

IMPORTANT QUESTION CLASS – 12 HISTORY CHAPTER- 4 THINKERS, BELIEFS AND BUILDING CULTURAL DEVELOPMENTS

Question 1.

Describe the Tirthankaras of Jainism. Discuss their main teachings about Jainism.

Answer:

Jainism has 24 Tirthankaras. It had the following most important Tirthankaras :

1. Rishabhath. He was the first Tirthankara of Jainism. According to tradition, he was a king. He left his throne for his son named Bharat.

2. Pasharvath. He was the 23rd Tirthankara of Jainism. He was the son of Ashvasen, the King of Kashi. He renounced the world at the age of thirty. He attained true enlightenment after a deep meditation for only three months. He spent the rest of his life as a Dharam Guru. He attained Nibbana at the age of a hundred.

3. Vardhman Mahavir. He was the 24th and the last Tirthankara of Jainism. He was born at Vaishali in the 6th century B.C.E. His childhood name was Vardhman. The name of his father was Siddharth and the name of his mother was Trishala. He was married to Yashodhara when he was quite young and was blessed with a son. He left his house at the age of thirty and practiced penance for many years. He attained enlightenment at the age of forty-two. He spent the rest of his life preaching religion. He attained Nibbana at the age of seventy-two.

Teachings of Jainism and Tirathankars. The religion that the Tirathankars preached came to be known as Jainism. The main teachings of this religion are as follows :

1. Tri-Ratna. According to Jainism, the ultimate aim of human life is the attainment of Nirvana or salvation. There are three means to attain this nirvana—pure knowledge, pure character, and pure philosophy. These three principles of Jainism are known as the Tri-ratan.
2. Belief in Penance. The followers of Jainism believed in asceticism and penance. They gave more and more torture to their bodies. They believed that salvation could be achieved by giving more and more pain to the human body.
3. Non-Violence. Jainism has emphasized ahimsa or non-violence in life. The followers of this religion believed that all things of this world are animate. So they considered it a sin to cause any injury to any human being, animal, plant, or insect.

4. No Faith in God. The followers of Jainism do not believe in God though they accept its existence. They worship their Tirathankars in place of God.
5. No Faith in the Vedas. The disciples of Jainism do not consider the Vedas as having divine knowledge. They do not consider the means of salvation mentioned in the Vedas as important. They believed that yajnas were futile.
6. Belief in Soul. The followers of Jainism accept the existence of the soul. According to them, the soul is immortal. Though it is in the body, yet it is distinct and different from the body.
7. No Faith in Caste System. The followers of Jainism do not believe in Casteism. According to them, all people are equal. No one can be high or low on the basis of caste.
8. Belief in the Theory of Karma. According to Jainism, the cycle of birth and re-birth is shaped through Karma. The next birth depends on the deeds done in the present life. So we should perform good deeds.
9. Attainment of Salvation. According to Jainism, salvation means that the soul should be free from the bond of Karmas. When the cycle of Karma ends, the individual attains salvation.
10. Emphasis on Righteous Conduct. Mahavir inspired all his disciples and followers to lead a high world life. He advised all to beware of anger, greed, jealousy, theft, and unethical deeds.

Question 2.

How were the Stupas discovered? Comment on their export citing examples of the Stupas at Amaravati and Sanchi.

Answer:

The Stupa of Amaravati was found all of a sudden. In 1796, a local Raja wanted to build a temple. He stumbled upon the ruins of the Stupa at Amaravati. He decided to use the stone. Then he thought that there might be a treasure buried in that hill-like place. After many years, this site was visited by Colin Mackenzie, a British official. He found many pieces of sculpture. He made detailed drawings of them. But all his reports remained unpublished.

Walter Elliot, the Commissioner of Guntur (Andhra Pradesh) visited Amaravati in 1854. He collected many sculpture panes and took them away to Madras. These sculpture panes were later on known as the Elliot Marbles as they were named after his name. He also discovered the remains of the western gateway. He concluded that the structure at Amaravati was very large and magnificent.

In the 1850s, some of the slabs from Amaravati were taken to the Asiatic Society of Bengal at Calcutta. Some other slabs were taken to the India office in Madras. A few others were taken to London. These slabs of sculpture adorned the gardens of a few British administrators. In fact, whenever a new official came in the area, he removed a few sculptures from the site on the plea that earlier officials had done the same.

Export of the Stupas at Sanchi and Amaravati

A few archaeologists had a different view about the export of Stupas at Sanchi and Amaravati. According to H.H. Cole, "It seems to be a suicidal and indefensible policy to allow the country to be looted of original works of ancient art." He believed that the original pieces of sculpture should not be dislocated. Rather all the museums should have plaster cast facsimiles of the sculpture. However, Cole failed to convince the officials about the importance of Amaravati. But his views about Sanchi were accepted. Hence, the Stupa at Sanchi survived whereas the Stupa at Amaravati could not.

Why did Sanchi survive whereas Amaravati did not?

Answer:

Amaravati was discovered earlier than Sanchi. But the scholars at that time could not realize the importance of preserving such monuments. They did not understand that these things should have been preserved where they had been found. They should not have been removed from the site.

Sanchi was discovered in 1818. At that time, three of its four gates were intact. They still stood in a good condition. The fourth gateway had fallen down. The entire mound was in good condition. No doubt some people suggested that the gateway should be taken either to Paris or London. But at last, Sanchi was kept as it was. On the other hand, the mahachaitya at Amaravati became an insignificant little mound. It had lost much of its past glory.

Question 3.

How did Puranic Hinduism grow? Give its main features.

Answer:

Puranic Hinduism originated from the notion of a Saviour. Two traditions were part of Hinduism-Vaishnavism and Shaivism. Vishnu was the principal deity in Vaishnav tradition and Lord Shiva was regarded as the chief God in Shaivism. In both traditions, special emphasis was laid on the worship of a specific deity. In this type of worship, the bond between the devotee and God was seen as one of love and devotion. It is called Bhakti.

Incarnation or Avtarism: Various cults were developed around various avatars of Vishnu in Vaishnavism. Ten avatars were recognized in this tradition. It has been believed that whenever the world is threatened by disorder and destruction because of the dominance of evil forces, the deity takes avatar to save the world in different forms. Probably different avatars were popular in different parts of the country. All the local deities were recognized as a form of Vishnu and Vaishnavism became a more unified religious tradition.

Sculptures: Some of the avatars represented in sculptures of other deities were also made. Shiva was represented by the 'Linga' but he was also represented in human form in many sculptures. All these representations of deities were based on a complex set of ideas. Their

attributes and symbols were depicted from their headdresses, ornaments, and weapons or auspicious objects the deities hold in their hands, how they are seated, etc.

Stories of Puranas: In order to understand the meaning of these sculptures, historians have to be familiar with the stories associated with them. Some stories are found even in the most of the stories of Puranas were developed through mutual contracts of people. Priests, merchants, common men, and women used to move from one place to another and used to exchange their beliefs and ideas. For example, Vasudeva-Krishna was an important deity of the Mathura region. But during many centuries, his worship spread to different parts of the country as well.

Question 4.

How Buddhist texts were prepared and preserved?

Answer:

Buddha used to give teachings through debate and discussion. Men, women, and children attended these discussions and discussed what they heard. None of his teachings were written down during his lifetime. After his death, his followers called a council of elders at Vaishali. This council compiled all of his teachings. These compilations were known as Tripitaka which literally means the three baskets to hold different types of texts. Firstly they were transmitted orally and then written and classified according to their subject matter and length.

Tripitaka: Three pitakas are included in Tripitaka-Vinay Pitaka, Sutta Pitaka and Abhidhamma pitaka.

- Vinay Pitaka is the collection of rules and regulations for those who joined the Sangha or monastic order.
 - Buddha's teachings were included in Sutta Pitaka.
 - Philosophical matters are dealt with in Abhidhamma Pitaka.
- Each Pitaka consists of many individual texts. Later on, Buddhist scholars wrote commentaries on these texts.

Mahavamsa and Dipavamsa: When Buddhism spread to new lands like Sri Lanka, other texts like Mahavamsa and Dipavamsa were written. These texts contain regional histories of Buddhism. Some of these texts had biographies of Buddha. Most of the oldest texts were in the Pali language but later on, texts were also written in the Sanskrit language.

Preserving Buddhist text: When Buddhism spread to east Asian countries, then many pilgrims like Fa Xian and Xuan Zang traveled from China to India. They took many texts to their country where they were translated by many scholars. Indian Buddhist teachers also traveled to different countries.

They carried Buddhist texts with them to disseminate the teachings of Buddha. For many centuries, these manuscripts were preserved in monasteries of different parts of Asia. Scholars also prepared modern translations from Pali, Sanskrit, Chinese, and Tibetan texts.

Question 5.

Explain the structural and sculptural features of the Sanchi Stupa.

Answer:

Sanchi Stupa is considered among the best-preserved monuments of the time. It is one of the most important centres of early Buddhism.

The Structure of Stupas

The Stupa is a Sanskrit word meaning a heap. It is a simple semi-circular mound of earth. Later on, it was also called as *anda*. Slowly and steadily, its structure became complex because an attempt was made to balance the round and square shapes. Above the *anda*, it had the *harmonica*, a balcony-like structure. This balcony represented the abode of the gods. Near the *harmonica*, was a mast called the *Yashti*. It was often surmounted by a *Chhatri* or an umbrella. Around the mound, there was a railing.

It separated the sacred place from the secular world. The Stupas at Sanchi and Bharhut have stone railings. This railing was like bamboo or wooden fence. It had four gateways, which were richly carved and installed in four cardinal points. The worshippers mostly entered through the eastern gateway. They walked around the mound in a clockwise direction keeping the mound on right imitating the sun's course through the sky.

The Sculpture of Sanchi Stupa

The sculpture depicts a rural scene, with thatched huts and trees. The sculpture at Sanchi identifies it as a scene from the *Vessantara Jataka*. This is a story about a generous prince who gave away everything to a Brahmana and went to live in the forest with his wife and children. Early sculptors did not show Buddha in human form but as symbols.

- The empty seat was meant to indicate the meditation of the Buddha.
- The stupa was meant to represent the *mahaparinibbana*.
- Another symbol was the wheel, which indicated the first sermon of the Buddha, delivered at Sarnath.

Some of the sculptures at Sanchi were not directly inspired by Buddhist ideas. These include beautiful women swinging from the edge of the gateway, holding onto a tree. According to a popular belief, she is a representation of *Shalabhanjika* in Sanskrit.

This woman's touch caused trees to flower and bear fruit. This auspicious symbol was used for the decoration of the stupa. Shalabhanjika motif suggests that many people who turned to Buddhism enriched it with their own pre-Buddhist and non-Buddhist beliefs, practices, and ideas. At Sanchi Stupa, many animals are carved into lively scenes derived from Jataka tales. These animals have human attributes. For example, an elephant denotes strength and wisdom.

The motif of Gajalakshmi or Maya-a a woman surrounded by lotuses and elephants sprinkling water on her as if performing abhisheka. She is regarded as the goddess of fortune. Other motifs include that of serpent worship derived from other popular traditions.

Question 6.

How did Sutta-Pitaka reconstruct the philosophy of ' Buddhism? Mention about Buddhist Tipitaka.

Answer:

Sutta Pitaka is an important text of Buddhism. The Buddha's teachings have been reconstructed from the stories found mainly in the Sutta Pitaka. Although few stories describe his miraculous powers, others suggest that the Buddha tried to convince people through reason and persuasion rather than through displays of supernatural power. For example, when a grief-stricken woman whose child had died came to Buddha.

He gently convinced her about the inevitability of death rather than bring her back to life. These stories were narrated in the language spoken by ordinary people so that these could be easily understood. According to Buddhist philosophy, the world is transient (anicca) and constantly changing; it is also soulless (anatta) as there is nothing permanent or eternal in it. Within this transient world, sorrow (dukkha) is intrinsic to human existence.

Humans can rise above the worldly troubles between severe penance and self-indulgence.

Buddha regarded the social world as the creation of humans rather than of divine origin. He advised kings and chapatis to be humane and ethical. Social relations can be transformed at the individual level.

The Buddha emphasized individual agency and righteous action as a means to escape from the cycle of birth and rebirth and attain self-realization and Nibbana, to remove ego and desire and end the cycle of suffering and resource the world.

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Question 7.

What was the method of the symbol of Buddha sculptures? Why was it difficult to understand these symbols?

Answer:

Many early sculptors showed the presence of Buddha through symbols instead of showing him in the human form. For example, the empty seat became the symbol of the meditation of Buddha. The symbol of the wheel was also used quite frequently.

This symbol stood for the first sermon of the Buddha, delivered at Sarnath. Actually, such sculptures cannot be understood very easily. For example, the tree does not stand just for a tree but it symbolizes an event in the life of the Buddha. To understand such symbols, it is necessary for historians to understand the traditions of those who produced these works of art.

Question 8.

Many rituals, religious beliefs and practices were not recorded in a permanently visible form as monuments or sculptures or even paintings.” Critically examine the statement.

Answer:

Many rituals, religious beliefs, and practices were not recorded in a permanent, visible form as monuments or sculptures, or even paintings. These included daily practices, as well as those associated with special occasions. Many communities and people may not have felt the need for keeping lasting records, even as they may have had vibrant traditions of religious activities and philosophical ideas.

Actually, people do like to preserve or record those things which are visible. They don't want to record those things which are not visible and that's why rituals and religious beliefs and even practices remain no more with the passage of time.

Question 9.**“The notion of a savior was not unique to Buddhism.” Comment.****Answer:**

The notion of a savior was not unique to Buddhism. We find the same ideas being developed in different ways within a tradition that we now consider a part of Hinduism. In the case of Vaishnavism, cults developed around the various avatars or incarnations of the deity.

Ten avatars were recognized within the tradition. These were forms that the deity was believed to have assumed to save the world whenever it was threatened by disorder and destruction by evil forces. It is likely that different avatars were popular in different parts of the country. Recognizing each of these local deities as a form of Vishnu was one way of creating a mere unified religious tradition.