

Collegedunia NCERT Notes

NCERT Revision Notes

Chapter 7: India's Cultural Roots

These notes explain Class 6 Social Science Chapter 7 for the 2026-27 NCERT textbook. The chapter traces India's cultural roots through the Vedas, Upanishads, Buddhism, Jainism, Charvaka thought, folk traditions and tribal belief systems.

Also see for this chapter: [NCERT Solutions](#)

Contents

1	Chapter at a Glance	1
1.1	Big questions	2
1.2	Fast revision frame	2
2	Culture as a Banyan Tree	3
2.1	Why the tree image matters	3
2.2	Branches of culture	4
3	The Vedas	4
3.1	Meaning and age	4
3.2	Oral preservation	5

4	Rishis, Rishikas and Vedic Deities	5
4.1	Language and composers	5
4.2	Deities and order	6
5	Unity in the Vedic Message	6
5.1	Ekam sat	7
5.2	Unity among people	7
6	Vedic Society	9
6.1	Clans and regions	9
6.2	Assemblies and work	9
7	Rituals and Yajna	10
7.1	Daily practice	10
7.2	Change over time	10
8	Upanishads and Vedanta	11
8.1	Core ideas	11
8.2	Brahman and atman	11
9	Stories from the Upanishads	12
9.1	Shvetaketu and the seed	12
9.2	Nachiketa and Gargi	12
10	Yoga and Hinduism	14

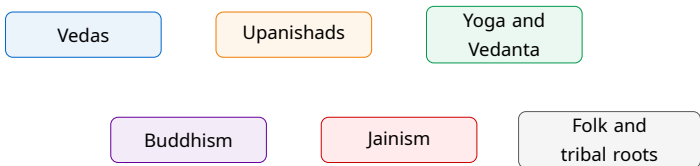
10.1 Yoga as a method	14
10.2 Foundations of Hinduism	14
11 Buddhism	15
11.1 Life of Siddhartha	15
11.2 Enlightenment	15
12 Buddha's Teachings and Sangha	16
12.1 Key teachings	16
12.2 Sangha	16
13 Jataka Tale of the Monkey King	17
13.1 The story	17
13.2 The lesson	17
14 Jainism	19
14.1 Life of Mahavira	19
14.2 Meaning of Jina	19
15 Jain Teachings	20
15.1 Ahimsa	20
15.2 Anekantavada and aparigraha	20
16 A Jain Story	21
16.1 Rohineya's turning point	21

16.2 Message of the story	21
17 Ahimsa in Thought	22
17.1 Beyond physical action	22
17.2 Shared value	22
18 Monks, Nuns and Rock-Cut Caves	24
18.1 Travel and teaching	24
18.2 Archaeological traces	24
19 Other Schools of Thought	25
19.1 Charvaka view	25
19.2 Why it is mentioned	25
20 Shared Concepts	26
20.1 Common trunk	26
20.2 Differences still matter	26
21 Folk and Tribal Roots	27
21.1 Oral traditions	27
21.2 Meaning of tribe	27
22 Interaction of Folk, Tribal and Hindu Traditions	29
22.1 Exchange of ideas	29

22.2 Nature as sacred	29
23 Supreme Deities in Tribal Traditions	30
23.1 Examples	30
23.2 Mutual enrichment	30
24 Quick Comparison Table	31
24.1 Major schools	32
24.2 Revision caution	32
25 Important Questions and Answer Points	33
25.1 Short-answer questions	33
25.2 Long-answer frame	33
26 Common Mistakes and Fixes	34
26.1 Mistakes to avoid	34
26.2 How to fix answers	34
27 One-Page Revision Sheet	36
27.1 Timeline and people	36
27.2 Must-know terms	36

1 Chapter at a Glance

India's Cultural Roots compares Indian culture with an ancient tree. The roots are old, the trunk is shared, and the branches include art, literature, medicine, governance, martial skills, schools of thought and local traditions.



1.1 Big questions

- What are the Vedas, and why are they important?
- What messages appear in Vedic and Upanishadic thought?
- Which new schools of thought emerged in the 1st millennium BCE?
- How did folk and tribal traditions enrich Indian culture?

1.2 Fast revision frame

- The Vedas are India's oldest texts and were preserved through oral learning.
- The Upanishads developed ideas such as brahman, atman, karma and rebirth.

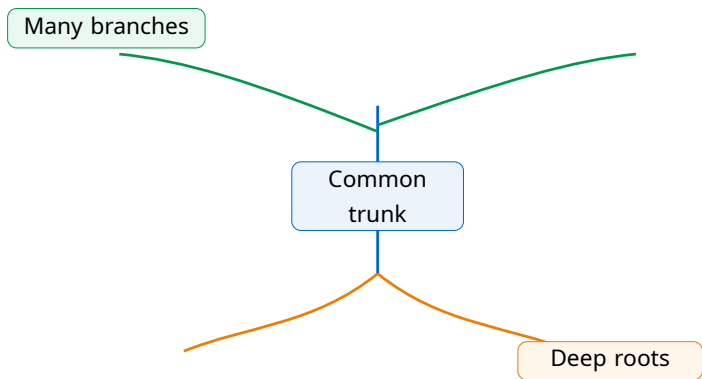
- Buddhism and Jainism stressed inner discipline, ahimsa and the removal of ignorance.
- Folk and tribal traditions kept local memory, nature worship and community practices alive.

Memory Hook

Use V-U-B-J-F: Vedas, Upanishads, Buddhism, Jainism and folk traditions.

2 Culture as a Banyan Tree

The chapter opens with the image of a large old tree. Its roots feed a common trunk, while the branches spread in many directions. This image helps students understand unity and variety together.



2.1 Why the tree image matters

- Indian culture has many old sources, not just one starting point.
- Different traditions grew in different regions and periods.
- Many branches still share ideas such as truth, discipline and respect for life.

2.2 Branches of culture

- Art, literature, science, medicine and governance are cultural branches.
- Schools of thought are groups of thinkers who share ideas about life and the world.
- Some cultural roots go back to the Indus or Sindhu-Sarasvati Civilisation.

Core Idea

The chapter teaches that Indian culture is old, layered and connected. Difference does not cancel unity.

3 The Vedas

The word Veda comes from the Sanskrit root *vid*, meaning knowledge. The four Vedas are the Rig Veda, Yajur Veda, Sama Veda and Atharva Veda.

3.1 Meaning and age

- The Vedas are among the oldest texts in India and the world.
- They contain thousands of hymns, prayers, poems and songs.
- The Rig Veda is the oldest of the four Vedas.
- Scholars place its composition across a wide range, from the 5th to the 2nd millennium BCE.

3.2 Oral preservation

- The Vedas were recited orally instead of being written at first.
- Students learnt them through rigorous memorisation and correct pronunciation.
- UNESCO recognised Vedic chanting in 2008 as an intangible heritage of humanity.

Exam Cue

When asked why the Vedas are special, mention both age and oral transmission.

4 Rishis, Rishikas and Vedic Deities

The Vedic hymns were composed by rishis and rishikas. A rishi is a male seer or sage, while a rishika is a female seer.

4.1 Language and composers

- The hymns were composed in an early form of Sanskrit.
- They were created in the Sapta Sindhava region.
- The chapter shows that women also took part in early thinking and learning.

4.2 Deities and order

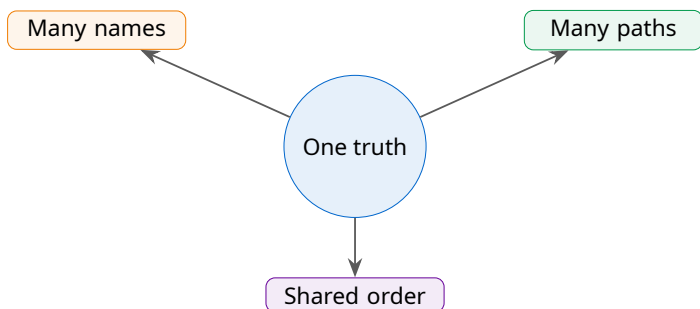
- Hymns were addressed to deities such as Indra, Agni, Varuna, Mitra, Sarasvati and Ushas.
- These deities were linked with truth, order and the working of the cosmos.
- The Vedic word *ritam* means truth and order in life and the universe.

Key Terms

Term	Meaning
<i>Rishi</i>	<i>Male seer or sage</i>
<i>Rishika</i>	<i>Female seer or sage</i>
<i>Ritam</i>	<i>Truth and cosmic order</i>
<i>Cosmos</i>	<i>Ordered and harmonious universe</i>

5 Unity in the Vedic Message

The early Vedic worldview did not treat divine powers as completely separate. A famous hymn says that the truth is one, though sages call it by many names.



5.1 Ekam sat

- The expression *ekam sat vipra bahudha vadanti* means the existent is one.

- It teaches that sages may describe the same reality in different ways.
- This idea helped shape India's openness to many paths of worship and thought.

5.2 Unity among people

- The last mantras of the Rig Veda call people to come together.
- They ask for common speech, common thought, united purpose and united hearts.
- This gives the chapter a social message, not only a spiritual message.

Verse Cue

Remember one truth, many names, united purpose. This captures the Vedic message in three steps.

6 Vedic Society

Early Vedic society was organised into janas or clans. A jana was a larger group of people linked with a region and a shared identity.

6.1 Clans and regions

- The Rig Veda mentions more than 30 janas.
- Examples include the Bharatas, Purus, Kurus, Yadus and Turvashas.
- These groups were linked with the northwestern part of the Subcontinent.

6.2 Assemblies and work

- The word *raja* refers to a king or ruler.
- *Sabha* and *samiti* refer to collective gatherings or assemblies.
- Vedic texts mention agriculturists, weavers, potters, builders, carpenters, healers, dancers, barbers and priests.

Governance Link

Words such as sabha and samiti help students connect ancient society with later ideas of discussion and public decision making.

7 Rituals and Yajna

Vedic culture developed many rituals called yajna. These rituals were directed to deities and were performed for individual or collective welfare.

7.1 Daily practice

- Daily rituals often included prayers and offerings to Agni.
- Agni was associated with fire.
- Fire became a central symbol because offerings were made through it.

7.2 Change over time

- Rituals became more complex over time.
- The chapter presents this as one part of Vedic culture, not the whole of it.
- Later schools of thought asked deeper questions about self, knowledge and reality.

Common Mistake

Do not reduce Vedic culture only to rituals. The chapter also stresses knowledge, truth, unity and philosophical questioning.

8 Upanishads and Vedanta

The Upanishads built on Vedic concepts and introduced new ideas. They asked direct questions about the self, the universe and the meaning of life.



8.1 Core ideas

- Rebirth means taking birth again and again.
- Karma refers to actions and their results.
- Vedanta teaches that human life, nature and the universe share one divine essence.

8.2 Brahman and atman

- Brahman is the divine essence behind everything.
- Atman is the Self or divine essence within every being.
- The Upanishads teach that atman and brahman are ultimately one.

Upanishadic Message

Everything is connected and interdependent because the same subtle essence is present in all beings.

9 Stories from the Upanishads

The Upanishads teach through questions and stories. They show children, women and men asking deep questions about reality.

9.1 Shvetaketu and the seed

- Uddalaka taught Shvetaketu through the example of a banyan seed.
- The tiny seed seems empty but holds the future tree within it.
- The story explains that the invisible essence is present everywhere.

9.2 Nachiketa and Gargi

- Nachiketa asked Yama what happens after death.
- Yama taught that the atman is not born and does not die.
- Gargi questioned Yajnavalkya about the nature of the world and brahman.

Story Cue

For a short-answer question, pair each story with its message: seed means hidden essence,

Nachiketa means fearless questioning, Gargi means philosophical debate.

10 Yoga and Hinduism

Several schools of thought grew out of the Vedas in the 1st millennium BCE. Yoga was one of them.

10.1 Yoga as a method

- Yoga developed methods for inner discipline.
- Its aim was realisation of brahman in one's consciousness.
- It connected practice with self-knowledge.

10.2 Foundations of Hinduism

- Vedic, Upanishadic and Yogic ideas became foundations of what is called Hinduism today.
- The chapter treats these as schools of thought with philosophical, spiritual, ethical and social aspects.
- It avoids reducing them to only one label.

Language Link

The word spiritual refers to the search for a deeper dimension beyond ordinary personality.

11 Buddhism

Buddhism emerged as a major school of thought that did not accept the authority of the Vedas. It developed its own path to remove suffering.



11.1 Life of Siddhartha

- Siddhartha Gautama was born in Lumbini, in present-day Nepal.
- The chapter uses 560 BCE as an approximate date for his birth.
- He lived a protected life before seeing old age, sickness, death and an ascetic.

11.2 Enlightenment

- Siddhartha left palace life and searched for the cause of suffering.
- He meditated under a pipal tree at Bodh Gaya.
- He realised that ignorance and attachment cause suffering.
- He became the Buddha, meaning the awakened or enlightened one.

Life Sequence

Use P-S-S-E: palace, sights, search and enlightenment.

12 Buddha's Teachings and Sangha

The Buddha taught ahimsa, truth, dharma and inner discipline. In the chapter, ahimsa means non-hurting or non-injuring.

12.1 Key teachings

- Purity comes from truth and dharma, not only from outer bathing.
- Conquering oneself is greater than defeating many people in battle.
- Inner discipline is central to the Buddhist path.

12.2 Sangha

- The Buddha founded the Sangha.
- It was a community of bhikshus or monks, and later bhikshunis or nuns.
- Members practised the teachings and helped spread them.
- Buddhism influenced India and many parts of Asia.

Common Mistake

Do not write that Buddhism was only a protest movement. The chapter presents it as a disciplined path to remove suffering and ignorance.

13 Jataka Tale of the Monkey King

The Jataka tales tell stories of the Buddha's former births. They explain Buddhist values in simple narrative form.

13.1 The story

- A monkey king protected his troop near a fruit tree.
- A human king wanted the fruit and sent soldiers to the tree.
- The monkey king used his body as a bridge so his troop could escape.

13.2 The lesson

- The story teaches self-sacrifice and care for others.
- It also asks rulers to think about their duty towards subjects.

- The tale makes an ethical idea easy to remember.

Value Link

A story can teach civic values. The monkey king shows that leadership means protection, not selfish power.

14 Jainism

Jainism became widespread around the same period as Buddhism, though its roots are said to be older. It also grew as an important Indian school of thought.



14.1 Life of Mahavira

- Prince Vardhamana was born near Vaishali in present-day Bihar.
- He left home at about 30 in search of spiritual knowledge.
- After 12 years of ascetic discipline, he gained supreme wisdom.
- He became known as Mahavira, meaning great hero.

14.2 Meaning of Jina

- The word Jain comes from *jina*, meaning conqueror.
- This conquest is not conquest of land or enemies.
- It means conquering ignorance and

attachment.

Name Cue

Mahavira means great hero. Jina means conqueror of ignorance and attachment.

15 Jain Teachings

Jain teachings include ahimsa, anekantavada and aparigraha. These ideas deeply shaped Indian ethical thought.

15.1 Ahimsa

- Ahimsa means avoiding harm to living beings.
- Mahavira taught that living creatures should not be slain, abused, tormented or driven away.
- Jainism extends care to humans, animals and even very small organisms.

15.2 Anekantavada and aparigraha

- Anekantavada means the truth has many aspects.
- No single statement can fully describe truth.
- Aparigraha means non-possession.
- It advises people to limit themselves to what is truly necessary.

Three Jain Ideas

Idea	Meaning
<i>Ahimsa</i>	<i>Non-harming in action and thought</i>
<i>Anekantavada</i>	<i>Many-sided nature of truth</i>
<i>Aparigraha</i>	<i>Non-possession and detachment</i>

16 A Jain Story

The chapter gives the story of Rohineya, a skilled burglar. The story teaches right action, right thinking and the possibility of change.

16.1 Rohineya's turning point

- Rohineya heard a few words from Mahavira's sermon.
- He was later arrested and tried to hide his identity.
- He remembered Mahavira's words and understood the illusion of his old life.

16.2 Message of the story

- Rohineya confessed his crimes and returned stolen treasures.
- He asked for forgiveness and became a monk.

- The story shows that people can change when they gain right understanding.

Ethics Link

The story supports the idea of a second chance. It connects moral learning with real action.

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17 Ahimsa in Thought

The chapter stresses that ahimsa is broader than avoiding physical violence. It also includes thoughts, feelings and intentions.

17.1 Beyond physical action

- Negative thoughts can also be a form of harm.
- Ahimsa asks people to observe their own minds.
- It encourages turning harmful thoughts into positive ones.

17.2 Shared value

- Buddhism and Jainism both gave strong importance to ahimsa.

- Vedantic thought also valued the interconnection of all life.
- The shared value became part of India's wider cultural trunk.

Common Mistake

Do not define ahimsa only as not killing. In this chapter, it includes non-hurting in speech, action and thought.

18 Monks, Nuns and Rock-Cut Caves

Buddhist and Jain monks, and sometimes nuns, travelled widely. They spread teachings, created monasteries and lived disciplined lives.

18.1 Travel and teaching

- Monks gave up ordinary worldly life.
- Nuns were the female equivalent of monks.
- Both could dedicate themselves to spiritual practice and teaching.

18.2 Archaeological traces

- Many monasteries and rock-cut caves have been found.
- Some caves even preserve names of monks who lived there.
- Ellora in Maharashtra has Hindu, Buddhist and Jain caves.

Map Cue

When revising, locate Lumbini, Bodh Gaya, Vaishali, Bihar, Maharashtra and Odisha on a map.

19 Other Schools of Thought

The chapter also mentions the Charvaka school, sometimes called Lokayata. It shows that ancient India had wide intellectual diversity.

19.1 Charvaka view

- Charvaka thinkers believed that the material world is the only reality.
- They did not accept life after death.
- The school did not become very popular and disappeared over time.

19.2 Why it is mentioned

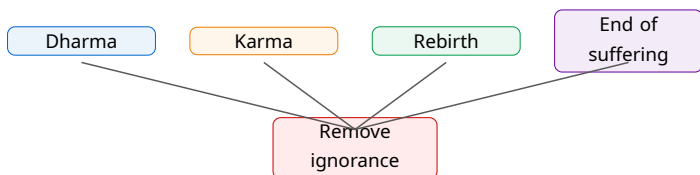
- It proves that many kinds of ideas existed together.
- People could choose different paths of belief and inquiry.
- The chapter presents debate and diversity as part of Indian civilisation.

Diversity of Thought

Ancient Indian thought included Vedic, Buddhist, Jain and materialist schools. This variety is a key feature of the chapter.

20 Shared Concepts

The Vedic, Buddhist and Jain schools had differences. Still, they shared important ideas and values.



20.1 Common trunk

- Dharma, karma and rebirth appear across traditions.
- Each tradition looked for the cause of suffering and ignorance.
- Each offered a method for self-discipline and better living.

20.2 Differences still matter

- Buddhism and Jainism did not accept Vedic authority in the same way.
- Their practices and communities developed separately.
- The chapter wants students to see both similarity and difference.

Common Mistake

Do not write that all schools were identical. The exam answer should mention shared concepts and clear differences.

21 Folk and Tribal Roots

India also has many oral traditions. Folk traditions are transmitted by common people, while tribal traditions are transmitted by tribes.

21.1 Oral traditions

- Oral traditions pass knowledge through memory, performance and everyday practice.
- They may include stories, songs, rituals, art, festivals and local beliefs.
- Written texts are not the only source of culture.

21.2 Meaning of tribe

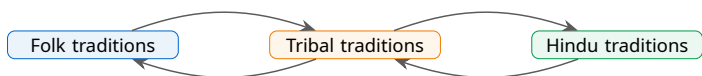
- A tribe is often a group of families or clans with common descent, culture and language.
- Many tribes live as close-knit communities.
- The Constitution uses the English terms tribes and tribal communities, and the Hindi term janjati.

2011 Census Fact

According to official figures, India had 705 tribes in 2011, with about 104 million people.

22 Interaction of Folk, Tribal and Hindu Traditions

The chapter states that folk, tribal and Hindu traditions interacted for a long time. Ideas moved in both directions.



22.1 Exchange of ideas

- Deities, legends, rituals and concepts moved between communities.
- Jagannath of Puri is traditionally linked with a tribal deity.
- Some tribal groups adopted Hindu deities and created their own versions of the Mahabharata and Ramayana.

22.2 Nature as sacred

- Mountains, rivers, trees, plants, animals and stones may be regarded as sacred.
- The Toda people of the Nilgiris treat many peaks as sacred homes of deities.
- Many tribal groups worship deities linked with nature.

Example Cue

Use Jagannath, Toda peaks, Donyipolo, Khandoba and Singbonga as examples of interaction and sacred nature.

23 Supreme Deities in Tribal Traditions

Many tribal traditions have several nature deities. At the same time, some also have a higher divinity or supreme being.

23.1 Examples

- Several tribes of Arunachal Pradesh worship Donyipolo, linked with the Sun and Moon.
- Khandoba is important in parts of central India.
- Munda and Santhal communities worship Singbonga, a supreme creator deity.

23.2 Mutual enrichment

- Tribal traditions influenced Hinduism.
- Hindu traditions also influenced tribal communities.
- Sociologist Andre Beteille described this interaction as long and mutual.

Culture Link

Mutual enrichment means both sides give and receive. The chapter uses this idea to explain India's cultural growth.

24 Quick Comparison Table

This table helps students compare the main traditions without mixing them up.

24.1 Major schools

Tradition	Important ideas	Remember this
Vedic	Vedas, hymns, ritam, unity, yajna	Oldest texts and oral preservation
Upanishadic	Atman, brahman, karma, rebirth	Questioning and hidden essence
Buddhist	Suffering, ignorance, attachment, Sangha	Buddha's path of inner discipline
Jain	Ahimsa, anekantavada, aparigraha	Mahavira and conquest of ignorance
Folk and tribal	Oral traditions, sacred nature, local deities	Mutual enrichment with other traditions

24.2 Revision caution

- Use examples in every answer.
- Do not write only definitions.
- Add the value or message behind the concept.

Common Mistake

Students often write only one word, such as karma or ahimsa. Add the meaning and one example.

25 Important Questions and Answer Points

Use this section for fast revision before a class test. The questions match the chapter's main themes.

25.1 Short-answer questions

1. What are the four Vedas? Mention their method of transmission.
2. What is the meaning of *ekam sat vipra bahudha vadanti*?
3. Why are Shvetaketu, Nachiketa and Gargi important?
4. What did the Buddha identify as the cause of suffering?
5. What do ahimsa, anekantavada and aparigraha mean?

25.2 Long-answer frame

- Start with the main concept.
- Give two or three facts from the NCERT chapter.
- Add one story or example.
- End with the value taught by the tradition.

Answer Frame

For 5-mark answers, use definition, timeline or person, core idea, example and value.

26 Common Mistakes and Fixes

This chapter has many names and concepts. A clean answer separates them before comparing them.

26.1 Mistakes to avoid

- Do not confuse brahman with the god Brahma.
- Do not call the Vedas written palm-leaf texts in their earliest form.
- Do not write that Buddhism is older than the Vedas.
- Do not treat tribal traditions as primitive or inferior.

26.2 How to fix answers

- Write full names of concepts at least once.
- Add the region or person when possible.
- Mention that traditions interacted over time.
- Use simple sentences and correct examples.

Revision Rule

If a concept has a Sanskrit name, define it in simple English before adding the example.

27 One-Page Revision Sheet

This final sheet collects the chapter in compact form. Read it once after finishing the full notes.

27.1 Timeline and people

- Vedas: India's earliest texts, preserved orally.
- Upanishads: texts of deep questioning about atman and brahman.
- Buddha: Siddhartha Gautama, enlightened at Bodh Gaya.
- Mahavira: Vardhamana, teacher of Jain ideas.
- Andre Beteille: sociologist quoted for mutual influence among castes and tribes.

27.2 Must-know terms

- Spiritual: related to the spirit or deeper dimension.
- Seeker: one who searches for truths.
- Ascetic: one who follows strict discipline for higher consciousness.
- Monk and nun: people who dedicate themselves to religious or spiritual life.
- Oral tradition: knowledge passed through memory and practice.

Final Memory Aid

Truth, self-discipline, non-harming and mutual enrichment are the four thread words for this chapter.

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