

India's Cultural Roots

Chapter-7

The Big Ques (Page 105)

Ques 1.

What are the Vedas? What is their message?

Answer:

- The Vedas are a collection of sacred religious text in Sanskrit originating in ancient India, giving the foundation of Hinduism.
- They were composed during 1500 and 500 BCE and are among the most ancient texts in the whole world.
- There are four Vedas: The Rig Veda, the Yajur Veda, the Sama Veda and the Atharva Veda.
- The Rig Veda contains the Hymns about the mythology.
- The Sama Veda consists mainly of the hymns about the religious rituals.
- The Yajur Veda contains the instructions for religious rituals. .
- The Atharva Veda consists of the spells against the enemies and diseases.
- The Vedas declares that God manifested himself in the beginning as the creator of the Universe.
- The main purpose of the divine knowledge contained in the Vedas is to instruct human beings to live a truthful meaningful, progressive, happy and righteous life in the material world and also to plan for the future and final goal of the life.

Ques 2.

What new schools of thought emerged in India in the 1st millennium BCE?

What are their core principles?

Answer:

During the early 1st Millennium several new schools of thoughts emerged from Vedas.

- Yoga was one of them which developed methods to achieve one's consciousness.
- Vedanta was another thought which evolved through Upanishads. Upanishads were group of texts which were built upon Vedic concepts like rebirth and karma.
- Vedanta principles believed that everything including human life, nature and the universe is one divine essence called Brahman, the supreme existence.
- Together these thoughts laid the foundation of Hinduism.
- Other school of thoughts also emerged which didn't accept Vedas authority were Buddhism, Jainism and Charvaka School.
- Their core principle was that God is only one. We are the one giving indifferent names to them.
- The core principles of Buddhism was the idea of ahimsa, which is generally translated as non-violence means non-injuring. He also preached sincere inner discipline.
- The core principles of Jain teachings include ahimsa, anekantavada and aparigraha. These ideas, shared to a large extent with Buddhism and the Vedantic school of thoughts are central to Indian culture.
- The core principles of Charvaka School of thought was that there was no life after death. Charvaka School disappeared with time as its principles were not popular.

Ques 3.

What is the contribution of folk and tribal traditions to Indian culture?

Answer:

Introduction : The folk and tribal traditions provides an invaluable window into the rich heritage of Indian culture.

Many tribes in ancient Bharat believed in elements of nature such as rivers, mountains, trees, plants, animals and some stones too, to be sacred. This was because of their belief that there is a consciousness behind all of them. This belief was also found in Hinduism and is still today. Similarly many tribes used to worship same deity as others did like Lord Jagannath. Some tribes had their own versions of Hindu epics Mahabharata and Ramayana. All these tribal beliefs and their folk and cultural traditions merged with Hindu traditions to form the Indian cultural roots.

Let's Explore

Ques 1.

Do you know the term for a society where people select their leaders? How do you think people can benefit from such a situation? What could happen if they live under leaders that they did not choose? (Hint: Think back to what you're learning in the theme 'Governance and Democracy'!)

Write your thoughts in a paragraph of 100-150 words. (Page 109)

Answer:

- As we know throughout the history, one can find evidence of direct democracy in which communities make decisions through popular assembly.
- Today, the dominant form of democracy is a representative democracy, where citizens elect government officials to govern on their behalf such as in a Parliamentary or Presidential democracy.

People can get the benefit from such a situation. They will be able to follow the following points:

- Representation: People feel that their voices are heard by the leaders they have chosen.
- Accountability: Elected leaders are accountable to the people who voted for them, which can lead to better government responsiveness to the needs of the population.
- Participation: Democratic Processes encourage civic engagement and participation in decision making leading a more active and informed

citizens. Overall, choosing leaders through democratic means can promote equality in the society where the interests of the people are at the forefront of governance.

If they live under leaders that they did not choose. In such case their life could have become quiet worst. They will not be able to a lead a comfortable life.

As the leader chosen is without the consent of the people, that is without the democratic process, it is autocratic or a dictatorship. Kings were known as autocrat, where only family of the king ruled the territory under them. In history, many kings ruled with good governance.

Another example is of Britishers who ruled Indian sub-continent for over two centuries as a dictatorship rule. Under their rule, Indians were suppressed and looted a lot, thus changing a developed Indian nation, known as Golden Bird (Sone ki Chidiya) into underdeveloped country with severe poverty.

Ques 2.

(a) Discuss the way the Buddha is depicted in the below panel.

(b) Can you name some states of India or some other countries where Buddhism is a major religion even today? Try to plot these on a world map.

(Page 115)

Answer:

(a) This stone panel, which is around 1800 years old, depicts that Buddha is teaching his disciples.

His main teachings included Non-violence and sincere inner discipline.

(b) Buddhism is the major religion in Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim, Maharashtra, Tripura and in Ladakh (a Union Territory).

- Buddhism is the official religion in four countries. Bhutan, Cambodia, Myanmar, and Sri Lanka. The religion also holds a special status in two countries, Thailand and Laos.
 - Buddhism is also followed in China, Japan, Cambodia and Mangolia.
- Map Work: Do it yourself.

Ques 3.

Observe the below panel (from a Jain temple in New Delhi). What is striking about it? What messages does it carry? (Page 118)

Answer:

- The panel depicts a lion and a cow drinking water together from the same container. This is striking because these are natural enemies, and yet they are shown in harmony.
- The panel shows that even natural enemies can live together peacefully if they are treated with compassion and respect.
- The image represents the interconnection of all living beings and the importance of living in harmony with nature.

Think About it

Ques 1.

Have you heard or read any other story that conveyed an important message? What value did it teach you? (Page 110)

Answer:

- There are many stories and narratives throughout history that have conveyed important messages.
- Yes, I read an interesting story from Panchtantra of, “The Mouse and the Elephant”
This story taught me that even a small creature like mouse could make a big impact on life of an elephant.
Similarly, I also read another story from Panchtantra titled, “The Rabbit and the Lion”
- Moral of this story is that knowledge is more powerful than strength. Hence, few stories which I have read have taught me good moral values in life.

Quess, Activities and Projects (Page 123)

Ques 1.

If you were Nachiketa, what Quess would you like to ask Yama? Write them down in 100-150 words.

Answer:

I would like to ask Yama, the god of death, following Quess, if I was Nachiketa:

- What happens after the death of a body?
- What is soul?
- What happens to soul after death?
- Will soul also die with death, if not where will it go?
- Will soul take rebirth in form of another body?

Ques 2.

Explain a few central ideas of Buddhism. Briefly comment upon them.

Answer:

- Buddhism was started by Siddhartha Gautam (Gautam Buddha).
- It evolved during 500 BCE and did not accept the concepts and principles of Vedas.
- Buddhism believed that ignorance and attachment are the source of human sufferings. Their teachings were based to remove these two causes of Sufferings ignorance and attachment.
- Buddhism preached non-violence and sincere inner discipline to reduce human sufferings.

Ques 3.

Discuss in class the quotation of the Buddha which begins with “Not by water is one made pure, though many people may bathe here [in sacred rivers]” to make sure that its meaning has been understood by all.

Answer:

Main point of discussion in Class room:

- Gautam Buddha means by this quotation that you can not be pure just by having a bathe in any sacred river like the Ganges.
- You could become pure only within by following the path of non-violence and inner discipline.
- The one who could conquer his inner mind by meditation and further enlighten-ment is greater manifolds than any emperor who wins any battle killing thousands of men.

Ques 4.

Explain a few central ideas of Jainism. Briefly comment upon them.

Answer:

- Jainism teaches that the path to enlightenment is through non-violence and reducing harm to living things (including plants and animals) as much as possible.
- Like Hindus and Buddhists, Jains believe in reincarnation.
- This cycle of birth, death and rebirth is determined by one's karma.
- Jains believe bad karma is caused by harming living things. To avoid bad karma, Jains must practice ahimsa, a strict code of non-violence.
- The principle of non-violence includes doing no harm to humans, plants, animals etc.

Ques 5.

Consider and discuss in class Andre Beteille's thought (see page 122).

Answer:

Andre Beteille's is an Indian sociologist.

- As per his thoughts, since ancient times, thousands of castes and tribes had great influence on the religious beliefs of Hinduism.
- Each tribe used to follow their own religion influenced by Hinduism. Similarly as per his views, Hinduism as a religion was also influenced by the tribal religious customs and traditions.
- Finally, we could decipher from his views that Hinduism as a religion evolved through beliefs, customs and traditions of different castes and tribes of ancient India.

Ques 6.

Make a list of popular gods and goddesses in your region and the festivals they are associated with.

Answer:

Here is the list of popular gods and goddesses with festivals associated with them:

- Lord Rama and Hanuman: Diwali is celebrated worldwide as on this day Lord Rama returned to Ayodhya after killing the Demon Ravana.
- Lord Ganesh: Ganesh Chaturthi is celebrated on his birth anniversary.
- Lord Shiva: Shivaratri is celebrated on his birth anniversary.
- Lord Krishna: Janmashtami is celebrated on his birth anniversary.
- Goddess Durga: The deity of strength and motherhood. Durga Pooja festival celebrates the victory of goddess Durga over the demon king Mahishasura.
- Goddess Laxmi: The deity of wealth and prosperity is worshipped during Diwali festival.

Similarly students could make further list of their regional gods, goddesses and festivals associated with them.

Ques 7.

As a class activity, list two or three tribal groups from your region or State. Document some of their art and belief systems.

Answer:

Gonds, Bhils, Santhal, Munda and the Great Andamanese Tribes.

- The Great Andamanese Tribes are an indigenous people of the Great Andaman Archipelago in the Andaman Islands. All living things are believed to be endowed with power that affects the human being. The art form depicts the culture and tradition.
- Bhil art is known for its simplicity and use of vibrant colours. The art form is practised on the walls, floors, clothes. Similarly students could give details of tribal groups from their region.

True or False

Ques 1.

The Vedic hymns were written on palm-leaf manuscripts.

Answer:

True

Ques 2.

The Vedas are India's oldest texts.

Answer:

True

Ques 3.

The Vedic statement ekam sat vipra bahudha vadanti reflects a belief in the unity of cosmic powers.

Answer:

False

Ques 4.

Buddhism is older than the Vedas.

Answer:

False

Ques 5.

Jainism emerged as a branch of Buddhism.

Answer:

False

Ques 6.

Both Buddhism and Jainism advocated for peaceful coexistence and the avoidance of harm to all living beings.

Answer:

True

Ques 7.

Tribal belief systems are limited to belief in spirits and minor deities.

Answers

False

Class Activity

Ques 1.

Stage a small play with Yama, god of death, surrounded by several Nachiketas asking him Questions about life.

Answer:

Under the guideline of the teacher students will be selected in the class to play the role of different characters.