

BCM SCHOOL, BASANT AVENUE, DUGRI ROAD, LUDHIANA

ENGLISH ASSIGNMENT (August, 2025)

CLASS – XI

READING SECTION

I. Read the following passage carefully.

1. Situated in a narrow gorge in the Lidder valley in Anantnag district of Kashmir, the cave shrine of Amarnath is perhaps one of the most popular pilgrimage destinations in India, and also the most challenging. The cave, at an altitude of 3,962 metres above sea level, is located 140 km to the north-east of Srinagar. Legend has it that Shiva recounted to Parvati the secret of creation and immortality in this cave. Unknown to them, a pair of mating pigeons (or doves) overheard the secret, attained immortality and are ever present in this cave, their eternal abode. Sighting a pair of white pigeons in the cave by pilgrims is therefore considered to be highly auspicious.
2. Swami Vivekananda, who visited the cave in 1898, suggested that it was first discovered by a party of shepherds, who accidentally entered it while searching for their flocks. A local legend, however, traces the discovery to a Muslim Gujar shepherd, Buta Malik, who was led to the cave by a sadhu, believed to be Shiva himself. Another legend has it that the valley of Kashmir was once a huge lake. When the sage Kashyap drained this lake, the cave and the lingam were discovered by sage Bhringesh who was then traversing the Himalayas.
3. Since the cave is at a height of nearly 13,000 ft and the area remains snowbound most of the year, the pilgrimage is possible only for a short time during the summer, roughly corresponding to the months of July and August.
4. The natural ice lingam covers the extreme right of the cave and is formed by water drops falling from the top of the cave and at its glorious best, the lingam can be over 8 feet high and over 7 feet in diameter. Two smaller structures of ice are located to the left of the lingam and are believed to represent Parvati and Ganesh respectively.
5. The traditional route to the cave is via Pahalgam, nearly 96 km south of Srinagar. Pilgrims taking this route usually accomplish the return journey in about five days. The distance to the cave from Pahalgam is 46 km. However, vehicular

traffic is possible till Chandanwari – located 16 km north of Pahalgam. The route lies along the river Lidder meandering in the valley below. The distance to the cave is now only 30 km but it is to be covered entirely on foot or on ponies and palkis. Another route via Srinagar–Sonamarg is increasingly being used by pilgrims. From Srinagar, devotees reach Baltal through a link road which takes off from kilometre 95 on the Srinagar-Leh highway near Sonmarg. On a good, fair-weather day, devotees who start early can complete their darshan and return to the base camp at Baltal on the same day. This is what makes this route popular and alluring for some devotees. The Baltal route is shorter but steeper and the journey track is narrow and dangerous at places.

Answer the following questions, based on the passage above.

1. According to paragraph 1, why is the Amarnath cave considered both popular and challenging as a pilgrimage site?
2. How does the author use the phrase “eternal abode” in paragraph 1 to describe the pigeons in the cave?
3. **Read and complete the following suitably.**

The statement “Sighting a pair of white pigeons... is considered to be highly auspicious” (paragraph 1) reflects the deep spiritual belief linked to legend.

Choose the correct response from the two options to complete the sentence.

The phrase suggests

- (a) the pigeons are rare and must be protected by pilgrims
- (b) their sighting is viewed as a divine sign and a blessing during the pilgrimage

4. **Complete the following suitably with ONE reason, with reference to paragraph 3:**

The pilgrimage to the Amarnath cave is only possible during the summer months of July and August because

5. Why does the author mention multiple legends about the discovery of the Amarnath cave in paragraph 2?
- (a) To highlight the confusion surrounding its discovery and location.
 - (b) To show how varied stories add spiritual and cultural value to the site.
 - (c) To compare pilgrimage practices of different religious communities.

(d) To question the truth behind all religious and mythological stories.

6. Provide ONE textual evidence from paragraph 4 that describes the physical appearance of the ice lingam.

7. In the line, “the Baltal route is shorter but steeper and the journey track is narrow and dangerous at places” (paragraph 5), what does the phrase “narrow and dangerous” suggest about the route?

8. Complete the analogy with ONE word from paragraph 5:

Cave : vehicle : pilgrim :: _____ : palanquin

(a) cave

(b) river

(c) valley

(d) palanquin

9. Why is it fair to say that the Pahalgam route poses more difficulty than the Baltal route despite being traditional?

(a) Because it involves more formalities and documentation.

(b) Because it takes more days and includes longer walking stretches.

(c) Because it requires trekking through thick forested areas.

(d) Because it remains open only during colder winter months.

10. Assess one major advantage and one significant challenge of the Baltal route as mentioned in the passage.