



Piprahwa Relics

Why in News?

The Central Government has launched a **strong diplomatic and legal campaign to stop** Sotheby's in Hong Kong from **auctioning the sacred Piprahwa Relics**, which are believed to be the **remains of Lord Buddha**.



Key Points

- **About Piprahwa Relics:**
 - Excavators **discovered the Piprahwa Relics in 1898** at the **Piprahwa Stupa in Uttar Pradesh**, believed to be **ancient Kapilavastu**, the birthplace of Lord Buddha.
 - The relics include **bone fragments, crystal caskets, gold ornaments, and other ritual offerings**.
 - An inscription in **Brahmi script** on one casket links the relics directly to Lord Buddha, stating they were deposited by **the Sakya clan**.
- **Legal Protection of the Relics:**
 - India classifies the relics as **'AA' antiquities**, granting them the **highest level of legal protection** under national law.
 - Indian law **prohibits their sale or export**, making any attempt to auction or remove them illegal.
 - While **most relics were handed to the Indian Museum, Kolkata in 1899**, **descendants of British excavator William Claxton Peppé retained some relics**, now surfacing in the auction market.
- **India's Immediate Action:**
 - After learning of the proposed Sotheby's auction in Hong Kong, the Ministry of Culture issued a legal notice demanding an immediate halt.
 - The **Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)** contacted India's Consulate General in Hong Kong to seek intervention.

UPPCS Foundation Course

अ हिन्दी मीडियम

En English Medium



Personalised Mentorship



Free Study Material



Answer Writing Practice

Admissions Open

87501 87501

Kapilavastu Relics:

- The discovery of an **inscribed casket in 1898** at the stupa site in **Piprahwa** (near UP's Siddharthnagar) helped identify the place with the ancient Kapilavastu.
- The inscription on the casket's lid refers to the relics of **Buddha and his community, the Sakya**.
- A further excavation of the stupa by the Archaeological Survey of India in 1971-77 brought to light **two more stoneware relic caskets**, containing a total of 22 sacred bone relics, which are now under the care of the National Museum.
- This was followed by the discovery of more than 40 terracotta sealings from different levels and spots in the eastern monastery at Piprahwa, establishing that Piprahwa was the ancient Kapilavastu.

GAUTAM BUDDHA

Believed to be 8th of the 10 incarnations of Lord Vishnu (Dashavatar)

BIRTH

- Born as Siddhartha (563 BC)
- Birthplace - Lumbini (Nepal) near Kapilavastu

PARENTS

- Father - elected ruler of Kapilavastu; headed Shakyas republican clan
- Mother - princess from Koshal dynasty

IMPORTANT EVENTS

- Buddha's Birth
- The Great Departure (Mahabhisikramana)
- Enlightenment (Nirvana)
- First Sermon (Dhammacakkapavattana)
- Death (Mahaparinirvana)

Buddha referred to himself as **Tathagata** (one who has thus come/gone) and has been addressed as **Bhagavat** (in Buddhist texts)

CONTEMPORARIES

- Vardhaman Mahavira
- Bimbisara
- Ajatasatru

OTHER IMPORTANT PLACES ASSOCIATED WITH BUDDHA

- Bodhi Gaya (Enlightenment) (named Buddha after attaining enlightenment)
- Sarnath (first sermon)
- Vaishali (last sermon)
- Kushinagara (death place (487 BC))

BUDDHISM

ORIGIN

- 6th century BC, based on the teachings of Gautam Buddha

MAIN FEATURES

- Essence - Attainment of enlightenment (Nirvana)
- Supreme Deity - None

PRINCIPLES

- Avoid the extremes; follow Madhyam Marg (middle path)
- Individualistic component (everyone is responsible for their own happiness)
- 4 Noble Truths:
 - Dukkha (suffering)
 - Samudaya (cause of suffering)
 - Nirodha (suffering could be ended)
 - Atthanga Magga (8-fold path to achieve this)
- 8-Fold Path:
 - Right - view, intention, speech, action, livelihood, mindfulness, effort and concentration

BUDDHISM REJECTS

- Authenticity of Vedas
- Concept of soul (atman) (unlike Jainism)

MAJOR BUDDHIST TEXTS

- Sutta Pitaka (main teachings of Buddha - Dhamma)
- Vinaya Pitaka (rules of conduct for monks/nuns)
- Abhidhamma Pitaka (philosophical analysis)
- Other imp texts - Divyavadana, Dipavamsa, Mahavamsa, Milind Panha

Buddha's teachings were rehearsed, authenticated & divided in 3 Pitakas at the 1st Buddhist Council

These teachings were written down c. 28 BC in Pali

4 BUDDHIST COUNCILS

Buddhist Council	Patron	Venue	Chairman	Year
First	Ajatasatru	Rajgirha	Mahakassapa	483 BC
Second	Kalashoka	Vaishali	Sabbakami	383 BC
Third	Ashoka	Pataliputra	Mogaliputra	250 BC
Fourth	Kanishka	Kundaliban (Kashmir)	Vasumitra	72 AD