

The Big Questions (Page 167).

1. What is 'sacredness'?

Ans. Sacredness refers to the quality of being holy, divine, or spiritually significant. It means something that is deeply respected and held in reverence because of its connection with religion or spirituality.

In the context of this chapter:

- Sacredness can be linked to places, objects, journeys, or natural elements like rivers, mountains, and forests.
- A place is considered sacred when it evokes feelings of devotion, awe, or respect.
- Sacredness is not limited to religion—it also connects to geography, traditions, and culture.

Example: The Ganga River is considered sacred by many people in India and is worshipped as a goddess. Similarly, places like Bodh Gaya, Vaishno Devi, and Rameswaram are considered sacred due to their spiritual and historical significance.

2. How does the land become sacred?

Ans.

- Land becomes sacred due to religious beliefs and myths connected to it.
- Pilgrimage routes and holy places make certain regions spiritually important.
- Rivers, mountains, forests, and trees are seen as manifestations of the divine.
- Stories like the 51 Shakti Peethas symbolically spread sacredness across the land.
- Tribal and folk communities associate nature with deities, further sacralizing the land.

3. How do sacred sites and pilgrimage networks connect with the life and culture of the people?

Ans.

- Sacred sites are places of worship and spiritual experience for people of all faiths.
- Pilgrimage journeys (Tirthayatra) are part of people's religious and social lives.
- They bring people from different regions together, encouraging interaction and exchange.
- Cultural traditions like food, dress, and languages are shared during pilgrimages.
- Sacred journeys reinforce community bonds and preserve religious and cultural practices.

4. What role did sacred geography play in the cultural integration of the Indian Subcontinent?

Ans.

- Sacred geography encouraged people to travel across regions, promoting unity.
- Pilgrims and traders shared ideas, stories, and beliefs along their routes.
- Major pilgrimage sites are spread across India, covering all directions.
- The common reverence for rivers, mountains, and forests fostered a shared world-view.
- It connected diverse communities into a single cultural and spiritual network.

LET'S EXPLORE (Page 168)

Q. Do any of the pictures look familiar to you? Can you name similar places found in your neighbourhood?

Ans. Yes, some of the pictures look familiar as they show famous religious and sacred sites like temples, mosques, churches, and gurdwara.

In my neighbourhood, I can find similar places such as:

- A Hanuman temple that many people visit every Tuesday and Saturday.
- A mosque where people gather for Friday prayers.
- A gurdwara where free langar is served to all visitors.
- A church that holds prayer meetings on Sundays.

These places are respected and visited by people from different communities, just like the sacred sites shown in the textbook.

LET'S EXPLORE (Page 171)

Read the excerpt.

Q 1. What are your observations after reading the excerpt about the group traveling from Rameswaram to Haridwar?

Ans. The group was deeply committed to completing their pilgrimage, even though it took them several months. They were self-reliant, carrying their own food like atta, ghee, and sugar. They did not waste time in sightseeing or resting in Delhi—they were focused on reaching Haridwar. This shows the devotion and discipline that pilgrims followed during such long journeys.

Q 2. Locate the route the group must have taken from Rameswaram to Haridwar.

Ans. The group likely started from Rameswaram in Tamil Nadu, passing through:

- Madurai, Trichy, and Chennai in Tamil Nadu,
- Then through Andhra Pradesh (like Vijayawada),
- Telangana (Hyderabad),
- Madhya Pradesh (Bhopal),
- Uttar Pradesh (Lucknow),
- Finally reaching Haridwar in Uttarakhand.

Q 3. Why do you think the group was going straight to Haridwar instead of stopping at Delhi?

Ans. The group may have believed that stopping elsewhere could delay or disturb the spiritual journey. They had a clear purpose and limited time; Haridwar was their next sacred destination. It shows how pilgrims prioritize devotion and religious duty over tourism or rest.

Q 4. In ancient times, when people were travelling from Madurai in Tamil Nadu to Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh, what languages would they come across?

Ans. They would encounter several languages such as:

- | | |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------|
| • Tamil in Tamil Nadu, | • Marathi in Maharashtra, |
| • Telugu in Andhra Pradesh, | • Hindi in Uttar Pradesh. |
| • Kannada in parts of Karnataka, | |

Q 5. How would they communicate with people in those places?

Ans. Through gestures, simple words, and sometimes with the help of local guides. Many used a few common trade or religious terms understood across regions. Sanskrit may have also served as a linking language among educated or religious people.

Q 6. Where would they stay?

Ans. Pilgrims stayed in dharamshalas, temple inns, ashrams, or sometimes in villagers' homes. Some might camp in open areas or rest under trees. Communities along the route often provided free shelter to pilgrims.

Q 7. What food would they eat?

Ans. They usually carried dry food items like atta (flour), ghee, and sugar. In villages and towns, they may receive simple vegetarian meals from charitable groups or temples. Food was often cooked by themselves in small stoves or earthen pots.

LET'S EXPLORE (Page 173)

Q. Note the locations of the Char Dham. What do you think it implied for the people when they travelled north-south and east-west?

Ans. Locations of the Char Dham:

- Badrinath – North (Uttarakhand)
- Rameswaram – South (Tamil Nadu)
- Dwarka – West (Gujarat)
- Puri – East (Odisha)

What it implied for the people:

- **Unity in Diversity:** People from different regions, languages, and cultures travelled across the country, fostering a sense of national and spiritual unity.
- **Cultural Exchange:** As pilgrims moved from north to south and east to west, they exchanged traditions, customs, and knowledge with other communities.
- **Awareness of Geography:** These pilgrimages helped people become familiar with the landscape, rivers, mountains, and towns across India.
- **Trade and Travel Routes:** Pilgrimage paths often became trade routes, promoting economic activity and regional connectivity.
- **Spiritual Discipline:** The long journey was seen as a way to strengthen devotion, patience, and mental discipline.

Thus, the Char Dham Yatra connected the people of India both spiritually and culturally, contributing to the idea of "One Bharat".

LET'S EXPLORE (Page 174)

Q. Can you identify the names of a few traditional tirthas given in the map above? You can refer to the political map at the end of the book for help.

Ans. Yes, a few traditional tirthas (sacred pilgrimage sites) shown in the map include:

- Badrinath – Uttarakhand (North India)
- Rameswaram – Tamil Nadu (South India)
- Dwarka – Gujarat (West India)
- Puri (Jagannath Temple) – Odisha (East India)
- Kedarnath – Uttarakhand
- Amarnath – Jammu & Kashmir
- Haridwar – Uttarakhand
- Varanasi (Kashi) – Uttar Pradesh
- Tirupati (Balaji Temple) – Andhra Pradesh
- Sabarimala – Kerala

These sacred places are located across different parts of India, representing the country's diverse religious geography.

THINK ABOUT IT (Page 177)

Q. How do you think these sacred places are connected with the people's economic lives and activities? Draw a mind map to trace these connections.

Ans. Sacred places like the one shown in the image (e.g., Varanasi ghats) are deeply connected with the economic lives and activities of local people. Here's how:

**Explanation:**

- **Religious Services:** Temples and ghats employ priests, helpers, and cleaners. Daily rituals and ceremonies involve multiple service providers.
- **Tourism:** Pilgrims and tourists visit these places, creating demand for hotels, guides, and transport.
- **Trade and Markets:** Shops sell religious items, offerings (Prasad), flowers, clothes, and souvenirs.
- **Transport Services:** Boats on rivers, taxis, autos, and buses support both local transport and long-distance travel.
- **Local Art and Handicrafts:** Sacred places support the sale of traditional crafts, paintings, sculptures, and textiles.

Sacred places not only have spiritual importance but also support a vibrant economy that benefits a wide range of people.

THINK ABOUT IT (Page 179)

Q. Many parts of the peepul tree have medical uses: the leaves are used to treat some skin ailments while the bark is useful for stomach ailments. Since it stays green almost through the year, it provides food and shelter to many types of birds and other animals.

Ans.

- The peepul tree is considered sacred because it is beneficial to both humans and nature.
- Its leaves and bark have medicinal properties, helping in the treatment of skin and stomach ailments.
- Being evergreen, it provides shade, food, and shelter to many birds and animals throughout the year.
- In religious traditions, its usefulness and life-sustaining nature are seen as a symbol of divinity and protection.
- It is also associated with important events in Buddhism and Hinduism, such as the Buddha's enlightenment under the Bodhi tree.
- Therefore, the peepul tree is worshipped and protected as a sacred tree in many communities.

LET'S EXPLORE (Page 181)

Q. Take a sheet of transparent paper that can be used for tracing. Trace a map of the trade routes from the chapter 'The Rise of Empires'. Place it on top of the map of the important tirthas. What do you observe?

Ans. When we overlay the map of ancient trade routes on top of the map of important tirthas (pilgrimage sites), we observe the following:

- Many pilgrimage sites are located along or near major trade routes such as the Uttarapatha (northern trade route) and the Dakshinapatha (southern trade route).
- Important tirthas like Varanasi, Prayagraj, Ujjain, Bodh Gaya, and Rameswaram lie close to or directly on these ancient trade paths.
- This overlap suggests that pilgrimage routes and trade routes often followed the same paths.
- Traders and pilgrims interacted regularly, leading to exchange of goods, cultures, ideas, and languages.
- Towns along these routes prospered, becoming both religious centres and commercial hubs.

Conclusion: The overlap between trade routes and pilgrimage networks shows how religion and economy were closely connected in ancient India. Sacred geography not only united people spiritually but also boosted trade, travel, and cultural integration.

THINK ABOUT IT (Page 182)

Look carefully at these pictures of places and animals that are considered sacred. The Yamuna in the north, the Mahanadi in the east or the Kaveri in the south are all sacred rivers. How come they have become so polluted? Are there sacred places in your locality or region that have been similarly polluted or degraded by human activity? Whose responsibility is it to preserve the sanctity of our sacred places? Discuss in class.



Ans. Reasons for Pollution:

Sacred rivers like Yamuna, Mahanadi, and Kaveri are polluted due to:

- Industrial waste being dumped into rivers.
- Untreated sewage flowing directly into water bodies.
- Plastic and religious waste, such as flowers and idols, being immersed in rivers.
- Lack of proper waste disposal systems and public awareness.

Local Observation:

- Yes, in my locality, the nearby lake/temple pond/riverbank is often dirty.
- People throw plastic bags, food waste, and religious offerings without proper care.
- Sometimes, even animals are affected, as shown in the picture.

Responsibility to Preserve Sacred Places:

- **Government:** Should enforce strict laws and install proper waste treatment systems.
- **Local Authorities:** Must manage cleanliness and monitor pollution sources.
- **Citizens and Pilgrims:** Must avoid polluting, use eco-friendly materials, and respect sacredness.
- **Schools and Communities:** Should raise awareness through campaigns, posters, and clean-up drives.

Conclusion: Sacred places reflect our culture and values. It is the shared responsibility of all – government, communities, and individuals – to protect and preserve them for future generations.

Questions and activities (183-184)

1. What do you think David Suzuki's statement means? What implication does it have for our actions with respect to nature?

Ans.

- David Suzuki's statement means that our attitude toward nature affects how we treat it.
- If we see mountains, rivers, forests, and animals as sacred, we will protect and respect them.
- If we see them only as resources for profit, we will exploit and damage them.
- This perspective encourages us to treat nature as a living entity, not just a commodity.
- It implies that we must take responsibility for conserving air, water, forests, land, and animals for a sustainable future.

2. List the sacred sites in your region. Why are they considered sacred? Are there stories connected to them? (Short Essay – 150 words)

Ans.

In my region, there are several sacred sites. One of the most famous is the Mahakaleshwar Temple in Ujjain. It is one of the 12 Jyotirlingas and is considered highly sacred by Hindus. Another is the Kshipra River, which flows through Ujjain and is believed to have spiritual cleansing powers. People from all over India come here to take a holy dip during the Simhastha Kumbh Mela.

There are many stories about these places. It is said that Lord Shiva himself appeared here in the form of a flame (Jyoti). The temple is also associated with ancient sages and rituals. Local elders tell tales of miracles and the power of prayer in this temple. These sacred places bring people together for festivals and rituals, helping preserve our cultural identity.

3. Why do you think natural elements like rivers, mountains and forests are considered sacred for the people? How do they contribute to our lives?

Ans.

- Natural elements are considered sacred because they sustain life—providing water, air, food, and shelter.
- Rivers like Ganga and Yamuna are worshipped for their life-giving properties.
- Mountains are seen as abodes of gods (e.g., Mount Kailash).
- Forests and trees provide medicine, oxygen, fruits, and wood.
- These natural elements are closely linked to religious beliefs and rituals.
- By treating them as sacred, people also protect and conserve them.

4. Why do people visit a tirtha or other sacred sites?

Ans.

- People visit tirthas to seek blessings, perform religious rituals, and purify their souls.
- These visits provide spiritual peace and help fulfill vows or wishes.
- Pilgrimages also serve as a way to connect with cultural roots and traditions.
- Many believe that visiting sacred places brings good fortune and inner growth.

5. How did the ancient pilgrimage routes help in fostering trade during those times? Do sacred sites help in developing the economy of the region today?

Ans.

- Ancient pilgrimage routes often became trade routes as traders and pilgrims travelled together.
- Pilgrims needed food, clothes, and religious items, which supported local markets.
- Traders carried goods like spices, cloth, and ornaments to sacred towns.
- Even today, sacred sites boost the local economy by promoting tourism, lodging, handicrafts, transport, and small businesses.
- Festivals and pilgrimages attract millions, creating job opportunities for local people.

6. How do sacred places influence the culture and traditions of the people living near them?

Ans.

- Sacred places influence festivals, rituals, songs, dances, and daily practices of nearby communities.
- Local legends and myths are built around these sites, passed down through generations.
- Traditional art and crafts often depict themes from sacred sites.
- They promote a sense of identity, community pride, and cultural unity.
- People living near sacred places often feel a sense of responsibility toward maintaining them.

7. From the various sacred sites of India, select two and explain their significance.

Ans.

a. Bodh Gaya (Bihar):

- It is the place where Siddhartha Gautama attained enlightenment and became the Buddha.
- The Mahabodhi Temple and the Bodhi Tree are major pilgrimage sites for Buddhists.
- It is visited by people from around the world for peace and meditation.

b. Rameswaram (Tamil Nadu):

- It is one of the Char Dham pilgrimage sites and holds importance in Hindu mythology.
- Associated with Lord Rama's journey to Lanka, the Ramanathaswamy Temple is a sacred site.
- Pilgrims take a dip in the holy wells and perform rituals for their ancestors.

8. What is the two-fold significance of a Tirthayatra or a pilgrimage?

Ans.

a. Spiritual Significance:

- It helps people connect with their faith, seek blessings, and attain inner peace and purity.
- Pilgrims practice discipline, humility, and devotion during the journey.

b. Cultural and Social Significance:

- It brings together people from different regions, promoting unity and cultural exchange.
- It supports local economies, strengthens traditions, and fosters social harmony.