

**1. The Vedic literature is an epitome of lyrical excellence and intellectual depth. Elucidate.****Approach**

The candidate needs to first mention what is meant by Vedic literature in brief. In next part address both the demands of question on how Vedic literature is epitome of lyrical excellence and how it has intellectual depth. Try to make use of examples to elucidate your points.

**Introduction**

The word 'Veda' is derived from the root 'vid', which means 'to know'. In other words, the term 'Veda' signifies wisdom, knowledge or vision. There are four Vedas and Rig Veda was composed in the early Vedic period while the other three Vedas were written in the later Vedic period. Besides the Vedas, there are other sacred works like the Brahmanas, the Upanishads, the Aranyakas and the epics Ramayana and Mahabharata.

**Body**

Vedic literature as epitome of lyrical excellence:

- Vedic literature was written in Sanskrit language. It was followed and regulated by the strict rules of grammar and used in refined manner by the learned scholars from the very early period.
- Lyric poetry attained a high stage of development even in very early period of the Vedic literature. The whole of Rig-Veda is an example of excellent lyric poetry. It has used effective imagery and proper meter without violating sanctity of texts.
- Vedas were transferred from one generation to other through oral traditions. It was formed in way to help everyone to remember hymns after recitations. Hymns of Vedas were formed in way to serve specific purpose. The Sama Veda was dedicated to method in which it should be sung.
- In the later period, It was represented by remaining Vedas like Yajur Veda, Atharva Veda some advance was made towards the formation of a literary prose style which was revered for uniqueness and effective themes.
- Epics like Mahabharata and Ramayana are example of lyrical excellence achieved by Vedic literature.
- This lyrical excellence and heritage is recognised by UNESCO intangible heritage.

Intellectual depth of Vedic Literature:

- Vedas are mostly focused on issues of materialistic nature and Upanishads explains philosophical message deducted from Vedas which are written in question answer format.

- Intellectual depth of Vedic literature can be witnessed in various philosophies originate through Vedas such as 'Samkhya', 'Vaisheshika', 'Mimansa', 'Nyaya', 'Yoga' and 'Vedanta'.
- Upanishads discuss fundamental questions of human existence and its purpose, creator of universe.
- Brihadarnyaka Upanishad was first to mention 'Doctrine of Transmigration' i.e. cycle of birth and death in which soul changing different bodies and elaborations on afterlife. 'Karma theory' closely associated with the idea of rebirth . Human birth is culmination of good deeds of last life and bad deeds will be repaid in this life or in coming lives.
- Various upvedas associated with main Vedas also talks about specific subjects. E.g. Ayurveda associated with Rig-Veda is dealt in medicine. Dhanurveda in archery.

### **Conclusion**

Philosophies of Vedic times still reverberate into the various ideologies of different sects. Pool of knowledge in Vedic literature is so vast that every Indian religion has its roots in debates of Upanishads. Intellectual depth of such texts became torchbearer of social reform in modern times.

**2. What are the essential teachings of Buddhism & Jainism ? How did Buddhism spread in different parts of the world? Examine.****Approach**

The candidate needs to have basic knowledge on Jainism and Buddhism to answer this question. In introduction one needs to write in which period and what conditions these two religions emerged. In body part focus on three specific directions of writing essential teachings of Jainism, Buddhism and how did Buddhism spread. In conclusion write what was their overall contribution and current relevance.

**Introduction**

Buddhism and Jainism are ancient religions that developed during the days of Ancient India. Buddhism is based on the teachings of Gautama Buddha, while Jainism is based on the teachings of Mahavira. These two Indian religions that developed in Magadha (Bihar) and continue to thrive in the modern age. They emerged as the most potent religious reform movements in the 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C against the extreme rituals and sacrifices recommended by the Brahmanism.

**Body****Essential teachings of Jainism**

- Mahavira rejected Vedic principles which included rejection concept of God and rituals which are mentioned in the four vedas.
- It did not believe in God's existence. According to him, the universe is a product of the natural phenomenon of cause and effect.
- It believed in Karma and transmigration of the soul. The body dies but the soul does not.
- One will be punished or rewarded as per one's karma. Therefore there should be constant pursuit to decrease the accumulated bad Karma and get liberation.
- Advocated a life of austerity and non-violence. The clothing was not seen as essential for one's living and non violence is most essential tenet of Jainism where even stones are said to be classified with jivas.
- Stressed on equality but did not reject the caste system, unlike Buddhism. But he also said that man may be 'good' or 'bad' as per his actions and not birth.
- Asceticism was taken to a great length. Starvation, nudity, and self-mortification were expounded.
- The triratna of Jainism includes Right faith, Right knowledge, Right conduct. The five vows of Jainism include Ahimsa (non-violence), Satya (truth), Asteya (no stealing), Parigraha (no acquiring property), Brahmacharya (abstinence).

**Essential teachings of Buddhism**

- Buddhism believed in path of moderation. Buddha asked his followers to avoid extremes and choose between severe penance and self-indulgence. It believed sorrow is intrinsic to human existence.
- According to Buddhist philosophy world is 'anicca' i.e. transient and nothing is eternal and it is also 'anatta' i.e. soulless.
- Buddha emphasized individual agency and righteous action to attain self-realization and 'nibbana'. Buddhism propounded 'eightfold path' which is right view, right resolve, right speech, right conduct, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right meditation to achieve 'nibbana' i.e. end of desires and end of sorrow too.
- Buddhism consider social world as creation of humans and advised to be humane and ethical.
- It avoided fruitless controversies of 'atman', 'brahman' and focused to address worldly problems.

#### Spread of Buddhism:

- Buddha had two kinds of disciples – monks (bhikshus) and lay worshippers (upasikas).
- The monks were organized into the Sangha for the purpose of spreading his teachings.
- The Sangha was governed on democratic lines and was empowered to enforce discipline among its members.
- Owing to the organised efforts made by the Sangha, Buddhism made rapid progress in North India even during Buddha's life time.
- After the death of Buddha, his followers traversed on his path of meditation and roamed throughout the countryside.
- For 200 years Buddhism remained overshadowed by their Hindu counterparts until the advent of Great Mauryan King – Ashoka.
- After the bloodbath in his Kalinga conquest, emperor Ashoka decided to give up the policy of worldly conquest and adopted Dhamma conquest.
- Ashoka during the third Buddhist council dispatched various Buddhist missions to different areas such as Gandhara, Kashmir, Greece, Sri Lanka, Burma (Myanmar), Egypt, and Thailand.
- Through his missionary effort Ashoka spread Buddhism into West Asia and Ceylon. Thus a local religious sect was transformed into a world religion.

#### **Conclusion**

The rise of both Buddhism and Jainism started as reform movement against the contemporary ritualistic and sacrificial nature of Brahmanism. Further it went to have great influence on the architecture, paintings, culture and social life of India. Even the freedom movement which was spearheaded by Gandhi was based on the tenets of these two religions. Therefore there is a need to preserve the teachings of these religions and include these in family and schools curriculum for a more reason based and harmonious society

**3. What are some of the most recurring themes of cave paintings in India? What are the most characteristic features of these paintings? Discuss.****Approach**

The question is straightforward on the cave paintings. Therefore first define what are cave paintings and attach an example. In next part mention different themes of Indian paintings in different eras. In the last part write what were the features of these paintings with help of examples

**Introduction**

Painting and drawing were the oldest art forms practiced by human beings to express themselves, using the cave walls as their canvas. Cave paintings of India date back to the prehistoric times like Bhimbetka. The finest examples of these paintings comprise of the murals of Ajanta, Ellora, Bagh, Sittanavasal etc. which reflect an emphasis on naturalism.

**Body**

Themes of Cave paintings in India :

**1) Mesolithic period**

- People hunting in groups
- Hunting armed with barbed spears, pointed sticks, arrows and bows.
- Primitive men with traps and snares probably to catch animals.
- Depiction of animals: The Mesolithic artists loved to paint animals.
- Depicted animals include elephants, bison, tiger, boar, deer, antelope, leopard, panther, rhinoceros, fish, frog, lizard, squirrel and at times birds.
- Social life: The young, old, children and women equally find place in these paintings. In many of the rock-shelters we find hand prints, fist prints, and dots made by the fingertips.

**2) Chalcolithic period**

- Battle scenes : There are many paintings of men riding horses and elephants with men carrying bow and arrow, indicating preparedness for skirmishes.
- Other paintings from this period also have depictions of musical instruments like the harp.
- Some of the paintings have complex geometrical shapes like the spiral, rhomboid and circle.

**3) Age of civilisation**

- In first and second century paintings in caves of Ajanta and Ellora had themes of religion and urbanisation.
- It had scenes from court life and monarchy.
- The art life of music instruments and dance forms were depicted very vividly in this period across the caves of India.



Some of the characteristic features of the early cave paintings are:

- A long-snouted animal, a fox, a multi-legged lizard are main animal motifs in the early paintings.
- Wavy lines, rectangular filled geometric designs and a group of dots also can be seen.
- Superimposition of paintings – earliest is Black, then red and later White.
- Human beings are represented in a stick-like form. In the late historic and Neolithic period the subjects of paintings developed and figures like bulls, elephants, sambars, gazelles, sheep, horses, styled human beings, tridents and rarely vegetal motifs began to be seen.
- The features of cave paintings can be classified into three different phases:
- Paintings are linear representations, in green and dark red, of huge animal figures, such as Bisons, Tigers, Elephants, Rhinos and Boars beside stick-like human figures.

Examples of cave paintings

1. Ajanta Paintings

- Ajanta caves are located at a distance of approximately 100 km from the city of Aurangabad. Most of the paintings seen in the Ajanta Caves, date back to the period of the Mahayana sect of Buddhism. The themes of most of these paintings revolve around the life and teachings of Lord Buddha. This includes the Jataka stories related to the various lives and incarnations of Buddha. Calligraphic lines characterize these paintings, which can be classified into portraits, narrative illustrations and ornamental decoration.

2. Ellora Paintings

- Ellora caves are nestled amidst the Chamadari Hills, lying approximately 18 miles to the northeast of Aurangabad city. Paintings can be found in five caves. However, all of them are today preserved only in the Kailasa temple. The rock paintings of Ellora were painted in two different series. The first series, which were done when the caves were carved, revolve around Lord Vishnu and Goddess Lakshmi. The second series, painted centuries later, illustrate the procession of Shaiva holy men, Apsaras, etc.

3. Bagh Paintings

- Bagh caves, situated on the banks of the Bagh River, have been excavated on the rock face of a lofty hill. The wall paintings of these caves date back to the period between 5th and 7th century. These paintings represent the most exquisite traditions of Indian art form.

4. Sittanavasal Paintings

- Sittanavasal is the site of an ancient Jain Monastery, located at a distance of around 58 km from Trichy. The monastery is known for housing some of the most exquisite frescoes in a rock cave. Most of these cave paintings are based on the Pandyan period of the 9th century. The themes of these paintings include animals, fish, ducks, people collecting lotuses from a pond, two dancing figures, etc. Apart from that, one can also find inscriptions dating back to the 9th and 10th century. The ceiling of the Ardhamandapam is adorned with murals from the 7th century.

### **Conclusion**

The rich cultural heritage spanning thousands of years, Indian art's origins can be traced back to Indian cave paintings and rock-cut structures that reflect the ingenuity and skill of their masters. They act as windows to the minds of our ancestors. Therefore it's necessary to preserve them and also make them more widely accessible to the modern generation to provide them a sense of history and evoke awe for ancient culture of India.

