from householders, merchants, artisans, and rulers supported monasteries and other Buddhist institutions.

6. **Relationship with Urban and Commercial Growth:**

Buddhist institutions became associated with important settlements and trade networks. Merchants and other economically active groups contributed to the establishment and maintenance of monasteries and religious monuments.

7. **Role of Royal Patronage:**

Royal support contributed significantly to the expansion of Buddhism. Emperor Ashoka was particularly important in Buddhist history because his inscriptions provide evidence of his policy of Dhamma, moral conduct, religious tolerance, and concern for social welfare.

8. **Expansion of Buddhist Institutions:**

Stupas, monasteries, caves, and other religious establishments developed in different parts of India. These institutions functioned as centres of religious practice, learning, cultural exchange, and community activity.

9. **Development of Buddhist Schools:**

Buddhism was not a completely uniform tradition. Different schools and interpretations developed over time. The emergence of Mahayana represented an important stage in the transformation and diversification of Buddhist thought and practice.

10. **Cultural Contributions:**

Buddhism made substantial contributions to Indian literature, art, architecture, sculpture, painting, education, and philosophy. Buddhist monuments and artistic traditions became important elements of ancient Indian cultural heritage.

11. Geographical Expansion:

Buddhism spread from its initial centres in northern India to many other regions of the subcontinent. Through missionary, monastic, and commercial networks, Buddhist traditions also reached Sri Lanka, Central Asia, Southeast Asia, and other parts of Asia.

12. Transformation and Decline in India:

Buddhism gradually experienced institutional and regional transformations in India. Changes in political patronage, economic conditions, monastic institutions, religious competition, and the development of other religious traditions contributed to changes in its position over time.

DISCUSSION

The findings indicate that the rise of Buddhism cannot be explained through a single religious or social factor. It emerged within a period of broad transformation in northern India. The expansion of agriculture, growth of towns, development of trade, and emergence of larger political states created a changing social environment in which new forms of religious and philosophical thought could develop.

The teachings of Gautama Buddha provided an ethical and philosophical framework centred on the problem of suffering and the possibility of liberation. The Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path offered a structured approach to religious practice. The emphasis on ethical conduct, mental discipline, and wisdom became important features of Buddhist identity.

The Sangha played a crucial role in transforming Buddhism from the teachings of an individual teacher into an organized religious tradition. Monks and nuns preserved teachings and disciplinary traditions, while lay followers provided material support. This relationship between monastic and lay communities contributed to the institutional stability of Buddhism.

Economic and urban developments also influenced Buddhist expansion. Buddhist monasteries were frequently established near settlements and routes of movement and trade. Merchants and other donors supported these institutions through donations. Such patronage helped connect Buddhism with wider networks of economic and cultural exchange.

Royal patronage was another significant factor. Ashoka's inscriptions demonstrate the importance he placed on Dhamma, ethical conduct, religious tolerance, and public welfare. Buddhist traditions also remember Ashoka as an important patron of Buddhism. However, the historical evidence should distinguish between information derived from his inscriptions and accounts preserved in later Buddhist literature.

The development of different Buddhist schools demonstrates the dynamic nature of the tradition. Changes in doctrine, monastic organization, devotional practices, and philosophical interpretation contributed to the emergence of diverse Buddhist traditions. Mahayana Buddhism introduced important new forms of religious thought and practice while earlier traditions continued in different regions.

Buddhism also had a major cultural impact. Buddhist stupas, monasteries, rock-cut caves, sculptures, paintings, inscriptions, and literary works demonstrate the close relationship between religion and cultural production. Buddhist educational and intellectual traditions contributed to the wider development of philosophy and learning in ancient India.

The later decline of Buddhism in India was a complex and gradual historical process rather than the result of a single event. Changes in political patronage, economic support, institutional structures, religious developments, and other historical circumstances affected Buddhist institutions differently across regions and periods.

CONCLUSION

The rise and development of Buddhism was one of the major religious, intellectual, and cultural transformations in ancient Indian history. Emerging in the sixth century BCE, Buddhism developed in a period marked by social change, urbanization, economic growth, political transformation, and intellectual debate.

The teachings of Gautama Buddha, particularly the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path, established the philosophical and ethical foundations of the tradition. The formation of the Sangha provided Buddhism with an organized institutional structure through which its teachings could be preserved and transmitted.

The growth of towns and trade networks, support from merchants and lay communities, and royal patronage contributed to the expansion of Buddhist institutions. Ashoka's support during the Mauryan period gave Buddhism an important historical and political context, while subsequent developments led to the emergence of diverse Buddhist schools and traditions.

Buddhism's influence extended beyond religious practice. Its contributions to art, architecture, literature, education, philosophy, and cultural exchange became significant features of ancient Indian civilization. Its expansion beyond India also established enduring connections between the Indian subcontinent and other parts of Asia.

Thus, Buddhism should be understood as a dynamic historical tradition that developed through the interaction of religious ideas, social institutions, economic networks, political circumstances, and cultural processes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1. Interdisciplinary Research:** Future studies should combine history, archaeology, epigraphy, anthropology, sociology, linguistics, and religious studies to examine Buddhism from multiple perspectives.
- 2. Critical Use of Sources:** Buddhist literary traditions should be studied alongside inscriptions, coins, archaeological remains, and other contemporary evidence to distinguish religious tradition from historical evidence.
- 3. Research on Women:** Greater attention should be given to Buddhist nuns, female donors, laywomen, and women's participation in Buddhist institutions.
- 4. Study of Monastic Institutions:** Further research should examine the organization, economic resources, property, administration, education, and everyday life of Buddhist monasteries.
- 5. Role of Economic Groups:** The contributions of merchants, artisans, traders, and urban communities to the expansion of Buddhism should be studied in greater detail.
- 6. Ashoka and Buddhist Development:** Further research should critically compare Ashoka's inscriptions with later Buddhist literary accounts to understand the nature of his relationship with Buddhism and Dhamma.
- 7. Regional Studies:** Detailed research should be undertaken on the development of Buddhism in regions such as Maharashtra, Andhra, Gandhara, Mathura, Magadha, and other important centres.
- 8. Art and Architecture:** Buddhist stupas, caves, monasteries, sculptures, paintings, and inscriptions should be examined to understand the cultural and institutional development of Buddhism.
- 9. Study of Buddhist Schools:** Further comparative research should examine the development of different Buddhist schools, their philosophical ideas, religious practices, and institutional structures.

10. Digital and Technological Research: Digital databases, GIS mapping, computational textual analysis, and other modern research methods can help trace Buddhist sites, texts, trade routes, and patterns of geographical expansion.

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