

9. Path-makers



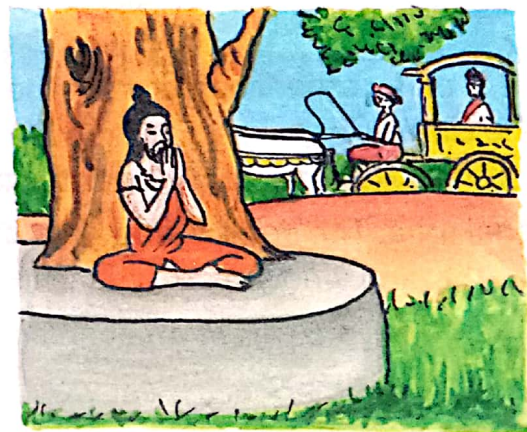
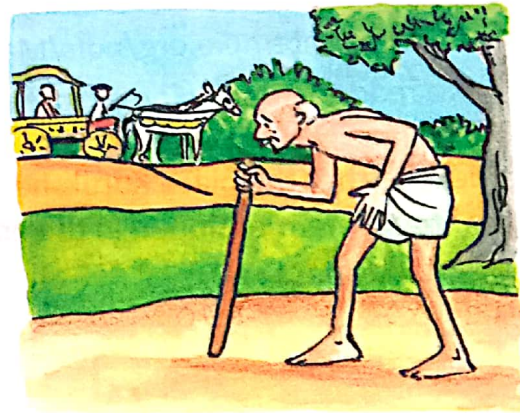
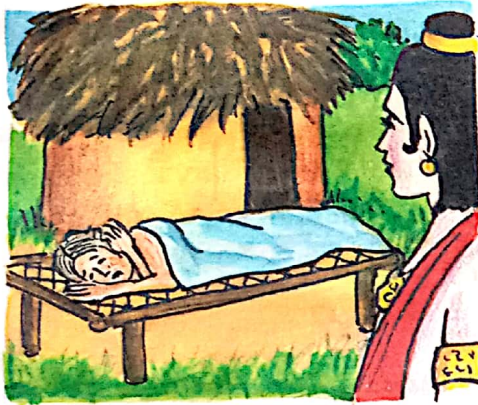
Lesson objectives

After reading this lesson, you will be able to:

- explain who is a path-maker
- describe the lives of three such path-makers, namely, Buddha, Mahavira and Ashoka
- appreciate how their teachings changed our lives

Who are **path-makers**? Path-makers are people who show us the way forward. They are teachers who guide others into a better world, and help us become better people. Let us look at some famous path-makers.

Thousands of years ago, there were some leaders in India who thought very deeply about life and the way things were. They looked at the world around them, filled with war and suffering, and tried to find a path to peace. Many people



The four sights that changed Gautama's life: a sick man, an old man, a dead man and a peacefully meditating monk.

listened to their messages of peace and followed them. Here are the stories of three of those great teachers — **Gautama Buddha**, **Vardhamana Mahavira** and **Ashoka**.

Gautama Buddha

Prince Gautama was born about 2,500 years ago in a small kingdom near Nepal. His parents wanted to protect him from all the pain and suffering in the world. So, Gautama was not allowed to travel outside the palace too often.

When he was 16 years old, Gautama was married to princess **Yashodhara**.

One day, Gautama was riding outside with his **charioteer**. On the way, he saw four sights that changed his life forever—an **old man**, a **sick man**, a **corpse**, and a **monk**. The prince had never seen sick or old people before. He did not know that there was unhappiness and death in the world. But he saw that in spite of all the suffering, the monk still



looked calm and happy. This made Gautama think about life deeply.

Gautama left the palace one night and led the life of a wandering monk. After many years, he finally found the answers he was looking for while **meditating** under a *peepul* tree. He came to be called Gautama Buddha, or the **Enlightened One**.

Gautama Buddha travelled from place to place, teaching people. He told them to lead a simple life, to speak the truth, and not to harm other living beings. He also believed

Go beyond!

Gautama's kindness extended not only to all people, but also to animals. When Gautama's cousin, Devadatta, let loose a mad elephant, everyone else became very frightened. But Gautama only raised his hand in a gentle way, and the elephant stopped and knelt before him. People believe that this was because even animals could feel the love and kindness of Gautama Buddha.



in **ahimsa**, or non-violence. The religion based on Buddha's teachings is called **Buddhism**.

Many people continue to follow Buddha's teachings even today.

Mahavira

Vardhamana was a prince who lived around the same time as Buddha. He grew up in a kingdom called **Vaishali**, in present-day Bihar. The young prince was married to the princess **Yashoda**.

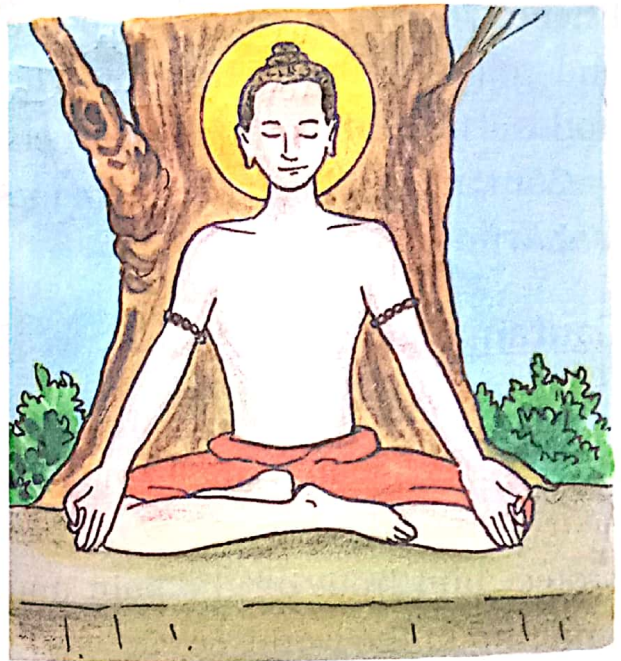
Even as a child, Vardhamana would think about life, death and happiness. When he was around 30 years old, he left his family and life in the palace to become a monk. After 12 years, he found the truth he was searching for. He came to be called **Mahavira** or **Jina**. He got rid of his clothes and all his belongings and spent the next 30 years travelling and teaching people.

Get active

Locate the state of Bihar in a map of India.

Go beyond!

Jain monks are very strict about their vows. They use a piece of cloth to cover their mouths so that they do not disturb any of the tiny creatures that live in the air. They also carry a broom and sweep the ground before them as they walk to avoid stepping on any insects.



People who follow the teachings of Mahavira are called **Jains**. Their religion is called **Jainism**.

Jains believe very strongly in **ahimsa**, or not harming other living beings. They are very careful not to hurt even the smallest insects. The Jains also believe in speaking the truth and in leading a simple life.

Ashoka

When we talk about kings and queens, we remember the wars they fought or the lands they won. But there was a great king in ancient India who decided to give up war





ASHOKA'S EMPIRE



captured it. But by the end of the war, many thousands of people had died, and many more were **wounded**.

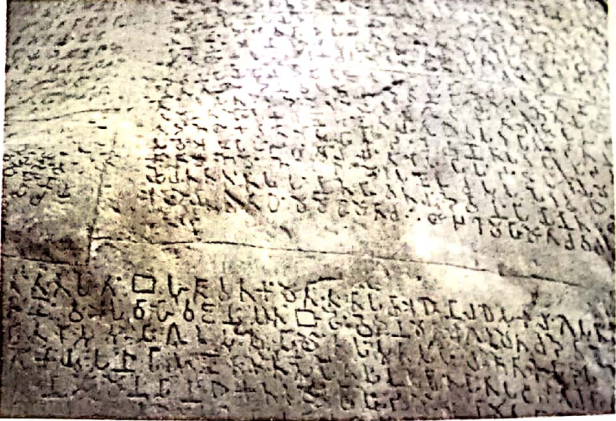
When Ashoka saw the pain and suffering caused by the war, he was filled with horror. He took a vow that he would never fight a war again.

and rule in peace. His name was Ashoka.

When Ashoka became king, he wanted to expand his kingdom. He attacked his neighbouring kingdoms and conquered them. Soon his empire covered almost the whole of India. The only kingdom that he could not capture was Kalinga, on the eastern coast of India.

He attacked Kalinga in 262 BC, and

Ashoka became a follower of Buddhism. He gave up all his wealth



Ashoka's edict in Junagarh, Gujarat

and decided to lead a simple life. He told his people to be kind to all, and to give **alms** to beggars. He told them never to kill a living being. He believed that everyone should follow the path of peace, truth and justice.

He had his thoughts and rules carved on rocks and pillars and placed all over the kingdom. They were called **edicts**. Because he won over a mighty empire with love and not war, he is known as **Ashoka the Great**.

Get active

Does this picture look familiar? It is the national emblem of India. It is based on the sculpture on top of the Ashoka pillar at Sarnath. Try to find out what the four lions stand for. Below the four lions, are carvings of a horse and a bull. Between them is a wheel, or chakra. Have you seen this chakra anywhere else? Find out the importance of this chakra and what it means.



New words

- * **charioteer**: a chariot driver
- * **corpse**: a dead body
- * **monk**: someone who has taken religious vows
- * **meditate**: think deeply
- * **emblem**: an image that represents an idea
- * **chakra**: wheel
- * **wounded**: physically hurt
- * **enlightenment**: spiritual understanding that frees a person from human suffering and desire
- * **alms**: money or food given freely to help the poor

Recap

- * Prince Gautama gave up life in the palace to become a wandering monk. He was called Buddha or the Enlightened One. The religion based on his teachings is called Buddhism.
- * Buddha taught people to lead a simple life and to speak the truth. He believed in ahimsa, or non-violence.
- * Jainism is based on the teachings of Vardhamana Mahavira.
- * Jains believe very strongly in ahimsa, or not harming another living being. The Jains also believe in speaking the truth and in leading a simple life.
- * Emperor Ashoka became a follower of Buddhism after seeing the suffering caused by the Kalinga War. He believed in following a life of honesty, kindness and charity.

were called edicts.

Exercises

I. Fill in the blanks.

1. Prince Gautama, after several years of meditation, became the Gautama Buddha the founder of Buddhism.
2. After the Kalinga War, Ashoka gave up war and violence.
3. Both Buddha and Mahavira believed in ahimsa or non-violence.
4. During his childhood, Mahavira was called Vardhamana.
5. Ashoka wanted to capture the kingdom of Kalinga on the eastern coast of India.