

NCERT Solutions Class 7 Social Science

(Exploring Society India and Beyond)

Chapter 8 How to Land Becomes Sacred

The Big Questions? (Page 167)

Question 1. What is sacredness?

Answer: Sacredness refers to the quality of being holy, divine, or spiritually significant. It is the feeling or belief that certain places, objects, people, or events are connected with the divine or have special religious importance. Sacredness often inspires reverence, respect, and devotion.

Question 2. How does the land become sacred?

Answer: Land becomes sacred through its association with divine events, religious stories, saints, deities, or rituals. It may be linked to mythology, history, or spiritual experiences. For example, a place where a deity is believed to have appeared, where a saint meditated, or where a holy river flows can be considered sacred. Over time, collective belief and rituals performed there enhance its sacred character.

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

Answer: Sacred sites and pilgrimages become part of people's spiritual routines and cultural identity:

1. They influence art, music, festivals, food, and even local economies.
2. Pilgrimages promote community bonding and cross- regional interaction.
3. People learn values like faith, discipline, and humility during these journeys.
4. These networks connect people from diverse regions and backgrounds through shared beliefs and practices.

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

Answer: The sacred geography played vital role in the cultural integration of the Indian Subcontinent in the following ways:

1. Sacred geography helped unify different regions of India by creating common religious and cultural landmarks.
2. Pilgrimages to places like Varanasi, Rameswaram, Amritsar, Bodh Gaya, and others fostered connections among people across linguistic and ethnic boundaries.
3. Shared worship of rivers (like the Ganga), mountains (like Kailash), and forests built a sense of spiritual unity.



4. It supported the idea of India as a sacred land (punya bhpmi), encouraging national and cultural cohesion.
5. This spiritual map helped integrate diverse traditions into a larger Indian cultural identity.

Let's Explore

Question 1. Do any of the below pictures look familiar to you? Can you name similar places found in your neighbourhood? (Page 168)



Answer: Yes, the pictures of temples, mosques, churches, and gurdwaras look familiar to me. In my neighbourhood, we have a Shiv temple, a Jama Masjid, and a small church. These places are visited regularly by people for prayers and festivals. They are important to the local community and are also used as centers for social gatherings and celebrations. Just like the sacred sites shown in the pictures, these places in my area are respected by everyone and add to the cultural richness of our society.

Question 2. Read the below excerpt and answer the questions that follow. (Page 170-171)
 “I was travelling from Gwalior to Delhi ... when I met a group of people ... about twelve of them, some three or four women and seven or eight men ... They said that they had been on a pilgrimage, three months long, up to Rameswaram, among other places. They came from two different villages north of Lucknow. They had various bundles of things and some earthen pots with them ... They had taken all the necessities for their food-atta, ghee, sugar with them ... I asked them, “You are going to Delhi now?” “Yes!”, they replied. “You will stop in Delhi?” “No, we only have to change trains there. We’re going to Haridwar!.., We don’t have time ... We have to go to Haridwar. And then we have to get back home.”

(a) What are your observations? Locate the route the group must have taken from Rameswaram to Haridwar. Why do you think the group was going straight to Haridwar instead of stopping at Delhi?

Answer: Observations from the excerpt:

1. **Pilgrimage as a unifying practice:** The group travelled from north of Lucknow to Rameswaram in Tamil Nadu, and then on to Haridwar in Uttarakhand. This shows how

people from diverse parts of India felt spiritually connected through sacred places located thousands of kilometres apart.

2. **Self reliance and planning:** They carried their own food atta (flour), ghee, and sugar showing how travellers prepared for long journeys in earlier times.
3. **Simplicity and determination:** Despite being tired and far from home, they weren't stopping to rest in Delhi. Their commitment to the pilgrimage route was strong, showing deep devotion and purpose.

Route from Rameswaram to Haridwar (via Delhi):

1. **Starting Point:** Rameswaram, Tamil Nadu (southern tip of India)
2. **Likely route by train or traditional transport:**
 - Rameswaram → Madurai → Chennai (or Tiruchirapalli)
 - From Chennai, heading north via Vijayawada → Nagpur → Bhopal → Jhansi → Gwalior → Agra → Delhi
3. **Delhi is a major railway hub:** from there, they'd change trains.
4. **Final destination:** Haridwar, in Uttarakhand

This route essentially connects the southernmost pilgrimage site (Rameswaram) with one of the northernmost (Haridwar), showing how spiritual geography connects India across thousands of kilometres.

The group did not stop in Delhi because:

1. Haridwar was part of the same pilgrimage centre, and they wanted to complete it before heading home.
2. Time may have been limited they had already spent three months on the journey.
3. Their focus was on spiritual fulfillment rather than sightseeing or rest in Delhi.
4. Delhi wasn't a pilgrimage centre for them.

(b) In ancient times, when people were travelling from Madurai in Tamil Nadu to Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh, what languages would they come across? How would they communicate with people in those places? Where would they stay? What food would they eat? (Page 171)

Answer: Travel in ancient times: Madurai to Varanasi People in ancient India often undertook long spiritual journeys, like from Madurai to Varanasi. Let's look at what that journey may have been like:

Languages encountered:

1. Tamil (Madurai and surrounding areas)
2. Telugu (in Andhra Pradesh)
3. Kannada or Marathi (depending on the route taken)
4. Hindi or Awadhi/Bhojpuri (in Uttar Pradesh)

They might have communicated in the following ways:

1. Through basic spoken forms of common or related languages
2. Use of Sanskrit or regional dialects in temples and religious centres
3. Gestures, signs, or shared religious vocabulary
4. Pilgrimage networks helped pilgrims often found support along routes

They might have stayed at:

1. Dharamshalas, temple rest houses, ashrams
2. Sometimes in villages, where hospitality was extended to travellers
3. Choultries (free shelters for travellers) common in southern India

They have eaten:

1. They carried simple staple foods like rice, flour, ghee, pulses.
2. Ate at temple kitchens (e.g., prasadam).
3. Villagers along the way often fed pilgrims.
4. Food was vegetarian, simple, and easily digestible.

Question 3. Note the locations of the Char Dham. What do you think it implied for the people when they travelled north-south and east-west? (Page 173)

Answer: The Char Dham are located in the four corners of India:

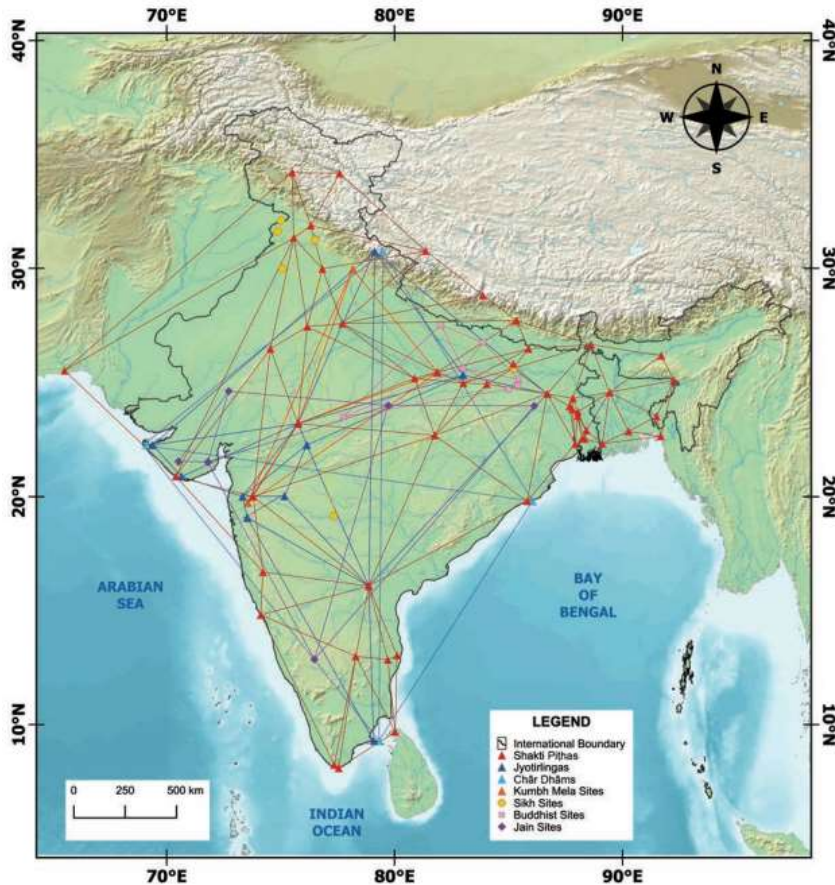
1. Badrinath in the North (Uttarakhand)
2. Rameswaram in the South (Tamil Nadu)
3. Dwarka in the West (Gujarat)
4. Puri in the East (Odisha)

This wide geographical spread of sacred sites meant that people from all parts of the subcontinent undertook long and challenging journeys across the country. When they travelled north-south and east-west, it implied:

1. Cultural unity: Despite differences in language, food, and customs, people shared a common spiritual goal. This created a sense of unity and belonging.
2. Exchange of ideas: Pilgrims interacted with different communities, leading to an exchange of traditions, art, music, and knowledge.
3. Shared sacred space: The entire Indian subcontinent was imagined as one vast sacred landscape, helping integrate diverse regions into a common cultural and religious identity.
4. Religious equality: By making all directions sacred, it emphasized that no one region was spiritually superior, thus promoting religious inclusiveness.



Question 4. Can you identify the names of a few traditional tirthas given in the below map (Map-1)? You can refer to the political map (Map-2) for help. (Page 174)



Answer: Yes, a few traditional tirthas (sacred pilgrimage sites) marked on the map include:

1. Varanasi (Kashi) – Uttar Pradesh
2. Rameswaram – Tamil Nadu
3. Dwarka – Gujarat

4. Puri – Odisha
5. Badrinath – Uttarakhand
6. Haridwar – Uttarakhand
7. Mathura – Uttar Pradesh
8. Kanchipuram – Tamil Nadu
9. Nashik – Maharashtra
10. Amarnath – Jammu & Kashmir

These tirthas are spread across the Indian subcontinent and represent sacred places associated with deities, legends, saints, and religious practices. They have historically played a key role in religious travel, cultural exchange, and social unity.

Question 5. 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? (Page 181)

Answer: 1. Steps to complete the activity:

(i) First, trace the map of trade routes from the chapter "The Rise of Empires" using transparent paper.

(ii) Then, overlay the traced map on top of the map of important tirthas (sacred sites) to observe any patterns or connections between the two.

2. Observations:

(i) Trade routes and sacred sites alignment: Upon overlaying the maps, you might notice that many of the trade routes pass near or through important sacred places (tirthas). This could indicate a historical pattern where religious or spiritual journeys were often integrated with economic activities like trade and commerce.

(ii) Convergence of trade and pilgrimage routes: The trade routes could also coincide with pilgrimage routes, meaning that traders and pilgrims likely traveled along the same paths, leading to a mutual exchange of goods and cultural practices.

(iii) Strategic locations of tirthas: Many tirthas are located along routes that were significant for trade, such as those connecting north and south India or regions of ancient empires. This indicates that sacred places often served as resting points or cultural hubs where travelers could rest, trade, or even partake in religious activities.

(iv) Cultural and economic exchange: These overlaps between trade routes and sacred sites show how religion, culture, and economy were closely linked in ancient times, with places of worship often acting as focal points for both spirituality and commerce.



Think About it

Question 1. 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. (Hint: The pictures below can provide some clues.) (Page 177)



Answer: Sacred places are deeply interconnected with the economic lives and activities of people in multiple ways. Some of the key connections include:

(i) Pilgrimage tourism: Sacred places attract pilgrims and tourists, leading to a boost in local businesses such as hotels, transport services, and local markets.

(ii) Local crafts and handicrafts: Many sacred sites have local artisans who sell handicrafts and souvenirs to pilgrims, adding to the economy of the region.

(iii) Religious donations: Temples, shrines, and pilgrimage sites often receive donations from pilgrims, which are used to fund local development, maintenance of sacred sites, and charitable activities.

(iv) Agriculture: Sacred places often have temple- owned land used for agricultural purposes, with profits sometimes directed toward charitable work or community welfare.

(v) Festivals and events: Festivals related to sacred places attract large crowds, encouraging trade, commerce, and cultural exchanges, which create a temporary boost to local economies.

(vi) Transportation and infrastructure: The movement of people towards sacred places results in the development of transportation infrastructure (roads, railways, airports), which in turn stimulates economic growth in the surrounding areas.

(vii) Cultural and religious services: Priests, performers, and guides offer their services to pilgrims, supporting the service economy in these areas.

Question 2. 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. (Page 179)

Answer: The Peepul tree (*Ficus religiosa*) is known for its various medicinal, ecological, and cultural significance. Here are some of the key points:

Medicinal Uses:

1. **Leaves:** The leaves of the Peepul tree are used to treat skin ailments, such as sores or rashes. They can be applied externally to help in the healing process.
2. **Bark:** The bark of the Peepul tree is known to be useful for treating stomach ailments, like diarrhea and gastric issues.

Ecological Benefits:

1. **Shelter for Wildlife:** Since the Peepul tree remains green throughout most of the year, it provides shelter for various types of birds and other animals, especially in regions with seasonal changes in vegetation.
2. **Food for Wildlife:** The Peepul tree also provides food for wildlife, particularly for birds that consume its leaves or fruits.

Cultural Importance:

1. The Peepul tree is often considered sacred in many cultures, especially in Hinduism and Buddhism.
It is commonly associated with the concept of enlightenment and is seen as a symbol of life and longevity.

Question 3. 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. (Page 182)



Answer: Rivers like the Yamuna, Mahanadi, and Kaveri have been considered sacred for centuries, serving as spiritual hubs and sources of sustenance. However, these rivers have become heavily polluted due to:

(i) Industrial waste: Factories often discharge harmful chemicals and effluents directly into the rivers without proper treatment.

(ii) Sewage and untreated waste: Many urban areas along these rivers release untreated sewage, which pollutes the water.

(iii) Religious practices: While religious rituals may involve offering flowers, idols, and other offerings into the rivers, the decomposition of these items adds to the pollution.

(iv) Deforestation: The loss of forest cover around the rivers reduces their ability to naturally cleanse and filter the water, contributing to pollution.

(v) Over-extraction of water: Overuse of river water for irrigation, drinking, and industrial needs leads to lowered water levels, exacerbating pollution. Many sacred places in local regions across India have been similarly affected by human activities:

(vi) Riverbanks: Sacred riverbanks, often the site of pilgrimages, have suffered due to littering, unregulated construction, and untreated sewage dumping.

(vii) Temples and Shrines: In some areas, temples and shrines are surrounded by litter, waste, and encroachments, reducing their spiritual and environmental value.

(viii) Forest areas: Sacred groves or forests have been degraded due to deforestation, illegal timber harvesting, and other harmful human activities. Example: In some areas near sacred rivers, pilgrims and tourists contribute to pollution by throwing plastic waste and non-biodegradable items, impacting the sanctity of these spaces. Yes, in many regions including towns, cities, and rural areas there are sacred places that have unfortunately been polluted or degraded due to human activity. These sacred places might include temples, rivers, forests, hills, lakes, or even ancient monuments that hold religious, spiritual, or cultural significance. For example:

1. The Ganga River is considered sacred by millions in India, yet it faces severe pollution from industrial waste, sewage, and plastic.
2. Sacred groves and forests, once protected for religious reasons, are often cleared for construction or agriculture.
3. Historic temples or pilgrimage sites sometimes suffer from overcrowding, littering, and unregulated development.



Preserving sacred places is a shared responsibility:

1. Local Communities and Devotees: They are often the first to recognize the spiritual importance of a place. Their role is to respect and protect these sites, keeping them clean and free from damage.
2. Religious and Cultural Institutions: Temples, mosques, churches, and trusts that manage these sites must ensure sustainable practices, waste management, and awareness.
3. Government and Authorities: Through laws, regulations, and conservation efforts (like the Clean Ganga Mission), governments must enforce environmental and cultural protection.
4. Visitors and Tourists: They must behave responsibly, avoid littering, and follow guidelines.
5. Educational Institutions and Media: By spreading awareness, values of respect and responsibility toward sacred and natural heritage can be nurtured in young minds.

Discussion Points for Class:

1. How do local communities, governments, and religious organizations work together to protect sacred places and rivers from pollution?
2. What are some innovative ways to clean and restore polluted rivers while preserving their sacred significance?
3. How can people who visit sacred sites be educated about their role in preserving these places?

Question Answer (Exercise)

Question 1. Read the following statement by a well-known environmental thinker, David Suzuki: "The way we see the world shapes the way we treat it. If a mountain is a deity, not a pile of ore; if a river is one of the veins of the land, not potential irrigation water; if a forest is a sacred grove, not timber; if other species are biological kin, not resources; or if the planet is our mother, not an opportunity—then we will treat each other with greater respect. Thus is the challenge, to look at the world from a different perspective." Discuss in small groups. What do you think this statement means? What implication does it have for our actions with respect to the air, water, land, trees and mountains around us?

Answer: David Suzuki's quote urges us to change our perspective and see the natural world not just as resources for exploitation, but as sacred and living entities. When we see nature with reverence—as a deity, family, or a mother—we naturally treat it with love, care, and respect. The implications it has on our actions with respect to the air, water, land, trees and mountains around us are:

1. We will avoid polluting rivers and instead protect them like sacred lifelines.
2. Forests would be preserved as sacred groves instead of being cleared for timber.
3. Mountains would be admired for their spiritual grandeur, not mined for minerals.



4. We would consider animals and other life forms as kin and not just as resources.
5. The air, water, and soil would be treated as life-giving elements, not as commodities.

This shift in thinking can help us become better caretakers of the environment.

Question 2. List the sacred sites in your region. Enquire, into why they are considered sacred. Are there stories connected with these sacred places? Write a short essay of 150 words. (Hint: You could speak to elders in your family and community, discuss with your teacher, read books and articles, etc., to gather relevant information.)

Answer: Sacred sites in my region (take for example- Uttarakhand):

1. **Kedarnath**-Considered sacred as it is one of the 12 Jyotirlingas of Lord Shiva.
2. **Badrinath**-Dedicated to Lord Vishnu and is one of the Char Dham sites.
3. **Yamunotri and Gangotri**- Sacred origins of rivers Yamuna and Ganga.

These are considered sacred because these places are associated with ancient myths, divine presence, and stories of gods and sages. Pilgrims visit them seeking blessings, purification, and spiritual upliftment.

A short essay with the title 'Preserving Our Sacred Places':

Sacred places are important for our religion, culture, and environment. They include rivers, temples, forests, mountains, and lakes. In my locality, there is a holy pond near a temple that was once clean and peaceful. But now, it is often filled with garbage and plastic. I spoke to my grandparents, and they told me how people used to respect the pond and even used its water for prayers. Today, many people do not take care of such places.

It is everyone's duty to keep sacred places clean and safe. Communities should come together to organize cleaning drives. Religious leaders can spread awareness about keeping these places pollution-free. The government should also take action against those who harm them.

Question 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?

Answer: Natural elements are considered sacred because they are believed to be abodes of gods or goddesses and sources of spiritual power. They contribute to our lives in the following ways:

1. Rivers provide water for drinking, agriculture, and rituals.
2. Mountains affect climate, store water as glaciers, and are pilgrimage sites.
3. Forests purify the air, provide medicine, and are seen as sacred groves. They are essential for both ecological balance and cultural traditions.



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

Answer: People visit tirthas or sacred places:

1. To seek spiritual purification and peace.
2. To fulfill religious vows or express gratitude.
3. To connect with divine energy and perform rituals.
4. To be part of centuries-old traditions and experience a sense of unity with others.

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

Answer:

Ancient pilgrimage routes and trade:

1. Pilgrims travelled with goods, spreading local products to other regions.
2. Traders set up shops along routes to cater to pilgrims.
3. These routes connected different regions culturally and economically.

The sacred sites help in developing the economy of the region in the following ways:

1. Promoting tourism and hospitality industries.
2. Supporting local artisans, guides, and transport workers.
3. Generating income through fairs, rituals, and donation centers.

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

Answer:

1. Sacred places are connected to religious stories, festivals, and local beliefs.
2. People living nearby often take part in rituals, prayers, and celebrations.
3. Festivals at sacred sites include music, dance, special food, and traditional clothes.
4. These places teach values like kindness, honesty, and respect.
5. Local art, crafts, and songs often show stories from the sacred place.
6. Sacred places bring people together and build a sense of community and belonging.
7. Traditions are passed from one generation to the next, keeping the culture alive.
8. These places also attract visitors, helping locals share their culture with others.

Question 7. From the various sacred sites of India, select two of your choice and create a project explaining their significance.

Project: Two Sacred Sites of India (Sample project brief)

Varanasi (Kashi):

1. Located on the banks of River Ganga.



2. Considered the city of Lord Shiva.
3. Pilgrims come for holy baths and last rites.
4. Famous for Kashi Vishwanath Temple.

Amarnath (Jammu & Kashmir):

1. Cave shrine dedicated to Lord Shiva.
2. Contains a naturally formed ice-lingam.
3. Visited by thousands during Amarnath Yatra. These sites represent devotion, nature's wonders, and spiritual traditions of India.

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

Answer: The two-fold significance of a tirthayatra or a pilgrimage are:

1. **Spiritual significance:** Helps cleanse the soul, seek blessings, and reflect on life's deeper meaning.
2. **Cultural and social significance:** It strengthens community bonds. Encourages knowledge-sharing across regions and preserves heritage and traditions.

