Paths of Change

Trace Buddhism's growth and its influence in Classical India

SS24.7.12c "Trace the development of Buddhism, including the contributions of Emperor Ashoka, and explain how Buddhism influenced society in Classical India."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline and number three steps in Buddhism's development in the order they happened. Circle two ways its teachings or communities affected life in India.

From One Teacher to Many Communities

1. About 2,500 years ago in northern India, Siddhartha Gautama left a comfortable life to ask why people suffer. After years of searching, he became known as the Buddha, or Awakened One. He taught that craving brings suffering and that people can reduce suffering by following a path of wise actions, careful speech, and meditation. His followers formed communities of monks and nuns who studied and shared these teachings. People could follow this path regardless of the social group they were born into.

2. Centuries later, Emperor Ashoka ruled much of India in the 200s BCE. After a deadly war in Kalinga, he expressed sorrow for the suffering it caused and embraced Buddhist teachings. Ashoka had messages carved on rocks and pillars across his empire. They urged kindness, respect for parents, and care for living things. He also supported Buddhist sites and helped send Buddhist teachers beyond his empire, including to Sri Lanka. His public support made the teachings more visible, although he also urged respect for other religious groups.

3. Buddhism's spread changed parts of everyday life in Classical India. Some families gave food to monks and nuns, while wealthy donors helped build monasteries and stupas, mound-shaped places that held sacred remains. Monasteries became places where people studied and copied teachings. The idea that a person's actions, rather than birth alone, mattered on the path to freedom from suffering questioned social rank. Buddhism did not erase India's caste system, and many people continued other traditions. Still, its communities and teachings opened new ways to learn, give, and seek spiritual change.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did the Buddha's followers help his teachings grow beyond one teacher?

2. How did the war in Kalinga lead to actions by Ashoka that helped Buddhism spread?

3. How could Buddhist teachings lead people to question social rank in Classical India?

4. How did people's gifts help Buddhist communities influence learning in Classical India?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine you are visiting a monastery in Classical India after Ashoka's reign. Write a museum label of 4 to 5 sentences that traces how Buddhism reached this setting, names one action by Ashoka, and explains two ways Buddhist teachings or communities affected people's lives.

ANSWER KEY

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GRADE 7 · SS24.7.12c

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline and number three steps in Buddhism's development in the order they happened. Circle two ways its teachings or communities affected life in India. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did the Buddha's followers help his teachings grow beyond one teacher?	**Monks and nuns formed communities where they studied and shared his teachings.**
2	How did the war in Kalinga lead to actions by Ashoka that helped Buddhism spread?	**Ashoka expressed sorrow after the war and embraced Buddhist teachings. He supported Buddhist sites and helped send teachers beyond his empire.**
3	How could Buddhist teachings lead people to question social rank in Classical India?	**The teachings said people could follow the path regardless of their birth and that their actions mattered on that path.**
4	How did people's gifts help Buddhist communities influence learning in Classical India?	**Families gave food to monks and nuns, and donors helped build monasteries where people studied and copied teachings.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The Buddha taught a path for reducing suffering, and monks and nuns formed communities to share it. After the war in Kalinga, Ashoka supported Buddhist sites and helped teachers carry the teachings to other places. At this monastery, people can study the teachings, while families help sustain the community with gifts of food. The belief that actions matter more than birth on the spiritual path also gives people a way to question social rank.

Accept other accurate steps in Buddhism's spread and effects on society that are supported by the passage. Responses should connect Ashoka's actions to the spread of teachings without claiming that Buddhism ended the caste system.