

CBSE Notes Class 6 History Chapter 11 - Building, Paintings and Books

Writing and Painting saw a significant development in India around 1500 years ago. In India, construction of temples was an expensive activity. In these temples, deities such as Vishnu, Siva and Durga were worshipped in these shrines. Ajanta is a place where several caves were hollowed out of the hills over centuries. During this period, some of the best epics were written. Puranas were written during this time, and Aryabhata wrote a book based on Science concepts. In Chapter 11 of Class 6 History students will learn the details mentioned above in-depth and these CBSE notes of Class 6 History, Chapter 11 are also based on these concepts.

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The iron pillar on pillar

The iron pillar at Mehrauli, Delhi, shows the outstanding skill of Indian craftspersons. It is made of iron, 7.2. m high, and weighs over 3 tonnes. It was made about 1500 years ago. The date has been inscribed on the pillar mentioning a ruler named Chandra, who probably belonged to the Gupta dynasty. One interesting fact of the pillar is that it has not rusted in all these years.

Buildings in brick and stone

Stupas also reflect the skills of craftspersons that have survived. The word stupa means a mound. Stupas can be of different kinds round and tall, big and small, which will have certain common features. At the centre of the stupa, a small box will be placed which contained bodily remains (such as teeth, bone or ashes) of the Buddha or his followers, or things they used, as well as precious stones, and coins.

This box, known as a relic casket, was covered with earth. Later, a layer of mud brick or baked brick was added on top. And then, the dome-like structure was sometimes covered with carved stone slabs.

A path, known as the pradakshina patha, was laid around the stupa surrounded with railings. The entrance of the path was through gateways. Devotees walked around the stupa, in a clockwise direction, as a mark of devotion. Both railings and gateways were often decorated with sculpture.

During this period, some of the earliest Hindu temples were also built. Deities such as Vishnu, Shiva, and Durga were worshipped in these shrines. The most important part of the temple was the room

known as the garbhagriha, where the image of the chief deity was placed. It was here that priests performed religious rituals, and devotees offered worship to the deity.

Bhitargaon, a tower, known as the shikhara, was built on top of the garbhagriha, to mark this out as a sacred place. Most temples also had a space known as the mandapa a hall where people could assemble.

How were stupas and temples built?

Building stupa and temple went through several stages. Kings or queens wanted to build these stupas or temples, which was an expensive affair. To start building these sculptures, good quality stone had to be found quarried, and transported to the place chosen for the new building. Here, these rough blocks of stone had to be shaped and carved into pillars, and panels for walls, floors and ceilings. After these, it had to be placed in precisely the right position.

To build these splendid structures, kings and queens spent money from their treasury to pay the craftsmen. Besides, when devotees came to visit the temple or the stupa, they often brought gifts, which were used to decorate the buildings.

Others who paid for these decorations were merchants, farmers, garland makers, perfumers, smiths, and hundreds of men and women who are known only by their names which were inscribed on pillars, railings and walls.

Painting

Ajanta is a place where several caves were hollowed out of the hills over centuries. Most of these were monasteries for Buddhist monks, and some of them were decorated with paintings.

The world of books

During this period, some of the best-known epics were written. Epics are grand, long compositions, about heroic men and women, and include stories about gods.

A famous Tamil epic, the Silappadikaram, was composed by a poet named Ilango, around 1800 years ago. It is the story of a merchant named Kovalan, who lived in Puhar and fell in love with a courtesan named Madhavi, neglecting his wife Kannagi. Later, he and Kannagi left Puhar and went to Madurai, where he was wrongly accused of theft by the court jeweller of the Pandya king. The king sentenced Kovalan to death. Kannagi, who still loved him, was full of grief and anger at this injustice and destroyed the entire city of Madurai.

Another Tamil epic, the Manimekalai was composed by Sattanar around 1400 years ago. This describes the story of the daughter of Kovalan and Madhavi.

Recording and preserving old stories

A number of Hindu religious stories were written down around the same time. These include the Puranas, meaning old. The Puranas contain stories about gods and goddesses, such as Vishnu, Shiva, Durga or Parvati. They also contain details on how they were to be worshipped.

The Puranas were written in simple Sanskrit verse and were meant to be heard by everybody, including women and Shudras, who were not allowed to study the Vedas. They were probably recited in temples by priests, and people came to listen to them.

Two Sanskrit epics, the Mahabharata and Ramayana had been popular for a very long time. The Mahabharata is about a war fought between the Kauravas and Pandavas, who were cousins. The Ramayana is about Rama, a prince of Kosala, who was sent into exile. His wife Sita was abducted by the king of Lanka, named Ravana, and Rama had to fight a battle to get her back. Valmiki is the author of the Sanskrit Ramayana.

Stories told by ordinary people

Ordinary people also told stories, composed poems and songs, sang, danced, and performed plays. Some of these are preserved in collections of stories such as the Jatakas and the Panchatantra, which were written down around this time. Stories from the Jatakas were often shown on the railings of stupas and in paintings in places such as Ajanta.

Writing books on science

Aryabhata, a mathematician and astronomer, wrote a book in Sanskrit known as the Aryabhatiyam. He stated that day and night were caused by the rotation of the earth on its axis, even though it seems as if the sun is rising and setting everyday. He developed a scientific explanation for eclipses as well. He also found a way of calculating the circumference of a circle.