

CBSE Notes Class 7 Social Science History Chapter 9

The Making of Regional Cultures

The Cheras and the Development of Malayalam

One example of the connection between language and the region-Chera kingdom of Mahodayapuram established in the 9th century-south-western part of the peninsula, part of present-day Kerala- likely Malayalam was spoken-rulers introduced the Malayalam language and script in their inscriptions- one of the earliest examples of the use of a regional language in official records in the subcontinent-Cheras also drew upon Sanskritic traditions-temple theatre of Kerala, traced to this period-borrowed stories from the Sanskrit epics-first literary works in Malayalam, dated to about the 12th century directly indebted to Sanskrit- a 14th-century text, the Lilatilakam, dealing with grammar and poetics-composed in Manipravalam –literally, “diamonds and corals” referring to the two languages, Sanskrit and the regional language.

Rulers and Religious Traditions: The Jagannatha Cult

In other regions, regional cultures grew around the religious traditions-best example is the cult of Jagannatha (literally, lord of the world, a name for Vishnu) at Puri, Orissa-To date, the local tribal people make the wooden image of the deity-suggests that the deity was originally a local god- later identified with Vishnu- In the 12th century, an important ruler of the Ganga dynasty, Anantavarman, decided to erect a temple for Purushottama Jagannatha at Puri. Subsequently, in 1230, king Anangabhimha III dedicated his kingdom to the deity and proclaimed himself as the “deputy” of the god-temple gained in importance as a centre of pilgrimage-its authority in social and political matters also increased-Those who conquered Orissa (the Mughals, the Marathas and the English East India Company) attempted to gain control over the temple in an attempt to make their rule acceptable to the local people.

The Rajputs and Traditions of Heroism

In the 19th century- a region (constituting most of present-day Rajasthan)-called Rajputana by the British-area inhabited only or mainly by Rajputs (partially true)-were (and are) several groups who identify themselves as Rajputs in areas of northern and central India-several people other than Rajputs live in Rajasthan-Rajputs contribute to the distinctive culture of Rajasthan-cultural traditions were closely linked with the ideals and aspirations of rulers. From the 8th century, most of the present-day state of Rajasthan was ruled by various Rajput families-Prithviraj was one such ruler-they cherished the ideal of the hero who fought valiantly, often choosing death on the battlefield rather than face defeat. Stories about Rajput heroes recorded in poems and songs- recited by specially trained minstrels- preserved the memories of heroes - inspire others to follow their example. Ordinary people were attracted by these stories – which often depicted dramatic situations, and a range of strong emotions – loyalty, friendship, love, valour, anger, etc. - Sometimes, women figure as the “cause” for conflicts-as men fought with one another to either “win” or “protect” women- they are also depicted as following

their heroic husbands in both life and death – there are stories about the practice of Sati or the immolation of widows on the funeral pyre of their husbands.

Beyond Regional Frontiers: The Story of Kathak

Dance can also be found in different regions in different forms- take the history Kathak-associated with several parts of north India- term kathak is derived from katha-word used in Sanskrit and other languages for the story-kathaks were originally a caste of storytellers in temples of north India, who embellished their performances with gestures and songs-Kathak evolved into a distinct mode of dance in the 15th and 16th century with the spread of the bhakti movement-legends of Radha-Krishna enacted in folk plays called rasa lila-combined folk dance with the basic gestures of the kathak story-tellers- under the Mughal emperors and their nobles, Kathak was performed in the court-it acquired its present features and developed into a form of dance with a distinctive style-it developed in two traditions or gharanas- one in the courts of Rajasthan (Jaipur) and the other in Lucknow-Under the patronage of Wajid Ali Shah (last Nawab of Awadh) it grew into a major art form-By the third quarter of the 19th century, it was firmly entrenched as a dance form - in these two regions and in the adjoining areas of present-day Punjab, Haryana, Jammu and Kashmir, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh-Emphasis was laid on intricate and rapid footwork, elaborate costumes-on the enactment of stories. Kathak, like several other cultural practices, was viewed with disfavour by most British administrators in the 19th and 20th centuries- it survived and continued to be performed by courtesans-was recognised as one of six “classical” forms of dance in the country after independence.

Painting for Patrons: The Tradition of Miniatures

Another tradition developed- that of miniature painting. Miniatures are small-sized paintings-done in watercolour on cloth or paper-earliest miniatures were on palm leaves or wood-found in western India-used to illustrate Jaina texts-Mughal emperors Akbar, Jahangir and Shah Jahan patronised highly skilled painters who primarily illustrated manuscripts containing historical accounts and poetry-generally painted in brilliant colours -portrayed court scenes, scenes of battle or hunting, and other aspects of social life- were exchanged as gifts -viewed only by an exclusive few – the emperor and his close associates. With the decline of the Mughal Empire, many painters moved out to the courts of the emerging regional states-result, Mughal artistic tastes influenced the regional courts of the Deccan and the Rajput courts of Rajasthan-they retained and developed their distinctive characteristics-Portraits of rulers and court scenes came to be painted-Mughal example-themes from mythology and poetry-depicted at centres such as Mewar, Jodhpur, Bundi, Kota and Kishangarh-Another region that attracted miniature paintings- Himalayan foothills around the modern-day state of Himachal Pradesh. By the late 17th century- region developed a bold and intense style of miniature painting called Basohli-popular text to be painted was Bhanudatta’s Rasamanjari-Nadir Shah’s invasion and the conquest of Delhi in 1739 resulted in the migration of Mughal artists to the hills to escape the uncertainties of the plains-they found ready patrons-led to the founding of the Kangra school of painting. By the mid 18th century-Kangra artists developed a style that breathed a new spirit into miniature painting-source of inspiration the Vaishnavite traditions-Soft colours including cool blues and greens- a lyrical treatment of themes distinguished Kangra painting-ordinary women and men painted as well – on pots, walls, floors, cloth –

works of art- that occasionally survived, unlike the miniatures - carefully preserved in palaces for centuries.

A Closer Look: Bengal

The Growth of a Regional Language

Tend to identify regions in terms of the language spoken by the people- we assume people in Bengal always spoke Bengali-while Bengali is now recognised as a language derived from Sanskrit-early Sanskrit texts (mid-first millennium BCE) suggest that the people of Bengal did not speak Sanskritic languages. How, then, did the new language emerge? From the 4th-3rdcenturies BCE-commercial ties develop between Bengal and Magadha (South Bihar)- led to the growth. 4th century- Gupta rulers established political control over north Bengal- began to settle Brahmanas in this area-linguistic and cultural influence from the mid-Ganga valley became stronger. In the 7th century- Chinese traveller Xuan Zang observed that languages related to Sanskrit were in use all over Bengal. From the 8th century, Bengal became the centre of a regional kingdom under the Palas. Between the 14th and 16th centuries-Bengal ruled by Sultans independent of the rulers in Delhi. In 1586- Akbar conquered Bengal-formed the nucleus of the Bengal suba-Persian was the language of administration-Bengali developed as a regional language- By the 15th century, the Bengali group of dialects came to be united by a common literary language-based on the spoken language of the western part of the region known as West Bengal- Bengali is derived from Sanskrit-it passed through several stages of evolution-a wide range of non-Sanskrit words, derived from a variety of sources including tribal languages, Persian, and European languages-become part of modern Bengali. Early Bengali literature divided into two categories – one indebted to Sanskrit and the other independent of it. The first includes translations of the Sanskrit epics, the Mangalakavyas (literally auspicious poems, dealing with local deities) and bhakti literature such as the biographies of Chaitanyadeva, the leader of the Vaishnava bhakti movement. The second includes Nath literature such as the songs of Maynamati and Gopichandra, stories concerning the worship of Dharma Thakur, and fairy tales, folk tales and ballads-texts belonging to the first category are easier to date- several manuscripts have been found-they were composed between the late 15th and mid 18th centuries-belonging to the second category circulated orally -can not be precisely dated- were particularly popular in eastern Bengal, where the influence of Brahmanas was relatively weak.

Pirs and Temples

16th century-people migrated in large numbers-from the less fertile western Bengal to the forested and marshy areas of south-eastern Bengal- moved eastwards-cleared forests and brought the land under rice cultivation-local communities of fisherfolk and shifting cultivators, often tribals merged with the new communities of peasants-coincided with the establishment of Mughal control over Bengal - their capital in the heart of the eastern delta at Dhaka-Officials and functionaries received land-set up mosques that served as centres for religious transformation in these areas-early settlers sought some order and assurance in the unstable conditions of the new settlements-were provided by community leaders- functioned as teachers and adjudicators -were sometimes ascribed with supernatural powers-referred with affection and respect as pirs- term included saints or Sufis-other religious personalities-

daring colonisers and deified soldiers, various Hindu and Buddhist deities and even animistic spirits-cult of pirs became very popular- their shrines found everywhere in Bengal-also witnessed a temple-building spree from the late 15th century - culminated in the 19th century. Temples and other religious structures were often built by individuals or groups who were becoming powerful – to both demonstrate their power and proclaim their piety- several modest brick and terracotta temples in Bengal were built - with support of several “low” social groups- the Kolu (oil pressers) and the Kansari (bell metal workers)-European trading companies created new economic opportunities- families belonging to these social groups availed of these-social and economic position improved-proclaimed their status through the construction of temples-local deities, once worshipped in thatched huts in villages-gained the recognition of the Brahmanas- their images began to be housed in temples. The temples began to copy the double-roofed (dochala) or four-roofed (chauchala) structure of the thatched huts-led to the evolution of the typical Bengali style in temple architecture-four triangular roofs placed on the four walls move up to converge on a curved line or a point-Temples built on a square platform-interior was relatively plain- outer walls of many temples decorated with paintings, ornamental tiles or terracotta tablets- in Vishnupur in the Bankura district of West Bengal-decorations reached a high degree of excellence.

Fish as Food

Traditional food habits generally based on locally available items of food-Bengal is a riverine plain-produces plenty of rice and fish-these two items figure prominently in the menu of even poor Bengalis-Fishing has always been an important occupation-Bengali literature contains several references to fish-terracotta plaques on the walls of temples and viharas (Buddhist monasteries) depict scenes of fish being dressed and taken to the market in baskets-Brahmanas not allowed to eat nonvegetarian food-popularity of fish in the local diet made the Brahmanical authorities relax this prohibition for the Bengal Brahmanas-Brihaddharma Purana, a 13th century Sanskrit text from Bengal-permitted the local Brahmanas to eat certain varieties of fish.