

## 4. Thinkers, Beliefs and Buildings: Cultural Developments

### 1. Were the ideas of the Upanishadic thinkers different from those of the fatalists and materialists? Give reasons for your answers.

**Ans:** The ideas of the Upanishadic thinkers is not much different from those of the fatalists and materialists. This is brought out by the following arguments.

(i) The essence of the philosophy of Jainism was already in existence in India, even before the birth of Lord Mahavir and Vardhaman.

(ii) Ahimsa or non-violence is the most important principle of Jainism. But this also form the basic thought of Hindu religion. Thus, there is a lot of similarity between the both the streams of the religion.

(iii) Upanishada believes and teaches Karma Theory. It means men and women should act and not worry about getting rewards. Fatalists also believed in the idea of work without thinking of the consequences. Thus there is a lot of similarity between the two.

(iv) Both fatalists and materialists believe that human beings are made of four elements, earth, water, sky, air and fire.

Thus, we are inclined to agree that the idea of the Upanishad thinkers are not much different from that of the fatalists and materialists.

### 3. Summarise the central teachings of Jainism.

**Ans:** The central teachings of Jainism are as follows:

- The entire world is animated – even stones, rocks and water have life.
- They believe in non-injury to living beings, especially to humans, animals, plants and insects.
- The cycle of birth and rebirth is shaped through karma.
- Asceticism and penance are required to free oneself from the cycle of karma.
- For Jainism monastic existence is a necessary condition of salvation.
- Jaina monks and nuns take five vows: to abstain from killing, stealing and lying; to observe celibacy, and to abstain from possessing property.

### 3. Discuss the role of the begums of Bhopal in preserving the stupa at Sanchi.

**Ans:** Begums of Bhopal made a great contribution to the preservation of the Stupa of Sanchi. Following are the major contribution made by them.

- (a) Shahjahan Begum and her successor Sultan Jahan Begum of Bhopal were the rulers of Bhopal, who made generous grants to the preservation of the Stupa of Sanchi.
- (b) A museum was built near the stupa and it was built mainly on the financial support of Begum Sultan Jahan Begum.
- (c) The support to preserve the stupa came from the Europeans also.
- (d) French and British both took the plaster cast copies of the pillars of the stupas to be displayed in the museums at France and Britain. They also contributed financially to preserve the stupa.

### 4. Read this short inscription and answer:

**In the year 33 of the maharaja Huvishka, (a Kushana ruler), in the first month of the hot season on the eighth day, a Bodhisatta was set up at Madhuvanaka by the bhikkhuni Dhanavati, the sister's daughter of the bhikkhuni Buddhamita, who knows the Tipitaka, the female pupil of the bhikkhu Bala, who knows the Tipitaka, together with her father and mother.**

- (a) How did Dhanavati date her inscription?
- (b) Why do you think she installed an image of the Bodhisatta?
- (c) Who were the relatives she mentioned?
- (d) What Buddhist text did she know?
- (e) From whom did she learn this text?

**Ans:** (a) Dhanavati dated her inscription that she placed the inscription at Madhuvanaka in the first month of the hot season on the eighth day in the year 33 of the Maharaja named Havishka.

(b) I think that she (the Bhikkhuni Dhanavati installed an image of the Bodhisatta to show that Mahayana sect of Buddhism was becoming popular day by day and Bodhisattas were considered great personalities in Buddhism during the reign of the Kushana rulers.

(c) She has mentioned her own mother's sister's name Buddhamita. The lady was a Bhikkuni. She had also mentioned Bhikkuni Bala and her parents.

(d) She knew the Tipitaka.

(e) She learnt the text from the Bhikkhuni Buddhamita who was the female pupil of the Bala.

### **5. Why do you think women and men joined the sangha?**

**Ans:** The important reasons why men and women joined sanghas could be as follows:

- (a) Many of them wanted to renounce the worldly pleasures.
- (b) They could study the Buddhist literature and philosophy by staying in the company of other monks.
- (c) Many people entered sanghas to become priests and teachers of Buddhism.
- (d) All were considered equal and the previous social identity was to be renounced.
- (e) The environment of sanghas was democratic. The decision making within sanghas was based on voting. This attracted many and they took to the life of sanghas

### **6. To what extent does knowledge of Buddhist literature help in understanding the sculpture at Sanchi?**

**Ans:** Buddhist literature helps understanding the sculpture at Sanchi in the following ways:

1. A scene at the northern gateway at its first sight seems to depict a rural scene, with thatched huts and trees. However, the historians after studying the sculpture carefully, identify it as a scene from the Vessantara Jataka. It 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.
2. The art historians acquire familiarity with biographies of the Buddha in order to understand Buddhist sculpture. According to Buddha's biographies, Buddha attained enlightenment while meditating under a tree. Many early sculptures showed Buddha's presence through symbols such as empty seat, stupa and the wheel. Such symbols can be understood only with the traditions of those who produced these works of art.
3. It may be mentioned that one of the earliest modern art historians, James Ferguson, considered Sanchi to be a centre of tree and serpent worship because he was not familiar with Buddhist literature – most of which had not yet been translated. He, therefore, arrived at his conclusion by studying only the images on their own.

## **7. Discuss the development in sculpture and architecture associated with the rise of Vaishnavism and Shaivism.**

**Ans:** Vaishnavism and Shaivism are the two branches of Hinduism. In case of Vaishnavism, Lord Vishnu was regarded as the chief deity. In case of Shaivism Lord Shiva was regarded as the chief deity. Both traditions were part of the Bhakti movement. Bhakti movement emphasized on the love and devotion of the devotee to: the God.

This tradition of Vaishnavism and Shaivism also impacted the tradition of architecture and sculpture. The temples developed the house deities. The initial temples were small and simple. It was a small room called Garbhagriha. Later it expanded, a tall structure was built on the garbhagriha. It was called Shikhara. The walls of the temple were decorated with suitors. Soon temples were built that had huge entrance and big halls for the comfort of visitors.

Many of these temples were carved out of rocks. These artificial caves were turned into temples. The tradition of article caves is old who had renounced the world. The most important were the Ajivikas, that developed as a sect during the reign of Asoka. Later a good example of the rock-cut temple is the Kailash Nath temple of the 8th Century. It was carved out of a single piece rock. There is a copper plate inscription at the temple of Ellora wherein the sculptor exclaims, “How did I make it!” Sculpture was yet another way of expression. Deities were given many shapes and forms in the sculpture. Shiva has been shown in the form of Linga. Many deities have shown in different forms, sometimes grotesque. There were also combination of man and animal forms.

## **8. Discuss the development in sculpture and architecture associated with the rise of Vaishnavism and Shaivism.**

**Ans:** The rise of Vaishnavism and Shaivism led to worship of a chosen deity. This helped in the development of sculpture and architecture. For example, in the case of Vaishnavism, cults developed around the various avatars or incarnations of the deity. Ten avatars were recognised within the tradition. It is possible that different avatars were popular in different parts of the country. Each of these local deities was recognised as a form of Vishnu. It, therefore, created a more unified religious tradition.

1. Some of these forms were represented in sculptures as in one figure the Varaha or boar avatar of Vishnu has been shown as rescuing the earth goddess. Under Shaivism, Shiva was symbolised by the linga. He was represented in the human form too. The deities and their attributes were depicted through symbols such as head-dresses, ornaments and ayudhas – weapons or auspicious objects the deities hold in their hands etc.
2. At the same time, the rise of Vaishnavism and Shaivism, temples were made to house images of gods and goddesses. The early temple was a small square room, called the garbhagriha, with a single doorway for the worshipper to enter and offer worship to the image. Later on, shikhara was built over the central shrine. Temple walls were decorated with sculpture.
3. Artificial caves were built and ultimately it led to the carving out of an entire temple, that of Kailashnath.

**9. Of the religious traditions discussed in this chapter, is there any that is practised in your neighbourhood? What are the religious texts used today, and how are they preserved and transmitted? Are images used in worship? If so, are these similar to or different from those described in this chapter? Describe the buildings used for religious : activities today, comparing them with early stupas and temples.**

**Ans:** The chapter discuss the religious traditions of ancient India which included, Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism, so on. As I live in the walled city of Delhi have seen people practising all these traditions.

The religious textbooks of all religions are preserved and kept with great respect. They have been translated in many languages including many regional languages of the country. Now they are also preserved in the form of CD and other modern devices. Images are also used by worshippers of these religions. The Hindus deities have almost same images as they had in the past. Jains and Buddhists also use images. Temples are used by hindus, buddhists and jams. Mosques are made by muslims and churches by the Christians. The structure of all these are different but with some similarities too.