

HISTORY

Chapter 9: The Making of Regional Culture



The Making of Regional Culture

The Growth of Regional Culture

India has been a land of diversity since ancient times. Each region in the country has its own distinct language, culture, tradition, food, dressing style and dance form. We find that regional diversities which exist today are a result of the intermingling or fusion of various local traditions which existed in the past.

The Cheras and the Growth of Malayalam

In the state of Kerala, we find a deep relation between the language and the kingdom.

- The Chera kingdom of Mahodayapuram was established in the ninth century in the present day state of Kerala.
- The rulers introduced the Malayalam language and script during this period. This is one of the earliest examples of the use of a regional language in official records in the Indian subcontinent.
- While Malayalam was used to maintain official records, Sanskrit was also used by the Chera rulers. The first literary works in Malayalam were based on Sanskrit.
- A text belonging to the fourteenth century, the *Lilatilakam*, dealt with the grammar and poetics in Sanskrit and Malayalam.

The Jagannath Cult

In some states such as Orissa, the regional culture grew around religious traditions. The cult of Jagannatha (a form of Lord Vishnu) at Puri in Orissa is one such example. In the twelfth century, a ruler of the Ganga dynasty, Anantavarman erected a temple for Purushottama Jagannatha at Puri. Later in 1230, King Anangabhimha III dedicated his kingdom to the deity of Jagannatha and declared himself as the 'deputy' of the god.



The temple of Jagannath at Puri, Orissa

As the temple received patronage from kings, it became a great pilgrimage centre and began to influence the social and political matters of the state. Many political powers who conquered Orissa

such as the Mughals, the Marathas, and the English East India Company attempted to control the temple as they thought that this would make their rule acceptable to the people.

The Rajputs

- The state of Rajasthan was ruled by the Rajputs in medieval India. Apart from the Rajputs, many people lived in Rajasthan but the Rajputs left a distinct impression on the culture of Rajasthan.
- From the eighth century onwards, Rajasthan was ruled by various Rajput families which were known for their bravery and honour.



A painting showing a Rajput fighting bravely with a tiger

- Prithviraj Chauhan was a famous ruler who is remembered for his bravery and who chose to die on the battlefield rather than face defeat.

- We have also come to know about the Rajputs from the poems and songs which have been passed down from generation to generation.
- These songs and poems demonstrate the various qualities of the Rajputs such as valour, friendship, loyalty, anger etc.
- Women have also found a place in these songs and stories. Sometimes they appear as a cause of conflicts between the rulers. Women have mostly appeared as brave wives who either followed their husbands into the battlefields or performed sati and jauhar.



Rajput women committing jauhar

The Story of Kathak

- While one region in India is known for the valour of its people, the other region in the country is known for one of its dance forms. Kathak is one such dance form which is associated with many parts of North India.
- Originally, kathaks were a caste of story tellers in the temples of North India who narrated their stories with various gestures and songs.
- With the spread of the Bhakti movement in the fifteenth and the sixteenth centuries, Kathak began to evolve into a dance form. The ras lilas of Radha and Krishna came to be enacted in folk dances which also included the gestures of the Kathak story tellers.
- It was under the Mughals that Kathak developed into a distinct dance form as it was performed in the court or many rulers.

- Later this dance developed into two traditions or gharanas: one developed in the courts of the kings of Rajasthan and the other developed in Lucknow. In Lucknow, it grew into a major art form under the patronage provided by Nawab Wajid Ali Shah, the Nawab of Awadh.
- Gradually Kathak spread as a dance form to various regions like the present Punjab, Jammu and Kashmir, Madhya Pradesh and Bihar.
- Kathak came to be recognised as a dance form which requires rapid foot work, costumes and is an enactment of stories.
- Though Kathak was not favoured by the British, it continued to be performed by the courtesans. After independence, it was recognised as one of the six 'classical' forms of dance in India.



Kathak is one of the six classical dance forms in India

The Miniature Painting

- Miniature painting has been one of the most famous forms of painting which developed in the early medieval period.
- Miniatures are small sized paintings which are generally drawn on a piece of cloth or paper with the help of water colours. The earliest miniature paintings were drawn on palm leaves or wood.
- Mughal emperors such as Akbar, Jahangir and Shah Jahan patronised highly skilled painters who portrayed battle scenes, court scenes, hunting scenes of the kings etc.



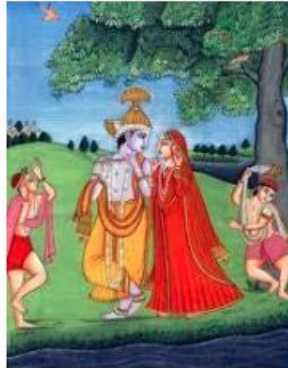
A Mughal miniature painting depicting the court scene of Babur

- These paintings were viewed by only the kings, nobles and aristocratic families.
- As the Mughal Empire began to decline, many painters migrated to various other regions of India. This influenced paintings in other regions also such as Deccan and Rajasthan.
- The portraits of kings and court scenes in these courts were subsequently painted. Many paintings were also painted on themes based on religion and mythology especially at centres such as Bundi, Kota Mewar, Jodhpur and Kishangarh.
- Miniature paintings further developed in the foothills of the Himalayan Mountains in

the present state of Himachal Pradesh. By the late seventeenth century, a bold and an intense style of miniature painting called Basohli developed in this region.

- Bhanudatta's 'Rasamanjari' was a popular text which was painted at this time.
- In 1739, when Nadir Shah invaded Delhi, many Mughal artists fled to the hilly regions.

The kings in these regions provided patronage to them and hence the Kangra School of Painting was evolved.



A painting belonging to
Kangra School of Painting

- The Vaishnavite traditions inspired the Kangra School of Painting. The use of soft colours such as soothing blues and greens and a lyrical treatment of themes were some important features of this school of painting.

A Close Look at Bengal

Development of the Bengali Language

The state of Bengal is located in the eastern part of the country. Since many centuries, Bengali has been the regional language of Bengal. Early Sanskritic texts suggest that people of Bengal did not speak the Sanskritic language but Bengali, which is a language derived from Sanskrit. Thus the question arises as to when did Bengali emerge in the region?

The following points give us the answer to the above question:

- Since the fourth and the third century B.C., we find the emergence of commercial ties between Bengal and Magadh which might have led to the growing influence of Sanskrit in Bengal.
- Further, the Gupta rulers established their control over North Bengal and many

Brahmin communities began to settle in the region. Therefore, the culture and languages spoken in Bengal began to be influenced by Sankritic languages and traditions.

- In 1586, Akbar conquered Bengal. While Persian became the language of administration, Bengali developed as a regional language and came to be influenced by Sanskrit.
- Though the Bengali language has been derived from Sanskrit, it has also been influenced by many languages as many non-Sanskritic words have been derived from other languages such as Persian, European languages and tribal dialects.

Division of Early Bengali Literature

Early Bengali literature can be divided into two categories- **influenced by Sanskrit** and the other is **independent of Sanskrit**. The former category includes the translations from the Sanskrit epics such as the Mangalakavyas (religious poems dealing with local deities) and the Bhakti literature. These texts are easier to date as several manuscripts indicate that these were composed between the fifteenth and the eighteenth centuries.

The second category of literature which has been independent of the Sanskrit language includes literature such as songs of Maynamati and Gopichandra, stories of Dharma Thakur, fairy tales, folk tales and ballads. These literatures were passed through the generations orally and hence cannot be dated precisely. They were more popular in eastern Bengal where Brahmins did not exercise great influence over the people and culture.

Pirs and Temples

- From the sixteenth century onwards, many people began to migrate to east Bengal which was a marshy land and a heavily forested region.
- As they moved into East Bengal, they cleared forests for cultivating rice crops. The already existing communities of fishermen and tribals peacefully intermingled with the new peasant communities.
- As Dhaka became the capital of Bengal, many officials and functionaries received grants of land and set up mosques, which religiously transformed the area.
- There arose a community of leaders who functioned as teachers and adjudicators.

These leaders came to be known as pirs. Pirs were deeply respected by the people and some were even regarded to wield magical powers.

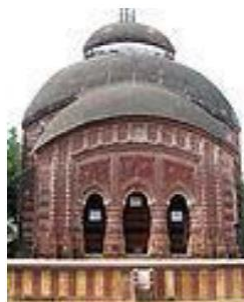
- The pirs included saints, sufis and even animistic (worship of forces of nature, plants, animals etc.) spirits. The shrines of the pirs were built by the people and can be found almost everywhere in Bengal.



A shrine of a pir in Bangladesh

Temple Building

- Temples began to be built in large numbers from the late fifteenth century onwards. In Bengal, several brick and terracotta temples were built with the support of low caste communities such as the Kolu (oil pressers) and the Kansari (bell metal workers).
- This was because as European companies traded in the markets of Bengal, their economic condition improved. They in order to show their strength and economic power built the temples.
- When local deities, who were worshiped in thatched huts, gained the recognition of the Brahmins, their images began to be placed in temples.
- Temples were built in the structure of the thatched huts. This led to the evolution of the Bengla style of architecture known as 'Bengla dome'.



A temple in Bengal built in the Bengla style of architecture

- Temples were built on a square platform with plain interiors. However, the outer walls of the temples were decorated with paintings.
- The most notable temple in Vishnupura in the Bankura district of West Bengal is an important example of a temple with a high degree of decoration.

Fish Eating

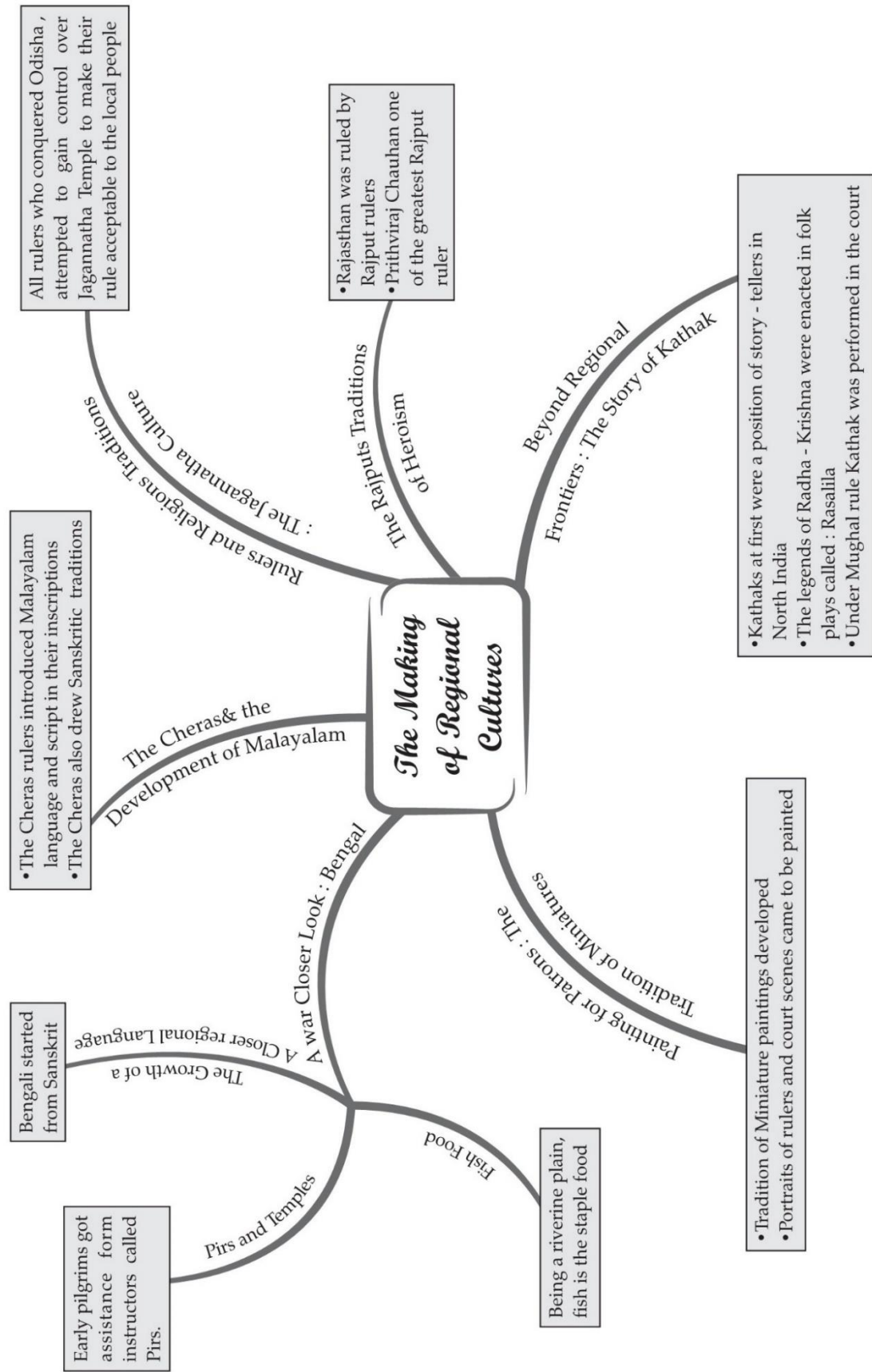
- One of the most common food items in Bengal is fish as Bengal is a riverine plain which produces fish and rice in large quantities.
- Rice and fish figure in the diet of even the poorest Bengali family.
- Fishing has always been an important occupation of the Bengalis and Bengali literature contains many references to fishing and fish eating. The walls of many temples show fishes being dressed and taken to markets in baskets.
- Interestingly, Brahmins were not allowed to eat non-vegetarian food. But the brahmanical authorities and texts allowed the Brahmin communities in Bengal to eat certain varieties of fish.



Fishing has been the one of the prime occupations of the Bengalis since ancient time

MIND MAP : LEARNING MADE SIMPLE

CHAPTER-19



Important Questions

➤ Multiple Choice Questions :

Question 1. The word Katha is a word of:

- (a) Sanskrit
- (b) Malayalam
- (c) Tamil

Question 2. Kathakali is the traditional dance of:

- (a) Andhra Pradesh
- (b) Karnataka
- (c) Kerala

Question 3. Kannada is the language of:

- (a) Tamil Nadu
- (b) Kerala
- (c) Karnataka

Question 4. Which Purana permitted Brahmanas to eat certain varieties of fish in Bengal?

- (a) Vishnu Purana
- (b) Brihaddharma Purana
- (c) VarahaPurana

Question 5. Bengali as a language originated from:

- (a) Sanskrit language
- (b) Malayalam language
- (c) Tamil language

Question 6. Malayalam language was introduced by:

- (a) Chola Empire
- (b) Mughal Empire
- (c) Chera Empire.

Question 7. Radha-Krishan is famous for:

- (a) Katha
- (b) Rasalila
- (c) Kathak

Question 8. Bengali is the language of:

- (a) Bengal
- (b) Assam
- (c) Bihar

Question 9. Jagannatha temple is related to:

- (a) Shankar Bhagwan
- (b) Ma Durga
- (c) Vishnu

Question 10. Ganga dynasty was situated in:

- (a) Bengal
- (b) Kerala
- (c) Rajasthan

Question 11. What was Basohli?

- (a) Small sized painting
- (b) Bold and intense style of miniature painting
- (c) Old and very distinctive
- (d) Traditions

Question 12. Kuchipudi is a classical dance of which state?

- (a) Kerala
- (b) Orissa
- (c) Andhra Pradesh
- (d) West Bengal

Question 13. Name a book written in Manipravalam language?

- (a) Ramayan
- (b) Gita
- (c) Lilatikalam
- (d) None of these

Question 14. What was Manipravalam?

- (a) Statue
- (b) Language
- (c) King

(d) Saint

Question 15. Where is the famous temple of Jagannatha?

(a) Karnataka

(b) Orissa

(c) Kerala

(d) Tamil Nadu

➤ **Fill in the blanks :**

1. Bengal is a riverine plain which produces plenty of _____ and _____.
2. The Lilatilakam, dealing with grammar and poetics, was composed in _____.
3. _____ established the kingdom at Mahodayapuram.
4. _____ is a Persian word meaning a spiritual guide.
5. Mangalakavyas literally means _____ poems.

➤ **Write true (T) or false (F) :**

1. The region that constitutes most of present-day Rajasthan was called Rajputana by the British.
2. The Brahmins of Bengal were not allowed to eat fish.
3. Jagannatha temple is located in Punjab.
4. Chaitanyadeva was the leader of the Vaishnava bhakti movement.

➤ **Very Short Questions :**

1. Who was Anantavarman?
2. Whom did King Anangabhim III dedicate his kingdom to? What did he proclaim himself?
3. What was called Rajputana by the British?
4. How were the Rajput rulers most distinctive?
5. Define the term Kathak.
6. Who were the Kathaks?
7. Where did Kathak develop?
8. Under whose patronage did kathak grow into a major art form?
9. What are miniatures?
10. What distinguished Kangra painting from the paintings?

➤ **Short Questions :**

1. Where was the Lilatilakam composed?
2. Which region was called the Rajputana?
3. Who were Kathaks?
4. Define classical dances? Name some of the classical dances and their states?
5. What was the style of miniature that developed in Himachal Pradesh?

➤ Long Questions :

1. Bengali literature can be divided into how many categories?
2. Explain in brief the gharanas of Kathak dance form.
3. Give a short note on temple construction activity in Bengal?
4. How did miniature painting develop under the Mughal patronage?
5. Write a brief note on early Bengali literature.

ANSWER KEY –

➤ Multiple Choice Answer :

1. (a) Sanskrit
2. (c) Kerala
3. (c) Karnataka
4. (b) Brihaddharma Purana
5. (a) Sanskrit language
6. (c) Chera Empire.
7. (c) Kathak
8. (a) Bengal
9. (c) Vishnu
10. (b) Kerala
11. (b) Bold and intense style of miniature painting
12. (c) Andhra Pradesh
13. (c) Lilatikalam
14. (b) Language
15. (b) Orissa

➤ Fill in the blanks :

1. Rice, fish

2. Manipravalam
3. Cheras
4. Pir
5. auspicious

➤ **Write true (T) or false (F) :**

1. True
2. False
3. False
4. True

➤ **Very Short Answer :**

1. Anantavarman was one of the most important rulers of the Ganga dynasty in the 12th century.
2. King Anangabhimha III dedicated his kingdom to Purushottama Jagannath and proclaimed himself as the deputy of the god.
3. In the 19th century, the region that constitutes most of the present-day Rajasthan was called Rajputana by the British.
4. The Rajput rulers were the apostles of bravery. They fought valiantly and often chose death on the battlefield rather than face defeat.
5. The term Kathaks is derived from katha, a word used in Sanskrit and other languages for the story.
6. The kathaks were originally a caste of story-tellers in temples of north India who beautified their performances with gestures and songs.
7. Kathak developed in the courts of Rajasthan (Jaipur) and Lucknow.
8. Kathak grew into a major art form under the patronage of Wajid Ali Shah, the last Nawab of Awadh.
9. Miniatures are small-sized paintings, generally done in water colour on cloth or paper.
10. Soft colours including cool blues and greens, and a lyrical treatment of themes distinguished Kangra painting from other paintings.

➤ **Short Answer :**

1. Lilatilakam is a 14th century treatise on grammar and poetics. It was composed in Manipravalam, referring to the two languages, Sanskrit and the regional language.
2. In the nineteenth century, the region that constituted most of the present-day Rajasthan was called Rajputana by the British. This was the area mainly inhabited by

Rajputs.

3. Kathaks were originally a caste of story tellers in the temples of north India. They performed in village squares and temple courtyards. They were mostly specialized in recounting mythological and moral tales from the scriptures, and embellished their recitals with hand gestures and facial expressions.
4. Animism refers to the belief that all natural things, such as plants, animals, rocks, thunder and earthquakes have spirits (beings that cannot be seen) and can influence human events.
5. In the region of Himachal Pradesh by the late seventeenth century, a bold and intense style of miniature painting called Basohli developed. This style of painting is characterized by vigorous use of primary colours and a peculiar facial formula prevalent in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries in the foothills of the Western Himalayas in the Jammu and Punjab States.

➤ Long Answer :

1. Bengali literature can be divided into two categories:

- One category of literature is indebted to Sanskrit. Under this category come the translated Sanskrit epics, the Mangalakavyas (auspicious poems) and bhakti literature such as the biographies of Chaitanya, the leader of the Vaishnavite movement.
 - The second category includes Nath literature such as the songs of Maynamati and Gopichandra stories concerning the worship of Dharma Thakur and tales, folk tales and ballads.
2. After Mughals, several schools or styles known as gharnas like Lucknow gharna, Jaipur gharana, Banaras gharana which helped the artists to take new challenges and obtain their individual mastery. Jaipur gharana include a command of complicated pure dance patterns. Lucknow style is famous for graceful expression of romantic feelings. It is characterized by precise, fine detailed movements and an emphasis on the exposition of thumri, a semi classical style of love song. Pandit Birju Maharaj also belong to Lucknow gharana.
 3. Temple building started in the 19th century with the influence of Bhakti saints led by Chaitanya. Temples were constructed by individuals or groups to represent their might of power. Through proclaiming deity they gained wide acceptance of people. Brick and terra cotta temples were built in Bengal during this period. Some of the important temples built during this period are Vishupur(17th century) and Kantaji's temple of Dinajpur(18th century) now in Bangladesh built by low social groups like bell metal workers(kansari) and oil pressers(kolu). Some of these temples are double or four roofed.

4. Miniatures are small-sized paintings, generally done in water colour on cloth or paper. The earliest miniatures were on palm leaves or wood. The Mughal emperors especially Akbar, Jahangir and Shah Jahan patronised highly skilled painters. These painters primarily illustrated manuscripts containing historical accounts and poetry. These were generally painted in brilliant colours and portrayed court scenes, scenes of battle or hunting and other aspects of social life. They were often exchanged as gifts and were viewed only by the emperor and his close associates.
5. **There are two categories of early Bengali literature:**
 - The first includes translations of the Sanskrit epics, the Mangalakavyas, 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. The texts belonging to the first category are written while those belonging to the second category circulated orally.