

Chapter : 5

Cultural Heritage of Indian and North East Region

PART-I:HISTORY

Very Short Answers Type Questions :

Q1. What was the eastern border of the Indus Valley Civilisation extended up to Ganga Valley ?

Ans: Meerut.

Q2. When was the town culture developed during the Indus Valley Civilisations ?

Ans : Around 4000 B.C.

Q3. What was the presumed time of writing of the Rig Veda ?

Ans : Between 1500 B.C. and 1000 B.C.

Q4. The term 'Satyameva Jayate' found in the national symbol was taken from which book ?

Ans : Mundak Upanishad.

Q5. Which book did establish the term 'unity in diversity' ?

Ans : Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru's book 'Discovery' of India'.

Q6. Greek-Roman techniques were used in which style of sculptures ?

Ans : Gandhara style.

Q7. What is the name of the famous book on political science written in ancient India ?

Ans : Arthashastra written by Kautilya.

Q8. When was the Natyashastra by Bharat Muni was written ?

Ans : Between 200 B.C. to second century.

Q9. How many slokas are there in the Natyashastra ?

Ans : About 600 slokas.

Q10. What is Heraka movement ?

Ans : The movement launched by freedom fighter Rani Gaidalu of Nagaland which aimed to revive and preserve the traditional religious beliefs and cultural heritage of the various tribes of Nagaland is known as 'Heraka' movement.

Q11. Hornbill festival of Nagaland is based on which name of organism ?

Ans : Bird Hornbill.

Q12. The traditional festival of Chapchar Kut belongs to which state ?

Ans : Mizoram.

Q13. What is the meaning of the word Mizo ?

Ans : The term 'Mizo' means the 'inhabitants of the hills'.

Q14. Which state of the North East has a matriarchal society ?

Ans : Meghalaya.

Q15. What are the main themes Manipuri Dance ?

Ans : The main themes of Manipuri dance have been developed on the childhood of Saint Chaitanya, Lord Krishna etc.

Q16. What is the ancient name of Assam ?

Ans : Pragiyotishpur and Kamrup.

Q17. From which Bodo word the name Assam is considered to be derived ?

Ans : 'Ha-chom'.

Q18. What is Charyapada ?

Ans : The Assamese songs written from 10th century to 14th century in Assam is known as Charyapada.

Q19. When was the Charyapada written ?

Ans : Between 10th century to 14th century A.D.

Q20. Under whose patronage Madhab Kandali translated the Saptakanda Ramayana ?

Ans : Barahi King Manimanikya.

Q21. Who was the first to introduce prose literature in Assam ?

Ans : Sankardeva.

Q22. Who did compose Zikir and Zari ?

Ans : Ajan peer (Sah Milan).

Q23. Who is Ajan Peer ?

Ans : Ajan Peer was a composer of muslim religious songs who was also known by the name Sah Milan.

Q24. When did Ajan Peer come to Assam ?

Ans : In the 13th century.

Q25. When was the stone gate of Da-Parbatia made ?

Ans : 6th century A.D.

Q26. What was the duty of Changrung Phukon ?

Ans : The main duty of Changrung Phukon was to supervise the construction and measurement of the roads, palaces, temples, houses, etc.

Q27. Which artist got Padmashree Award for the contribution to folk song ?

Ans : Pratima Pande Baruah.

Q28. What is the name of the first news magazine of Assam ?

Ans : 'Arunodoi' published by the American Baptist Missionaries in 1846.

Q29. Which tribe of North East is part of the Austric ethnic group ?

Ans : The Khasi tribe of Meghalaya.

Q30. Name the writers of the books :

(i) Arthashastra : Kautilya

(ii) Hashtividya : Sukumar Borkait

(iii) Kirtan : Sankardeva

(iv) Chordhora aru Pimpara Goshowa : Madhabdeva

(v) Kaliya Daman : Sankardeva

(vi) Ramvijoy : Sankardeva

(vii) Katha Geeta : Bhattadeva

(viii) Rajtarangini : Kalhan.

(ix) Bharat Sambhed : Jawaharlal Nehru.

SHORT ANSWER TYPE QUESTIONS :

Q1. Write the name of two foreign communities which came to India after the 6th century.

Ans : The two foreign communities which came to India after the 6th century are the Greeks and Huns.

Q2. Name two statues used for worshipping and which were discovered during Indus Valley Civilisation.

Ans : Statue of Pashupati and statue of Mother Goddess were discovered from Indus Valley sites. These appear to have been used for worshipping during the Indus Valley Civilisation.

Q3. Mention two contributions of the Austrians to Indian culture.

Ans : Two contributions of the Austrians to the Indian culture are :

(i) Cultivation of rice.

(ii) Preparation of raw sugar (gur) from sugarcane.

Q4. How does the geography of India play a role in creating cultural diversity of India ?

Ans : The Indian society has its origin in a variety of ethnic groups that came to India from various parts of the world. This has given India a cultural diversity. However, the geography of India too has had a role in creating and maintaining this diversity. The physiographic nature of India which consists of vast plains on one hand, high mountain terrains on the other, deserts on one hand and tropical forests on the other, and coastal areas on one hand and deep interiors on the other, has allowed each region to retain its cultural identity in isolation from the other regions. The topography of the region affects the living pattern of the people there; their occupation, their crops, their harvesting season, their clothes, their food, etc. and thus the culture they develop is unique to that region. Thus, India's varied and contrasting physical regions have helped to create cultural diversity in the country.

Q5. Write the names of the four Samhitas of the Vedas.

Ans : The four Samhitas of the Vedas constitute an important part of the Hindu religious texts. These are the following :

(i) Rigveda

(ii) yajurveda

(iii) Samaveda

(iv) Atharvaveda

Q6. What is written about religious tolerance in the 12th main stone carvings of Ashoka ?

Ans : Ancient India was noted for the practice of religious tolerance. This is evident from the 12th main stone writings of Girnar in 3rd century B.C. of Ashoka. This writing bears the oldest witness of the religious tolerance of Indian rulers. It says that kings accepted religious tolerance and that Emperor Ashoka maintained that no one should consider his or her religion as superior to others. Rather, everyone should follow a path of unity by acquiring the essence of other religions.

Q7. What is multiculturalism ?

Ans : The system in which several cultures, sometimes similar and sometimes dissimilar, coexist peacefully assimilating many good elements from other cultures is known as multiculturalism. India is the best example for multiculturalism being a mosaic of cultures, languages,

racess, religions, traditional customs, dressing styles, food habits, folk culture, etc.

Q8. What are the divisions of the ancient Indian culture ?

Ans : The major divisions of ancient Indian culture are :

(i) Social cultural : The social culture includes living styles, dressing style, food habits, social customs, practices, languages, folk culture, etc.

(ii) Religious culture : The religious cultural includes the different ways of worshipping, celebrating religious festivals, religious practices and customs, etc. Several religions, such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, Islam, Christianity, etc. Coexist and live peacefully.

(iii) Racial culture : Racial groups such as Austrics, Proto-Australoids, Negroids, Mongoloids, etc. are found in India. Each of these races has its own style of living.

Q9. Write names of two scientists of ancient India.

Ans : Two scientists of ancient India were :

(i) Aryabhatta

(ii) Brahmagupta

Q10. Write names of two medical books written in ancient India.

Ans : Two medical books written in ancient India were :

(i) Sarak Samhita

(ii) Susruta Samhita

Q11. Write the names of two Mughal emperors who patronised arts.

Ans : Two Mughal emperors who patronised arts were :

(i) Jahangir

(ii) Shahjahan

Q12. Write name of two pictorial books written in 'Sanchipat' in Assam.

Ans : Two pictorial books written in Sanchipat form in Assam are :

(i) Hashtividyarnava

(ii) Ananda Lahari.

Q13. Write the names of the two painters of Hashtividyarnava.

Ans : Two painters of Hashtividyarnava were Dilbar and Dosai.

Q14. What is jhum cultivation ?

Ans : The type of cultivation which is characterised by burning the vegetation of a patch of land and cultivating it until it loses its fertility, then moving on to another plot where the same procedure is followed, is known as jhum cultivation.

Q15. What is Jeng Bihu ?

Ans : There are three main types of Bihu celebrations in Assam, namely, Bohag (Rongali) Bihu, Kati (Kongali) Bihu and Magh (Bhogali) Bihu which are observed in the months of Bohag (Baishag), Kati (Kartik) and Magh respectively. Each of these bihu celebrations has different forms and styles. One of its forms is celebrated by the women of Upper Assam which is called Jeng Bihu.

Q16. Write divisions of Ojapali.

Ans : Ojapali is one of the most popular folk dances of Assam. It has two forms or styles. These are :

(i) Byash oja

(ii) Sukannani oja

Q17. Write names of two philosophers of ancient India.

Ans : Two philosophers of ancient India are :

(i) Kapil

(ii) Patanjali

Q18. Write names of two histories written during the Ahom era.

Ans : Two histories written during the Ahom era are :

(i) Deodhai history

(ii) Tungkhungia history

Q19. Write the names of two homogenous festivals of Bihu celebrated in lower Assam.

Ans : Two homogeneous festivals of bihu celebrated in lower Assam include :

(i) Deul in Darrang

(ii) Baash puja in Goalpara

Q20. Write name of two folk dances of Darrang.

Ans : Two folk dances of Darrang are :

(i) Dhepadhulia

(ii) Bordhulia

Q21. What are the main ethnic groups of India ?

Ans : The main ethnic groups of India consists of Proto-Australoids, Negroes, Austrics, Mongoloids, Nordic Aryans, Dravids and Western Brachcephalics.

Q22. Write three factors that create unity among cultural diversity in India.

Ans : Three factors that create unity among the cultural diversity in India are :

(i) Multiculturalism.

(ii) Political unity created by the empires of different ages.

(iii) Religious and cultural unity maintained by different rulers.

Q23. What are the main divisions made for the Indian architectural set up ?

Ans : The main divisions for the Indian architectural set up especially during the Sultanate and Badshahi era are:

(i) Mosques (Masjids)

(ii) Pillars (Minars)

(iii) Palaces (Manjils)

(iv) Makowara

Q24. Write names of three architectural set-up of India which are declared as world Heritage Site by the UNESCO.

Ans : Three architectural set-up of India which have been declared as world Heritage Site by the UNESCO are :

(i) Taj Mahal

(ii) Ajanta Caves

(iii) Sanchi Stupa

Q25. What statues were mainly created in the field of Indian sculptures ?

Ans : From ancient time, India was noted for the development of high quality sculpture. During the course of time people made statues of Gautam Buddha, Mahavir, different gods and goddesses of the Hindus, fairies and different animals related to Buddhism.

Q26. What are the three main styles of Indian sculptures ?

Ans : The sculptural styles followed in ancient India can be classified into the following three categories :

(i) Gandhara sculptures

(ii) Mathura sculptures

(iii) Amarawati sculptures

Q27. Name three pictorial books of Mughal age.

Ans : Three pictorial books of Mughal age are :

(i) Padsahnama

(ii) Tutinama

(iii) Jahangirnama

Q28. What are the six skills (sarangas) of paintings ?

Ans : The six skills (saranga) of paintings consist of the following :

(i) Shape

(ii) Measurement

(iii) Feelings expressing techniques

(iv) Artistic presentation

(v) Knowledge of similarity

(vi) Rules of using brushes

Q29. Write about three places of India having ancient wall paintings.

Ans : Three places in the India which have ancient wall paintings are :

(i) Ajanta wall paintings (Maharashtra)

(ii) Bagh wall paintings (Madhya Pradesh)

(iii) Chittanavachal wall paintings (Tamil Nadu)

Q30. Write briefly on the culture of Yoga in India.

Ans : One of the great contributions of ancient India to the entire world is the culture of yoga. Yoga was developed by the ancient Maharshis or gurus. It might have originated during the Indus Valley Period. But this practice was standardised by Maharshi Patanjali by compiling a book called Yogasutra in the second century. From then yoga became quite popular in India. Today it is not only used for physical wellbeing but also for mental and spiritual upliftment. Realising the worth of Yoga, the UNO has declared 21 June as International Yoga Day.

Q31. By what names the first seven days of Rongali Bihu are commonly known ?

Ans : Among the three forms of Bihu festivals, Rongali (Bohag) bihu is the most prominent. It is celebrated from the last day of the Assamese month of Sot to the first six days of Bohag.

(i) Last day of the sot month or the first day of Rongali Bihu is called Sankranti or Domahi and is observed as 'Garu bihu' (bihu festival for the cows).

(ii) The second day of the festival is called 'Manuh bihu' (bihu for the human beings).

Q32. What is the main subject matter of Kamrupi and Goalpara folk songs ?

Ans : The main subject matter of Kamrupi and Goalpara folk songs is marriage and songs to please different gods.

Q33. Name three books where the ancient names of Assam-Kamrup and Pragjyotispur are mentioned.

Ans : Three books were the ancient names of Assam, namely Kamrup and Pragjyotispur are mentioned includes :

(i) Ramayana

(ii) Mahabharata

(iii) Vishnu Puran

LONG ANSWERS TYPE QUESTIONS :

Q1. Write briefly on the source and development of multiculturalism in India.

Ans : India is known for its multiculturalism and its unity in diversity. Its culture is a result of hundreds of years of cultural assimilation and accommodation. How the country came to be multicultural can be seen in a study of the civilisation that have lived in the country. Among the oldest civilisations was the Indus Valley Civilisation which formed in 4000 B.C. and was architected by Dravidians. It left a deep mark on India's culture. Then from 1500 B.C. came the Pre-Vedic, Vedic and Post-Vedic eras which saw the compiling of the Vedas and the two great epics Ramayana and Maharashtra which have played a great role in determining the culture of India. Then the Arya culture came to greatly affect the society in every way, including culturally. The various ethnic groups Dravidians, Nordic Aryans, Proto-Australoids, Negroids, Austrics, Mongoloids and Western Brachcephalics then through the process of assimilation formed many sub-tribes. Other cultural groups were created by the assimilation of customs, social traditions, beliefs, rituals and linguistic variations. As a result, the Aryan culture transformed the ethnic groups. The various emperors of India practiced religious tolerance, and slowly people of religions other than Hinduism began to enter India. They included Christians, Muslims, Jews, Buddhists, etc. The different religious faiths had an impact on the culture, art and literature, architecture, traditions and rituals, festivals and lifestyle of the people of India. Further on, military invasion by Greeks, Suks, Huns, Turks, Afghans, Portuguese, Mughals, Dutch, French and British, also impacted India's culture. Many stayed back permanently thus adding to the cultural diversity of India's citizens.

India's geographical diversity has also contributed to its cultural diversity. People living in the plains, hills, deserts, coastal areas, valleys, etc. have all developed differently as the physical nature of their homeland has influenced their lifestyle, food, crops, art, folk culture, etc. Hence, each region has a different cultural identity. However despite all the cultural differences in origin and in lifestyle, there is a cultural unity among all the different regions of India, which is known as multiculturalism. All people of the country respect each other's cultures and thus live in unity. This unity has also been brought about by political empires of different ages, religious and cultural tolerance of India's erstwhile kings, cultural exchange and by the great epics like the Ramayana and the Mahabharata.

Q2. The soul of Indian culture and civilisation is regarded to be excited in the Sanskrit literature of ancient India. Discuss the meaning of the sentence.

Ans : The old Sanskrit literature of India may be considered as the soul of Indian culture and civilisation. The religious books of Hinduism like the Vedas, Vedangas, Upanishads, Brahmanas, and Aranyakas, great epics like Ramayana and Mahabharata, Gita and Puranas, etc. were written in Sanskrit. These books contain not only religious matter but also a lot of non-religious information about how people in the ancient times lived their lives. They provide glimpses of political, social, economic and cultural aspects of ancient India. Other great works of ancient period on politics, medicine, science, literature were also written in

Sanskrit. These include politics related books like Kautilya's Arthashastra, medical books such as Sarak Samhita and Susruta Samhita, pure literature of Kalidasa, Sudraka, Banabhatta, philosophical works of Kapil, Patanjali, Gautam, Badarayan, Ramanuj, Madhabacharya, historical works like Rajtarangini by Kalhan and scientific works by Aryabhatta, Barahmihir, Brahmagupta, Bhaskaracharya I and II and Maharshi Bharadwaj. The Sanskrit works of south named Sangam literature were also written in Sanskrit. These above-mentioned books contain the soul and the spirit of Indian culture. The writings reveal the way of life of people, their religious practices, scientific knowledge, philosophical notions, medical outlook and treatment, literary knowledge, artistic pursuits, cultural practices, etc. These writing greatly influenced and shaped Indian views and thinking process in the ancient period. These books highlighted the values Indians upheld. These great values have been followed by the Indian families for thousands of years. These works of literature throw open the wide spectrum of India's social, economic, political, and cultural life. It is in this context that ancient Sanskrit works are considered to be the soul of Indian culture and civilisation.

Q3. Write about religious traditions in India.

Ans : The Indus Valley Civilisation might have developed in the north west part of India around 4000 B.C. Later the Nordic Aryans migrated to India in 1500 B.C. and began what is known as Aryan Culture. By 400 B.C. Aryan Culture had spread to most parts of India.

At that time when Aryan Culture was expanding in India, the social and religious traditions of different areas were also assimilated. The result was that the Aryan Culture began to transform. The Hindu holy books such as Samhita, Brahmanas, Aranyakas, Ramayana, Mahabharata, Upanishads, Puranas, Smritis, Vedangas, etc. reveal this transformation.

One of the notable features of religious condition in ancient India is the prevalence of religious tolerance. Each part of India had developed its own system of worship and religious rituals. As the Aryans began to spread to other parts of India, they began to absorb some of the good elements of other regions. In fact, Aryans added several new ways of worshipping. They accepted many religious customs of the local population. In other words, there was a great deal of cultural and religious assimilation between the Aryan and non-Aryan population. Therefore we notice no conflict between Hindus and those following Lord Buddha or Mahavira. This religious tolerance was present not only among ordinary people but also among rulers. Emperor Ashoka is the best example in this regard. In one of his stone carvings of the 3rd century B.C., he exhorts the people to be tolerant towards people who follow other religions. He invites them to absorb the essence of other religions and remain united. This is the oldest example of religious tolerance being promoted by rulers. Thus from ancient time onwards people practiced religious tolerance. The result was that other religious groups such as Muslims and Christians

found little difficulty in settling down in India in the medieval period.

Q4. Write how the common and separate identity of the North East is developed.

Ans : The term 'north-east' coined for the seven north eastern states of Assam, Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram and Tripura, itself shows that these states have a common identity to be clubbed together. There are many factors that are common to all the states. Firstly, the states are distributed around the fertile Brahmaputra and Barak river valley plains; secondly, the whole region is surrounded by the countries of Bhutan, China, Myanmar and Bangladesh; thirdly, all the states, but for a major part of Assam, are hilly and are thus all dependent on Assam for land transport connection; fourthly, most of the people of the region, except the Khasis of Meghalaya, share a common ancestry of descending from the Mongoloid race; and lastly, in ancient times a healthy relationship existed between the rulers of the hilly regions and those of Assam which included acceptance of subordination, marriage ties, helping each other during crisis, trade by barter, etc. All these factors led to a sense of unity, oneness and commonness among the people, though belonging to different states.

However, despite the commonness with each other, every state of the north-east, also has its own separate identity. Each state has a distinct traditional and cultural

heritage, and also a unique political history which sets it apart from the other states.

Q5. Write briefly about the religious environment in the North East.

Ans : During the ancient time, Hinduism was the predominant religion of the North East region. It was practiced in Assam, Tripura, and Manipur. Vaishnavism got developed in the 15th century in Assam and soon it spread to Manipur. As a result, majority of the Meitei people of Manipur are followers of Chaitanya cult. The impact of Vaishnav religion is seen in every aspect of Manipuri culture, folk dance, folk songs, musical instruments, literature, etc. Many Manipuris however, still follow Animism. Majority of the people of Tripura are also Hindus and impact of Bengali culture is seen here. The Khasis, Garos and Jaintias, the tribes of Meghalaya got converted to Christianity from 1830, during British rules, and today more than 70 per cent of the population of the state are Christian. Similarly, majority of the people of the state of Mizoram are Christians although there are some groups that follow Buddhism and Hinduism. But unfortunately, after converting to Christianity, Mizo communities lost many aspects of their traditional culture including their festivals. However since 1973, there has been an attempt in Mizoram to restart the traditional festival called 'Chapchar' Kut' They have also started some attempts to revive many other traditional dance forms, folk songs, music and community festivals. Majority of the people of Nagaland also follow Christianity. But they have not given up their

traditional customs and practices. The people of Arunachal Pradesh follow Hinduism, Christianity, Buddhism, etc., but some also practise Animist traditions. The religious environment of north east displays religious harmony among the people of the region.

Q6. Assam has mixed culture due to assimilation of Aryan and non-Aryan cultures-discuss briefly on this aspect.

Ans : Assam is considered to be a mosaic of races, cultures and religions. Racial diversity has been one of the hallmarks of Assam for a long time. A number of racial groups such as the Negroids, Australoids, Mongoloids, Mediterranean and Caucasoid settled in different parts of this state during the ancient and medieval periods. According to historians, the Mongoloid people of the Tibeto-Burman linguistic family entered the north eastern region of India and gradually started to inhabit Assam, Bengal, Bihar and Nepal. Soon after their arrival in Assam, these Mongoloid groups started assimilating the racial and cultural traits of the people with whom they came into contact.

After the Mongoloid group, the next major racial group to enter Assam was the Aryans. The Aryans seemed to have entered India by 1500 B.C. and after several centuries of their settlement in the Indus and Gangetic valley they gradually began to migrate to the Brahmaputra valley as it was a very fertile region.

According to historians, the Aryans may have entered Assam during the 6th century A.D. The Ahoms seemed

to have migrated from Mong-Mao, a tiny kingdom in China and after crossing the Patkai range entered the Brahmaputra valley in 1228 A.D. During the rule of the Ahoms, many people belonging to different racial stocks entered Assam from South-east Asia and the Gangetic valley. In the early part of the 18th century, various tribes like Khamtis, Doyanians, Tai-Phake, Turungs, Aitonians, Naras, etc. migrated from different parts of south Asian region. During this time the Turki-Afghan adventures and fortune-seekers, the Mughals, many soldiers belonging to Islam, sometimes as prisoners of war and sometimes on their own behalf, settled in Assam. As a result of their settlement, Islam began to spread among the lower strata of Hindu society including the Koches and Meshes in Assam.

The result of these migrations and settlement is that medieval Assam became a fusion of several cultures, religions, and races. The Ahom people which constituted majority of the people of this state assimilated many of the social, religious, cultural customs of the Hindus, tribes and the indigenous people of the state. Thus the Ahoms attained a multi-racial, multi-ethnic character and in subsequent periods this character underwent further transformation and expansion. The society in medieval Assam thus consisted of people belonging to various races and tribes. A large section of the Assamese population consisted of, on the one hand of the Hindus caste claiming lineage from the Aryans and on the other, the various non-Aryan tribes. The tribal population were able to influence the Ahoms greatly. The Assamese language has borrowed a lot of vocabulary from the

languages of the various tribes of the region. Similarly, the Assamese culture absorbed a great deal of cultural traits and practices prevailing among the numerous tribal population. Thus, it is a proven fact that the present-day Assamese society and culture is a fusion of the collective efforts and achievements of the Aryans and the non-Aryan elements.

Q7. Write briefly on the heritage of paintings in Assam.

Ans : In Assam the Ahoms from the very beginning of their settlement in the Brahmaputra valley developed both literature and painting. Painting developed as an art form and the tradition of illustrating the books through paintings was developed and widely practised in Assam during the medieval period. The tradition of illustrating the literary works with painting grew under the patronage and influence of the neo-vaishnavite religious movement. The literary works were specially produced on Sanchipat. One of the features of the early writing in Ahom literature was that they left some space in the margin for illustration with miniature paintings. This was a great attraction to read the books. Important among the illustrated books written on Sanchipat included Hashtibidyarnava, Ananda Lahari, Chitra Bhagawat, Geet Govinda, Kumar Haran, Sankhachur Budh, Lava Kushar Yuddha, etc. These illustrated works are noted for their excellent quality as well as for their local touch.

The credit of writing the book 'Hashtibidyarnava' during the reign of Ahom King Saba Singha goes to Sukumar

Borkaith. The illustration of this famous work was done by two painters-Dilbar and Dosai. One of the deficiencies of the development of painting in Assam during the medieval period was that only the illustration painting got developed and the other forms of paintings got sidelined leading to their decline during this period. In this type of painting, pictures were drawn with natural colors. A certain colour was painted on the Sanchipat first, then pictures of kings, palaces, deities, animals, etc. were later drawn as per the requirements of the subject matter. The blank space were then filled with flowers, creepers, etc. The colours used mostly were red, green, yellow and black. The Ahom kings from the 17th century onwards patronised painters while pictorial books were developed in the satras under the patronage of learned teachers.

Q8. Write about religious unity and diversity in Assam.

Ans : One of the notable features of Assam is the cultural and religious diversity seen in the state. There are numerous ethnic groups in Assam which follow different religions. Majority of the people follow Hinduism. The other religious groups found in the area are Islam, Christians Jains, Buddhists, Sikhs, Animists, etc. It is seen that Hindus who live in Assam follow different sects of Hinduism. Hindu religious groups living in Assam can be divided into following groups :

- (i) Sakta cult
- (ii) Vaishnav cult

(iii) Shaiva cult

(iv) Sourya cult Assam is noted for the prevalence of Saktipithas. Among them, the most significant one is the Kamakhya Temple. It is situated close to Guwahati, the capital of Assam. The temple is famous all over the world. Hundreds of pilgrims visit this temple every year. Another major Hindu sect found in Assam is the Vaishnav sect. There are thousands of people who belong to Vaishnavism. The main leaders of this sect were Sankardeva and his disciple Madhabdeva. It is seen that the Muslims came to Assam during the 13th century as part of the army of Delhi Sultanate. Many of them remained back in Assam, Seeing the immense economic possibilities in this state. Today a good percentage of the population practise Islam. Their presence became much stronger with the inflow of immigrants from Bangladesh after its formation in 1971. Poamakka (Pao Mecca) in Hajo is a holy place of Muslims in Assam. The Zikir and Zari written by Ajan Peer are popular Muslims songs.

Another religious group that settled in Assam in the recent past is the Sikhs. During the invasion of Assam by the Burmese, the Sikh soldiers were hired to assist the Ahom army during the time of King Chandrakanta Simha. Some of these soldiers remained back and established a sikh community in Assam. Today many of them practice Assamese culture. There are some groups living in the eastern part of the state including Thai phake, Turung, Aitan, Khamti, Nora (Shyam) groups, etc. that follow Buddhism. Most of the people of

the tea gardens practise Christianity. Their ancestors had migrated from Chotanagpur region. Today their number has greatly increased and they constitute an important religious group of the state. Thus, we see that Assam has almost all religions of India adding a great deal of religious diversity in the state.

Q9. Why the Cultural diversity, assimilation and change are taking place more rapidly in Assam than the other states of the region ?

Ans : If we look at the history of Assam and the neighbouring states like Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Nagaland, Meghalaya, etc. we find that the cultural diversity and cultural assimilation is most visible in Assam. Assam is considered to be a mosaic of races, cultures and religions. A number of racial groups such as Negroids, Australoids, Mongoloids, Mediterranean, Austrics, Caucasoid, etc. settled in different parts of Assam. Gradually, these varied ethnic groups contributed their share in the development of common Assamese culture. It is a fact that among the seven states of the north-east, the highest level of cultural and religious assimilation and change has taken place in Assam. This is due to the following factors :

(i) The state of Assam has the most number of ethnic groups while most of the other states have only few ethnic groups.

(ii) Economically Assam has better resource and opportunities. The prevalence of extensive plains, possibility of agriculture, availability of water resources,

etc. boosted the economic prosperity, which in turn brought about cultural advancements. The other six states did not have such resources.

(iii) Most of the ethnic groups passed through Assam. The Khasis, Garo and Jaintias passed through the state of Assam and this has enriched the culture of the state.

(iv) Assam is fortunate to have two big rivers, Brahmaputra and Barak, which have boosted the economic prosperity of the state. It boosted river transport as well as transportation of goods and men. All these brought cultural rejuvenation and development.

(v) Only Assam is physically connected to the rest of India. As a result there is a great inflow of outsiders such as businessmen, traders, religious teachers, etc. from outside the state. Their presence has aided cultural exchange and cultural assimilation in the Assamese society. The other north-eastern states are connected with the rest of India only through Assam.

Q10. Really the society is like a book for studying the folk culture-provide your views on this issue.

Ans : It is a fact that the best book to study folk culture consisting of folk songs, folk dances and traditional practices is the society itself. Folk culture is not generally written down. It is handed over from one generation to another by word of mouth as well as by community example. Therefore, if one has to learn anything about the folk culture of a particular community,

one needs to watch that particular society very closely. Society is like an open book which provides a lot of information about its activities, festivals, practices, customs, traditions, dressing style, community feasting, value system, administrative set-up, etc.

When we look at the folk culture of Assam, we are impressed by its variety, richness and vitality. Assam has a rich tradition of folk songs, which are sung on different occasions. Many of these traditional songs have disappeared over the years while many of them are still sung even today. Marriage songs, appeasing songs, Kamrupi and Goalpara folk songs are quite popular. Some other folk songs which are still popular in Assam include Aainam, Dhainaam, Dotara (tokari) song, Chiyageet Nangeli geet (cow-boy song), Cherradhek, etc.

In the same way, the state of Assam is also noted for its rich folk dances. Among the folk dances of Assam, Ojapali is the most prominent one. Ojapali consists of two styles-Byash Ojapali and Sukannani ojapali. Stories of Ramayana and Mahabharata are sung following the Byash ojapali dance form while Sukannani story is sung for appeasement of Manasa Devi. All these aspects of folk culture can be gained only when one observes the various activities of the common people. In this context we say society is like a book to study the folk culture.

WRITE SHORT NOTES ON :

Q1. Sculptures of ancient India.

Ans : India was noted for the development of high quality sculptures during the ancient period. It reached its zenith of development during the Gupta period. Ancient sculptures were made of rocks, stones, bronze, copper and gold. The statues were made in local style. The feelings of the people like peace, comfort, anguish, divine love, etc. were depicted on these statues. The main subject matter of the sculptures were holy men like Gautam Buddha, Mahavir, gods and goddesses of Hinduism, different animals, etc. The sculpture styles of the ancient period can be divided into three categories, namely, Gandhara, Mathura and Amravati styles. Among these, the Gandhara style was most popular. This style was mostly used for the making of statues of Lord Buddha. The religious sculptures declined during the medieval period as Islam did not encourage making of statues and sculptures of dead human beings. The Muslim rulers were more interested in promoting architecture and painting than sculpture.

Q2. Indian paintings.

Ans : The ancient Indian period witnessed great progress in the field of painting. Ancient and medieval paintings can be categorised into two categories, viz. big wall paintings and smaller paintings. The smaller paintings were used for the illustration of books. The big wall paintings can be seen in different parts of India such as in the walls of Ajanta Caves (Maharashtra), Bagh (Madhya Pradesh) and Chittanavachal (Tamil Nadu). The main theme of these paintings is related to life and activities of Lord Buddha, Mahavira and Hindu

gods and goddesses. Among these paintings, Ajanta cave painting is the most magnificent and famous all over the world. During the Mughal era, paintings made great progress and noted painters were patronised by Akbar, Jahangir and Shahjahan. The smaller paintings mostly consisted of pictorial works in books. Mughal emperors encouraged such works. Important pictorial books of the period include works such as Padsahnama, Tutinama, Jahangirnama, Dastan-e-Amir, Khamda, etc.

Q3. Traditions of songs and dances in India.

Ans : India has a rich heritage of music and dance. The Vedas were to be recited in a particular musical style. Music reached its zenith of development during the Mughal period. Along with music, different types of musical instruments were also made to accompany classical and folk music. Among these instruments shahnai, tabla, santur, sitar, beena and flute were considered important. Folk instruments like dhol, taal, nagara, mridanga, khol, nupur, sharindra, dotara, etc. were extensively used. Like music, dance too received a lot of attention in the ancient period.

There are hundreds of dance forms in India. Out of these, the government of India has recognised eight of them as Indian Classical Dances. These are :(i) Kathakali (Kerala), (ii) Mohiniyattam (Kerala), (iii) Bharathanatyam (Tamil Nadu), (iv) Kuchipudi (Andhra Pradesh), (v) Odissi (Odisha), (vi) Kathak (North India), (vii) Manipuri dance (Manipur), (viii) Satriya (Assam).

Q4. Sculptures of Assam.

Ans : During the ancient and medieval period in Assam there was significant development in the field of sculpture. Sculptures were made of stone as well as of elephant tusks, gold, silver, bronze and wood. The main themes of these sculptures were religious deities such as Siva, Vishnu, Gangapati, Surya, etc. Sculptures of different animals are also seen in different parts of the state. The main Sculptures of Assam can be seen in Da-Parbatia in Tezpur, Bamuni Pahar, Madan Kamdev, Ambari, Dabaka, Surya Pahar, Borganga, Numaligarh, Deopani, Hojai, Dibrugarh, Sukreswar, etc. The Da-Parbatia sculptures were made in the 8th century. These sculptures were greatly influenced by Gupta sculptures.

Q5. Architecture of Assam.

Ans : There was not much progress in the field of architecture in Assam during the ancient period. However during the medieval period, architecture made some progress under the patronage of Ahom and Konch kings. The main architecture of Assam consists of Rong Ghar, Kareng Ghar, Talatal Ghar and number of temples constructed by Ahom rules. The most famous temples constructed during this time includes Kamakhya, Ugratara, Umananda Siva Doul, Joy Doul. Devi Doul, Fakua Doul, Haygrib-Madhab Temple of Hajo, Sukreswar-Devalaya Temple, Siva Temple in Dergaon and Bishwanath Navagraha, etc. These architectures were made up of bricks and stones. Ahom rulers paid a

considerable amount of attention to construction. An officer named Changrung Phukon was appointed to supervise the construction and maintenance of roads, palaces, temples, etc.

Q6. Vaishnavite literature of Assam.

Ans : The Vaishnavite movement launched by Sankardeva and Madhabdeva in the 15th century in Assam affected every aspect of Assamese culture including literature. This religious movement had a profound impact on Assamese literature and a good number of poems, prose, songs, dramas, devotional songs, etc. were prepared during this time. The main subject matter of these works were Ramayana, Mahabharata, Puranas, etc. Sankardeva (1449-1569), the great Vaishnavite preacher and intellectual of medieval Assam seemed to have written about 30 devotional songs called Borgit, several narrative poems and dramas. His greatest work was 'Kirtan'. The first naat (drama) Chihnajatra of Sankardeva was written and played even before William Shakespeare wrote his works. Madhabdeva, one of the leading disciples of Sankardeva followed his master and enriched the language with his form of writing. He is remembered for his immortal work 'Namghosha'. The other leading neo-vaishnavite writers like Bhattadeva, Ananta Kandali, Ram Saraswati, etc. too greatly enriched the Assamese literature.

Q7. Folk songs of Assam.

Ans : Assam has a rich tradition of folk songs which are sung on different occasions in different environment. Folk songs of Assam are unique and special. These constitute an integral part of Assamese culture. These are sung during marriage occasions, festival season, harvesting, community gathering, etc. Kamrupi and Goalpara folk songs are famous all over Assam. Other popular folk songs includes Aainam, Dhainaam, Dotara (tokari), Chiyageet, Nangeli geet, Cherradhek, etc. A number of folk song artistes of Assam have been honoured both by the state as well as central government for their contribution in this filed. Khagen Mahanta, Rameswar Patak and Pratima Pande Baruah have been honoured by Sangeet Natak Academy while Pratima Pande Baruah, a prominent Goalparia folk song artiste, was awarded with Padmashree by the Central government.

Q8. Religious unity in Assam.

Ans : The state of Assam is blessed with numerous ethnic tribes, races, cultural groups and religious groups. The main religions of the state include Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, Animism, etc. One of the notable features of the state with regard to religion is the prevalence of religious harmony in the state. Majority of the people are Hindus, but they belong to different sects of Hinduism such as 'Sakta', 'Shaiva', 'Vaishnav' and 'Sourya' cults. A good percentage of people belong to Vaishnavite cult which was made popular by Sankardeva and his disciple, Madhabdeva. Despite all differences in religious practices and rituals, the basic

elements in these Hindu sects are the same. there is hardly any conflict between them. The Kamakhya temple, situated close to Guwahati, is the most famous holy site of Hindus in the state. The other religious groups like Muslims, Christians, Sikhs and Buddhists, live peacefully in the state. In other words, the state of Assam is noted for religious harmony and unity.

Q9. Historical literature of Assam.

Ans : The language used by the ancient dynasties of Assam from the 4th century was Sanskrit and later Sanskrit borne Assamese. Assamese Literature of 10th to 14th century consisted of songs called Charyapada. Many writers translated Puranas and other Indian epics to write poetic literature. Madhab Kandali's translation of Ramayana is famous. The 15th century saw the impact of the Vaishnavite movement started by Sankardev. A number of poems, songs, prose, charit puthi, drama, etc. were written with the epics and Puranas as the theme. Sankardev wrote many 'ankiya naats' which were performed in Namghars. Later Bhattadev is prominent in having enriched Assamese literature with works like Katha Geeta, Bhagawat Katha, Ratnawali Katha, etc. Story based lyrics were written by non Sankari writers like Pitambar Kavi, Mankar, etc. The Ahom kings also patronised the writing of history first in Thai language and from 16th century onwards in Assamese. Many of these writings were restored during the British rule. Modern Assamese language developed since the first Assamese Journal "Arunodoi" was published by the

American Baptist Missionaries in 1846. Gradually Assamese literature began to imbibe influences of other literatures of the world.

Q10. Bihu festival.

Ans : Bihu festival in Assam is celebrated across all religions and castes. There are three Bihu festivals in a year-Bohag or Rongali Bihu observed on the last day of Sot month and first six days of Bohag month; Kartik or Kongali Bihu observed on the first day of Kartik month; and Magh or Bhogali Bihu observed on the last night of Push month and the first morning of Magh month.

Rongali Bihu is marked with fun and gaiety. The first day is Garu Bihu when cows are given special treatment, and the second day Manuh Bihu, when everyone wears new clothes and youngsters seek the elders' blessings. Bihu dance, sports and cultural activities are performed. Instruments like dhol, pepa and siphong are widely played. Fasting is observed on Kongali Bihu, and lamps are lit under Tulsi plants and in the paddy fields. Bhogali Bihu is associated with feasting. Bhelaghars or mejis (conical huts of straw and bamboo) are made and lit in the morning after a night of dancing and feasting. People take blessings from the God of Fire.