

2. Write a précis of the following and suggest a suitable title:

(20)

The fear of human beings when faced with the mysteries of life and their weakness by comparison with the vastness of nature created in them a need to communicate with the divine, with the superior powers which they believed regulated the universe and determined their own fates. Knowledge of wishes of the gods was always a sure guide for human behavior. In ancient Greece, the precise nature of these wishes was 'decoded' by the art of giving oracles, practiced by soothsayers who had the gift of understanding the signs or signals sent by the gods.

The soothsayers uttered their oracles by interpreting flashes of lightning, rolls of thunder or the flights of certain birds of prey (omens); alternatively, they might observe the direction in which the fire burned when a sacrifice was made, examine the entrails of animals which had just been sacrificed, or base judgments on the sacrificial beast's willingness to approach the altar. The interpretation of dreams was popular too, and so was palmistry. The most notable soothsayers of ancient Greece were Tiresias, Calchas, Helenus, Amphiaraus and Cassandra.

However, there were abundant instances in which the gods did not manifest themselves to the faithful in the forms of signs but spoke directly to an intermediate who for a short time was overcome by a 'divine mania' and transcended his own human essence. Here the prophet- or more usually the prophetess- entered a state of ecstasy in which he or she delivered the message from the gods to the suppliants.

These practices for foreseeing the future were the basis on which the ancient Greek oracles operated. Each oracle was located within a properly-organized sanctuary and was directly associated with one or other of the gods. Apollo was the archetypal soothsayer for the Greeks, the god who was responsible for conveying to mortals the decisions pronounced by Zeus. The most important of all the oracles, that at the Delphi, delivered the messages with the intervention of Apollo, while the oldest that of Dodona, functioned with the assistance of Zeus.

## Human Behavior : God's wishes

Human beings tried to connect with the regulators of the universe when they found them very powerful. Wishes of Gods shaped the human nature. In ancient times, soothsayers used to explain God's will through signs and signals sent by God. They had many ways to understand and then interpret God's will. Sometimes God just didn't give signs to oracles but he directly communicated through prophets, they then delivered God's messages. Oracles operated on the practices of seeing the future. Every God had specific oracles associated to them. Some important oracles used to assist God while some conveyed his message to humans.

## History of Gods

When human beings felt weak in comparison with the nature, they felt the need to communicate with the divine, whom they thought regulated the universe, their behavior was mostly influenced by the wishes of Gods. In ancient times, these wishes were interpreted by giving oracles by the soothsayers. The soothsayers used to give oracles on the basis of various signs of nature. Sometimes these Gods would communicate directly to the middle-men instead of giving signs. These practices determined how the oracles operated. These oracles were organized and they would work only in their domain and they were also directly associated with one or more Gods.

Word Count = 106