

Buildings, Paintings and Books

CBSE Class 6 Chapter 11 of History talks about various buildings, paintings and books which were an important part of ancient India. Several pillars, stupas, and paintings, mostly from the period of Gupta dynasty, have been discovered. This period is called the Golden Age of India. Buildings of historical importance were also found in the period of Maurya dynasty. Paintings were mostly found on the cave-walls. Some paintings were drawn during king Kanishka's rule. Most of the rulers of ancient India were passionate about various cultural activities. Harshavradhana, another famous ruler, himself was a painter and writer.

The Famous Iron Pillar of India

- The unparalleled skills of Indian artisans and craftsmen are reflected in the building of the Iron Pillar at Mehrauli, Delhi.
- The pillar is entirely made of iron. The height and weight of the pillar is 7.2m and 3 tonnes respectively.
- It is inscribed on the pillar that it was built approximately 1500 years ago.
- A ruler named Chandragupta II of Gupta dynasty probably built the pillar.
- The most astonishing fact is that the pillar has not yet rusted till date in spite of being made of iron and being left in open where rain, humidity and sun fall upon it without any barrier.

Buildings in Brick and Stone

- Stupas of India are some of the greatest examples of the skillfulness of the craftsmen of ancient India.
- The meaning of the word “stupa” is - mound.
- Generally, stupas are of various shapes such as round and tall, big and small. Different stupas possess different characteristics.
- Most of the stupas contain a small box at the centre or heart of the stupas. The bodily remains such as teeth, bone or ashes of Buddha or his disciples or things used by them are contained in that box.
- The box is known as a relic casket.. A coating of mud brick or baked brick was added on top.
- The dome-like construction was sometimes enclosed with fixed slabs.
- Sometimes a path was laid around a stupa. The path was known as Pradakshina Patha.
- The whole stupa was bordered with railings. People could enter the path through the gateways.
- Devotees toddled around the stupa in a clockwise direction as a symbol of devotion.
- Sculptures were used to decorate the railings and gateways.
- Most of the stone carvings which were used to decorate the stupa were made around 2000 years ago.

- Artificial caves were built by hollowing out the rocks. Most of the caves were beautifully decorated with sculptures and painted walls.
- Few of the Hindu temples of the earliest period were established in this time period. The deities worshipped in this particular period were Vishnu, Shiva and Durga.
- The most significant portion of the temples was known as the “Garbhagriha”. The main deity was placed in that part of the temple.
- The religious rituals were performed by the priests in the Garbhagriha.
- To identify the Garbhagriha as a sacred place a tower, known as shikhara, was built on the top of Garbhagriha.
- Most of the temples also contained a “mandapa” where the people could gather for religious purposes.
- Few renowned stone temples were established in Mahabalipuram and Aihole.

The Procedure for Building Stupas and Temples

- Generally, the decisions for the establishment of stupas or temples were taken by the kings or queens.
- The building process of a stupa or a temple involved several stages. The first step was to find out the good quality of stones. After that, the stones had to be carried to the place where the stupa or temple was supposed to be built.

- The next step was to shape and carve the rough stones for the construction of pillars and panels for walls, floors and ceilings. After that, the built-up structures had to be placed in the perfect position.
- Craftsmen were paid by the kings and queens. The expenses were made from the treasury.
- The gifts brought by the devotees were used to decorate the buildings.
- People like merchants, farmers, garland makers, perfumers, smiths and thousands of men and women were paid for the decorations of the buildings.
- The names of all these people were inscribed on pillars, railings and walls.

Paintings

- Several caves were built in Ajanta, presently in Aurangabad, Maharashtra. Most of the caves were the monasteries of Buddhist monks. Few of the caves were tinted with several paintings. These paintings are something that India can be proud of.
- The paintings were drawn in torchlight only as most of the caves were beyond the reach of the sunlight.
- Generally, colours used for those paintings were made of plants and minerals. These colours are vibrant even after 1500 years.

- The names of the artists of those marvellous works still remain unknown.

Books of Ancient India

- Epics are compositions that are grand and large. Those compositions generally described the stories about heroic men and women.
- Approximately 1800 years ago a renowned Tamil epic namely the Silappadikaram was composed by a poet named Ilango Adigal (a Jain monk). The epic described the story of a merchant named Kovalan.
- Poet Sithalai Sattanar had composed another famous Tamil epic named Manimekalai around 1400 years ago. This was a continuation of the epic Silappadikaram.
- Kalidasa was a famous writer of Sanskrit. He was famous for his poem Meghadutam. In addition, he wrote Abhigyan Shakuntalam, which was yet another jewel of the Indian literature.

Preservation of Old Stories

- Many religious stories of the Hindu religion were written in the contemporary period.
- The most significant religious stories were the Puranas. The meaning of the word Purana is old.
- The stories about various gods and goddesses such as Vishnu, Shiva, Durga or Parvati were depicted in the Puranas in plain Sanskrit verse.

- The main purpose of composing the Puranas was to spread them among everybody including the women and Shudras. These two categories of people were not permitted to study Vedas.
- Most probably priests used to recite the Puranas in the temples.
- Two most famous epics were written in this period named the Ramayana and Mahabharata. These two epics are popular among the people even today.
- The war between Kauravas and Pandavas was described in the Mahabharata. The story of Mahabharata is completely relevant even in the present day.
- The Mahabharata was composed about 1500 years ago and probably, Vyasa had compiled both the Puranas and Mahabharata.
- The Ramayana, which was composed by Valmiki, was the story of Rama, the ruler. It also described the war between Rama and Ravana, the evil ruler of Lanka.
- Different versions of Ramayana and Mahabharata were found in several languages across different parts of India.

Books on Science

- Aryabhatiyam, a book in Sanskrit was composed by Aryabhata, a renowned mathematician and astronomer.

- It was Aryabhatta who first coined the fact that the rotation of the earth on its axis is the reason behind the occurrence of day and night.
- The scientific justification of eclipses was also given by Aryabhatta.
- The method of calculating the circumference of a circle was also developed by Aryabhatta. The similar procedure is followed even in today's times.
- Other renowned mathematicians and astronomers of that period were Varahamihira, Brahmagupta and Bhaskaracharya.
- Famous practitioners of Ayurveda of that period were Charaka and Sushruta.

Important Questions and Answers

Q1. Write a short note on the invention of zero

Ans. Mathematicians in India had developed a special symbol for zero. The invention of zero was entirely the credit of the mathematicians of India. The numerals other than zero were already being used by the mathematicians of India. The Arabs followed the system of counting invented by the Indian mathematicians. After that, the system got popular in Europe too. In this way, the system got very popular across the entire world. The system of counting followed by the Romans was without zero. The mathematics of today is nothing without zero. Each and every counting involves zero as a base

parameter. It was one of the most famous inventions in the history of Mathematics.

Q2. Write a short note on Ayurveda

Ans. One of the most significant sectors of health science is considered to be the Ayurvedic system. It was first developed in ancient India. In the present times, many of the developing countries are inclined towards the Ayurvedic health system. Two major practitioners of Ayurveda in ancient India were Charaka and Sushruta. Charaka had composed a renowned book in medicine namely Charak-Samhita. The details about surgical procedures are given in Sushruta Samhita which was composed by Sushruta. Charak Samhita and Sushruta Samhita are considered to be the assets of the medical science of ancient India. Another famous personality in the domain of medical science of ancient India was Dhanwantari.

Q3. What was the significance of the stories told by ordinary people?

Ans. There was an abundance of stories composed by the common people. They also composed songs, and sang them, danced to the music and performed plays. Few of these stories are conserved in compilations of stories such as Jatakas and Panchatantra. The craftsmen sometimes portrayed the stories from Jatakas on the railings of stupas and in paintings on cave walls like that of Ajanta. Panchatantra was also a famous compilation of stories. The creator of those stories is unknown. Some opine that Vishnu Sharma had written the

Panchatantra. However, the stories are used as lessons or several other purposes even today. One of the famous stories from Jatakas was the story of the monkey king. The children, both of the early times and present times were very much fond of these stories.

Q4. Write a short note on the metallurgy of ancient India:

Ans. The metallurgical history of the world got rich by the huge contributions of ancient Indian metallurgy. According to the archaeologists, the people of Indus Valley Civilization were master craftsmen. They also possessed intense knowledge in copper metallurgy. Bronze was manufactured by them by blending copper and tin. The people of Harappa belonged to the Bronze Age. The immediate successors of Harappan people belonged to the Iron Age. Highly advanced forms of iron-forged iron, wrought iron and cast iron were produced in India. There was also abundant production of copper in ancient India. There was a copper mine located in Khetri in Rajasthan.

Q5. What was the origin of paper?

Ans. Paper is an integral part of our daily lives. A man named Cai Lun had invented paper around 1900 years ago in China. The plant fibres, cloth, rope and the bark of trees were beaten by him and all of these were soaked in water. The paper was created by pressing, draining and drying the pulp. The handmade paper that we use today is prepared by this method. For some unknown reason, the procedure of making paper

remained a secret for several years. Approximately, 1400 years ago, it had reached Korea and then Japan. The manuscripts of ancient India were found to be written on papers.