

CLASS NOTES

Class: XII

Topic: CH-4. Thinkers, Beliefs and Buildings

Subject: HISTORY

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS:

Q 1. Why are Buddhist stupas said to be “stories in stone”? Explain.

Ans: Each Buddhist stupa has a history of its own. The sculptures in the stupas depicted different stories which were taken from different texts at that time. Art historians have identified that the sculpture at Sanchi was a scene from the Vessantara Jataka. Often historians tried to understand the meaning of sculpture by comparing it with textual evidence

Q. 2. How was Buddha’s presence shown through symbols? Give two examples.

Ans: Examples to show Buddha’s presence shown through symbols are:

- The empty seat indicated the meditation of the Buddha.
- The stupas represented the mahaparinibbana of the Buddha.

Q. 3. Mention the internal functioning of the Buddhist Sanghas.

Ans: The internal functioning of Buddhist Sangha was based on the traditions of ganas and sanghas. Within the sangha, there were equal status given to all of them because they shed their earlier social identities on becoming bhikkhus and bhikkhunis.

Women were included later in the sanghas.

The bhikkhus in the sangha had to observe certain rules such as to abide by their duties, such as a bowl to receive food once a day from the ordinary people. Consensus was arrived on all issues through discussions. All decisions were taken with the majority opinion or by a vote on the subject.

Q.4. Name the two types of sources through which we come to know about Buddha and his teachings.

Ans: Two sources through which we come to know about Buddha and his teachings are as follows:

- Various Buddhist texts like Tripitakas or three baskets and the Jataka stories.
- Various pillar inscriptions and rock edicts.

Q. 5. How was the fate of Amaravati stupa different from the Sanchi stupa? Explain.

or

Critically examine why Sanchi survived while Amaravati did not?

Ans: The stupa at Amaravati was one of the largest and the most significant among the Buddhist stupas. The stupa at Sanchi survived while Amaravati did not. Reasons are:

- It is said that the stupa at Amaravati was discovered sometime earlier than the one at Sanchi.
- Perhaps, the scholars were not aware of the significance of preserving the archaeological remains at the site where they were originally found.
- The Sanchi stupa was discovered in the year 1818. At that time, three of its four gateways

were still standing, the fourth was lying on the spot and the mound was in good condition.

But from the Amaravati, several pieces of sculptures were already used by the British administration in London to decorate the gardens. There was an insignificant little mound and was totally denuded of its former glory.

Q. 6. "Many rituals, religious beliefs and practices were not recorded in a permanent visible form as monuments or sculptures or even paintings". Critically examine the statement.

Ans: Many rituals, religious beliefs and practices were not recorded in a permanent visible form as monument, sculptures or even paintings.

This can be understood through the following points:

- There are many communities and people who may not have known to keep records for their rituals, religious beliefs and practices.
- However, they may have vibrant traditions of religious activities and their own philosophical ideas.
- Generally, people want to record those things which are clearly visible. They do not feel urgency to record their daily practices about religion and philosophy.

Thus, we have a partial view of the rich visual traditions that were presented in the form of sculpture, architecture and paintings and any of these sculptures were damaged over the centuries. But beyond these, there is a vast history of men which is not yet recorded.

Q.7. Describe the teachings of the Buddha.

or

Describe how Buddha's teachings have been reconstructed from the stories of Sutta Pitaka?

or

Write down the eternal truth of Buddhism.

or

Explain briefly the teachings of Buddha.

Ans: The teachings of Buddha are as follows:

- The world is transient (anicca) and constantly changing. It is also soulless as there is nothing permanent or eternal in it.
- Within this transient world, sorrow (dukkha) is intrinsic to human existence.
- By following the path of moderation between severe penance and self-indulgence, human beings can use above these worldly pleasures.
- He advised kings and gahapatis to be humane and ethical. Buddha regarded the social world as the creation of humans rather than of divine origin.
- He emphasised individual agency and righteous action as the means to escape from the cycle of rebirth and attain self-realisation and nibbana (literally means the extinguishing of ego and desire).
This ends the cycle of suffering for those who renounced the world.
- The words to his followers were "Be lamps into yourselves as all of you must work out your own liberation."

Q. 8. Describe how the Buddha's teachings have been reconstructed from the stories of Sutta Pitaka.

Ans: The Buddha's teachings have been reconstructed from the stories found mainly in the Sutta Pitaka in the following ways:

- Although some stories suggest the Buddha's miraculous powers, others suggest that the Buddha tried to convince people through reason and persuasion rather than through displays of supernatural powers.
- When a grief-stricken woman, whose child had died, came to the Buddha, he sympathetically convinced her about the inevitability of death rather than bring her son back to life. These types of stories were narrated in the language spoken by ordinary people, so that they could easily understand.
- In Sutta Pitaka, the Buddha explained five ways through which a master could look after his servants and employees. These were:
 - By assigning them work according to their strength.
 - By supplying them with food and wages.
 - By tending them in sickness.
 - By sharing delicacies with them.
 - By granting leaves at times.

In Sutta Pitaka, there were instructions about how to behave with parents, teachers and wife.

Q.9. Describe briefly the early stupas at Sanchi and Bharhut.

Ans: The early stupas at Sanchi and Bharhut were built in the 2nd century BCE. The main features of these stupas were:

- These were plain except for the stone railings, which resembled a bamboo or wooden fence. The gateways of these stupas were richly carved and installed at the four cardinal points.
- Worshippers entered through the Eastern gateway and walked around the mound in a clockwise direction, keeping the mound on the right, imitating the sun's course through the sky.
- Later, the mound of the stupas made to be elaborately carved with niches and sculptures, like Amaravati and Shahji-Ki-Dheri in Peshawar.

An elevation of the great stupas of Sanchi provides a vertical perspective.

Q.10. Explain the structural and sculptural features of the Sanchi stupa.

Ans: The Sanchi stupa was built in the 2nd century BCE and regarded as one of the important stupas in India. It was discovered in 1888.

The structural features of the Sanchi stupa are:

- The stupa originated as a simple semi-circular mound of Earth, later called Anda. Above the anda was the harmika, a balcony-like structure that represented the abode of the Gods. There was a mast called the yashti, arising from the harmika and it was surmounted by a chhatra or umbrella.
- Around the mound, there was a railing, separating the sacred space from the world. There were stone railings and the gateways, which were richly carved and installed at the four cardinal points.

- An elevation of the great stupa provides a vertical perspective.

The sculptural features of the Sanchi stupa are:

- Art historians identified the scene depicted in the gateways as a scene from the Vessantara Jataka. They often try to understand the meaning of sculpture by comparing it with textual evidence.
- Many symbols like empty seat, wheel, and tree were used to indicate the different teachings of Buddhism in Sanchi stupa. For instance, the empty seat was meant to represent the mahaparinibbana.
Wheel stood for the first sermon of Buddha.
- Other sculptures at Sanchi were perhaps not directly inspired by Buddhist ideas. These figures included beautiful women swinging from the edge of the gateway holding onto a tree, like, Shalabhanjika was a woman whose touch caused trees to flower and bear fruit.
- There are other images in Sanchi stupa. Depiction of animals like elephants, horses, monkeys and cattle were found there. Animals were used as symbols of human attributes, e.g. elephants were depicted to signify strength and wisdom.
- There is a motif in Sanchi stupa of a woman surrounded by lotuses and elephants, which seems to be sprinkling water on her as if performing an Abhisheka or consecration. It has been identified by some historians as Maya, the mother of Buddha while others identify her with a popular Goddess Gajalakshmi (Goddess of good fortune).