

Theme 2 Kings, Farmers and Towns

Fastrack Revision

► Introduction

- Several developments in different parts of the subcontinent (India) has taken place in the long span of 1500 years following the end of Harappan civilisation:
 - Rigveda was composed along the Indus and its tributaries.
 - Agricultural settlements emerged in several parts of the subcontinents.
 - Pastoral populations were also seen in the Deccan and further South.
 - New modes of disposal of the dead including making of elaborate stone structures known as megaliths, emerged in central and South India from the 1st millennium BCE.
- To understand all these developments, historians use inscriptions, texts, coins and visual materials available for that period.

► The Earliest States

► The Sixteen Mahajanapadas

- The sixth century BCE is often regarded as a major turning point in early Indian history. It is an era associated with early states, cities, the growing use of iron, the development of coinage, etc. It also witnessed the growth of diverse systems of thought, including Buddhism and Jainism.
- Early Buddhist and Jaina texts mention, amongst other things, sixteen states known as *Mahajanapadas*. Although the lists vary, some names such as Vajji, Magadha, Kosala, Kuru, Panchala, Gandhara and Avanti occur frequently. Clearly, these were amongst the most important *Mahajanapadas*.
- While most *Mahajanapadas* were ruled by kings, some, known as *Ganas* or *Sanghas*, were oligarchies, where power was shared by a number of men, often collectively called *Rajas*. Both Mahavira and the Buddha belonged to such *Ganas*.
- Each *Mahajanapada* had a capital city, which was often fortified. Maintaining these fortified cities as well as providing for incipient armies and bureaucracies required resources.
- Brahmanas began composing Sanskrit texts known as the Dharmasutras. These laid down norms for rulers (as well as for other social categories), who were ideally expected to be Kshatriyas.

► Magadha

- Between the sixth and the fourth centuries BCE, Magadha (in present-day Bihar) became the most powerful *Mahajanapada*.
- Besides, iron mines (in present-day Jharkhand) were accessible and provided resources for tools and weapons. Elephants, an important component of the army, were found in forests in the region. Also, the Ganga and its tributaries provided a means of cheap and convenient communication.
- Initially, Rajagaha (the Prakrit name for present-day Rajgir in Bihar) was the capital of Magadha. Interestingly, the old name means "house of the king". Rajagaha was a fortified settlement, located amongst hills. Later, in the fourth century BCE, the capital was shifted to Pataliputra, present-day Patna, commanding routes of communication along the Ganga.

► An Early Empire

- Chandragupta Maurya, who founded the empire (c. 321 BCE), extended control as far as North-West as Afghanistan and Baluchistan and his grandson Ashoka, arguably the most famous ruler of early India, conquered Kalinga (present-day coastal Orissa).

► Mauryas

- Historians have used a variety of sources to reconstruct the history of the Mauryan Empire.
- These include archaeological finds, especially sculpture. Also valuable are contemporary works, such as the account of Megasthenes (a Greek ambassador to the court of Chandragupta Maurya), which survives in fragments.
- Besides, the Mauryas are mentioned in later Buddhist, Jaina and Puranic literature, as well as in Sanskrit literary works. While these are useful the inscriptions of Ashoka (c. 272/268-231 BCE) on rocks and pillars are often regarded as amongst the most valuable sources.
- Another source that is often used is the *Arthashastra*, parts of which were probably composed by Kautilya or Chanakya, traditionally believed to be the minister of Chandragupta.

► Ashoka

- Ashoka was the first ruler who inscribed his messages to his subjects and officials on stone surfaces – natural rocks as well as polished pillars.
- He used the inscriptions to proclaim what he understood to be *dhamma*. This included respect towards elders, generosity towards Brahmanas and

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Ashoka was the first ruler who inscribed his messages on rocks and polished pillars.

those who renounced worldly life, treating slaves and servants kindly and respect for religions and traditions other than one's own.

► Administration of Mauryan Empire

- There were five major political centres in the empire, the capital Pataliputra and the provincial centres of Taxila, Ujjayini, Tosali and Suvarnagiri, all mentioned in Asokan inscriptions.
- If we examine the content of these inscriptions, we find virtually the same message engraved everywhere – from the present-day North-West Frontier Provinces of Pakistan, to Andhra Pradesh, Orissa and Uttarakhand in India.
- The centres were carefully chosen, both Taxila and Ujjayini being situated on important long-distance trade routes, while Suvarnagiri (literally, the golden mountain) was possibly important for tapping the gold mines of Karnataka.
- Communication along both land and riverine routes was vital for the existence of the empire.
- Megasthenes mentions a committee with six sub-committees for co-ordinating military activity. Of these, one looked after the navy, the second managed transport and provisions, the third was responsible for foot-soldiers, the fourth for horses, the fifth for chariots and the sixth for elephants. The activities of the second sub-committee were rather varied: arranging for bullock carts to carry equipment, procuring food for soldiers and fodder for animals and recruiting servants and artisans to look after the soldiers.

► Importance of Mauryan Empire

- When historians began reconstructing early Indian history in the nineteenth century, the emergence of the Mauryan Empire was regarded as a major landmark.
- Some of the archaeological finds associated with the Mauryas, including stone sculpture, were considered to be examples of the spectacular art typical of empires. Many of these historians found the message on Asokan inscriptions very different from that of most other rulers.
- Ashoka was more powerful and industrious, as also more humble than later rulers who adopted grandiose titles. So it is not surprising that nationalist leaders in the twentieth century regarded him as an inspiring figure.

► New Notions of Kingship

► Chiefs and Kings in the South

- The new kingdoms that emerged in the Deccan and further South, including the chiefdoms of the Cholas, Cheras and Pandyas in Tamilakam (the name of the ancient Tamil country, which included parts of present-day Andhra Pradesh and Kerala).
- The Shakas, a people of Central Asian origin who established kingdoms in the North-Western and Western parts of the subcontinent, derived revenues from long-distance trade. Their social origins were often obscure, but as we will see in the case of the Satavahanas, once they acquired power they attempted to claim social status in a variety of ways.

- **Chiefs and Chiefdoms:** A chief is a powerful man whose position may or may not be hereditary. He derives support from his kinfolk. His functions may include performing special rituals, leadership in warfare and arbitrating disputes. He receives gifts from his subordinates (unlike kings who usually collect taxes) and often distributes these amongst his supporters. Generally, there are no regular armies and officials in chiefdoms.

► Divine Kings

- Kushanas (c. first century BCE–first century CE), who ruled over a vast kingdom extending from Central Asia to North-West India. Their history has been reconstructed from inscriptions and textual traditions. The notions of kingship they wished to project are perhaps best evidenced in their coins and sculpture.
- Colossal statues of Kushana rulers have been found installed in a shrine at Mat near Mathura (Uttar Pradesh).
- Many Kushana rulers also adopted the title *Devaputra* or 'Son of God', possibly inspired by Chinese rulers, who called themselves sons of heaven.
- Histories of the Gupta rulers have been reconstructed from literature, coins and inscriptions, including *Prashastis*, composed in praise of kings in particular, and patrons in general, by poets.



- The *Prayaga Prashasti* (also known as the Allahabad Pillar inscription) composed in Sanskrit by Harishena, the court poet of Samudragupta, arguably the most powerful of the Gupta rulers (c. fourth century CE), is a case in point.

► A Changing Countryside

► Kings and Peasants

- As this story indicates, the relationship between a king and his subjects, especially the rural population, could often be strained – kings frequently tried to fill their coffers by demanding high taxes and peasants particularly found such demands oppressive.
- Escaping into the forest remained an option, as reflected in the *Jataka* story. Meanwhile, other strategies aimed at increasing production to meet growing demand for taxes also came to be adopted.

► Strategies for Increasing Population

- One such strategy was the shift to plough agriculture, which spread in fertile alluvial river valleys such as those of the Ganga and the Kaveri from c. sixth century BCE.
- The iron-tipped ploughshare was used to turn the alluvial soil in areas which had high rainfall.
- In some parts of the Ganga valley, production of paddy was dramatically increased by the introduction of transplantation, although this meant back-breaking work for the producer.

- While the iron ploughshare led to a growth in agricultural productivity, its use was restricted to certain parts of the subcontinent.
- Another strategy adopted to increase agricultural production was the use of irrigation, through wells and tanks and less commonly, canals.

► Differences in Rural Society

- While these technologies often led to an increase in production, the benefits were very uneven.
- A growing differentiation amongst people engaged in agriculture – stories, especially within the Buddhist tradition, refer to landless agricultural labourers, small peasants, as well as large landholders. The term *Gahapati* was often used in Pali texts to designate the second and third categories. The large landholders, as well as the village headman (whose position was often hereditary), emerged as powerful figures and often exercised control over other cultivators.
- Early Tamil literature (the Sangam texts) also mentions different categories of people living in the villages – large landowners or *Vellalar*, ploughmen or *Uzhavar* and slaves or *Adimai*. It is likely that these differences were based on differential access to land, labour and some of the new technologies.

► Land Grants and New Rural Elites

- The records that have survived are generally about grants to religious institutions or to Brahmanas. Most inscriptions were in Sanskrit.
- From the early centuries of the Common Era, we find grants of land being made, many of which were recorded in inscriptions. Some of these inscriptions were on stone, but most were on copper plates.
- According to Sanskrit legal texts, women were not supposed to have independent access to resources such as land. However, the inscription indicates that Prabhavati had access to land, which she then granted. This may have been because she was a queen.
- The impact of land grants is a subject of heated debate among historians. Some feel that land grants were part of a strategy adopted by ruling lineages to extend agriculture to new areas. Others suggest that land grants were indicative of weakening political power.

► Towns and Trade

➤ New Cities

- The urban centres that emerged in several parts of the subcontinent from c. sixth century BCE.
- Many of these were capitals of *Mahajanapadas*. Virtually all major towns were located along routes of communication. Some such as Pataliputra were on riverine routes.
- Ujjayini, were along land routes and yet others, such as Puhar, were near the coast, from where sea routes began. Many cities like Mathura were bustling centres of commercial, cultural and political activity.

➤ Urban Populations: Elites and Craftspersons

- We have seen that kings and ruling elites lived in fortified cities. Although it is difficult to conduct extensive excavations at most sites because people live in these areas even today (unlike the Harappan cities).

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 Urban craftsmen used to produce mostly high-quality goods and catered to the needs of Court, feudal elites and their entourage.

- A wide range of artefacts have been recovered from them. These include fine pottery bowls and dishes, with a glossy finish, known as Northern Black Polished Ware, probably used by rich people and ornaments, tools, weapons, vessels, figurines, made of a wide range of materials – gold, silver, copper, bronze, ivory, glass, shell and terracotta.
- Sometimes, guilds or *shrenis*, organisations of craft producers and merchants, are mentioned as well. These guilds probably procured raw materials, regulated production and marketed the finished product. It is likely that craftsmen used a range of iron tools to meet the growing demand of urban elites.

➤ Trade in the Subcontinent

- From the sixth century BCE, land and river routes criss-crossed the subcontinent and extended in various directions – overland into Central Asia and beyond and overseas.
- Those who traversed these routes included peddlers who probably travelled on foot and merchants who travelled with caravans of bullock carts and pack-animals.
- A wide range of goods were carried from one place to another – salt, grain, cloth, metal ores and finished products, stone, timber, medicinal plants, to name a few. Spices, especially pepper, were in high demand in the Roman Empire, as were textiles and medicinal plants and these were all transported across the Arabian Sea to the Mediterranean.

➤ Coins and Kings

- To some extent, exchanges were facilitated by the introduction of coinage. Punch-marked coin made of silver and copper (c. sixth century BCE onwards) were amongst the earliest to be minted and used.
- Attempts made to identify the symbols on punch-marked coins with specific ruling dynasties.
- The first coins to bear the names and images of rulers were issued by the Indo-Greeks, who established control over the North-Western part of the subcontinent c. second century BCE.
- The Kushanas, however, issued the largest hoards of gold coins c. first century CE.
- Roman emperors and the Parthian rulers of Iran had also issued gold coins that have been found from several sites in North India and Central Asia. The widespread use of gold coins indicates the enormous value of the transactions that were taking place.
- Hoards of Roman coins have been found from archaeological sites in South India.
- Coins were also issued by tribal republics such as that of the Yaudheyas of Punjab and Haryana (c. first century CE).
- Some of the most spectacular gold coins were issued by the Gupta rulers.
- These coins facilitated long-distance transactions from which kings also benefited.

► Back to Basics: Deciphering Inscriptions

► Deciphering Brahmi

- Most scripts that used to write modern Indian languages are derived from Brahmi, the script used in most Asokan inscriptions.
- From the late eighteenth century, European scholars aided by Indian Pandits worked backwards from contemporary Bengali and Devanagari (the script used to write Hindi) manuscripts, comparing their letters with older specimens.
- Scholars who studied early inscriptions sometimes assumed these were in Sanskrit, although the earliest inscriptions were, in fact, in Prakrit. It was only after decades of painstaking investigations by several epigraphists that James Prinsep was able to decipher Asokan Brahmi in 1838.

► Deciphering Kharosthi

- The story of the decipherment of Kharosthi, the script used in inscriptions in the North-West, is different.
- Coins of Indo-Greek kings who ruled over the area (C. second-first centuries BCE) have facilitated matters. These coins contain the names of kings written in Greek and Kharosthi scripts. European scholars who could read the former compared the letters.

► The Limitations of Inscriptional Evidence

- **Technical Limitations:** Sometimes, there are technical limitations, letters are very faintly engraved and thus reconstructions are uncertain.

► **Damaged or Missing Letters:** Sometimes, important letters are damaged or missing in the inscriptions. It makes the work of epigraphists more difficult.

► **Lack of Clarity:** It is not always easy to be sure about the exact meaning of the words used in inscriptions, some of which may be specific to a particular place or time.

► **Undeciphered Inscriptions:** Although several thousand inscriptions have been discovered, not all have been deciphered, published and translated. Besides, many more inscriptions must have existed, which have not survived the ravages of time.

► **Non-relevance of Inscriptions:** There is another, perhaps more fundamental, problem, not everything that we may consider politically or economically significant was necessarily recorded in inscriptions. For instance, routine agricultural practices and the joys and sorrows of daily existence find no mention in inscriptions, which focus, more often than not, on grand, unique events.

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The content of the inscriptions project the views of the commissioning person.



Practice Exercise



Multiple Choice Questions

Q 1. Consider the following statements:

- (i) Sixteen states known as Mahajanapadas are mentioned in Buddhist and Jaina texts.
- (ii) The most powerful Mahajanapada was Magadha.
- (iii) Initially the capital of Magadha was Pataliputra.
- (iv) Iron mines were present in Magadha at that time.

Choose the correct statements.

- a. (i) and (iv)
- b. (ii) and (iii)
- c. (i), (iii) and (iv)
- d. (i), (ii) and (iv)

Q 2. During the, the capital city of Magadha was shifted to Pataliputra.

- a. 6th century BCE
- b. 4th century BCE
- c. 2nd century BCE
- d. 3rd century CE

Q 3. Which one of the following pairs is incorrectly matched?

- a. Magadha – Most powerful Mahajanapada between 6th and 4th century BCE
- b. Panchala – A Mahajanapada
- c. Rajgir – Capital city of a Mahajanapada
- d. Vaishali – A Mahajanapada

Q 4. Who among the following was the composer of Prayaga Prashasti? (CBSE SQP 2022-23)

- a. Banabhatta
- b. Charak
- c. Harishena
- d. Surdas

Q 5. Which of these was the most powerful Mahajanapada from 6th to 4th century BCE?

- a. Kuru
- b. Magadha
- c. Panchala
- d. Gandhara

Q 6. Which one of the following pairs is correctly matched?

- a. Chandragupta – Grandson of Bimbisara
- b. Kautilya – Also known as Brahmanas
- c. Principles of dhamma – Simple and almost universally applicable
- d. A principle of dhamma – Respect for your own religion

Q 7. What is the meaning of the title Devanampiyasa adopted by Ashoka?

- a. Pleasant to be held
- b. Beloved of the Gods
- c. Both a. and b.
- d. Neither a. nor b.

Q 8. He was called as 'Devanampiya' and 'Piyadassi'. He ruled the Indian subcontinent from C. 268 to 232 BCE. He is remembered for the propagation of Dhamma.

Who among the following ruler has been described in the above information? (CBSE SQP 2021, Term-1)

- a. Ashoka
- b. Chandragupta Maurya
- c. Samudragupta
- d. Ajatasattu

Q 9. Harishena was the court poet of

- a. Samudragupta
- b. Chandragupta II
- c. Ashoka
- d. Ajatasattu

Q 10. The Manusmrti was compiled

- a. before Ashoka's rule started
- b. between 6th century BCE to 6th century CE
- c. between 2nd century BCE and 2nd century CE
- d. None of the above

Q 11. Choose the correct option from the following statements with reference to the Magadha empire.

(CBSE SQP 2023-24)

- a. Initially Pataliputra was the capital of Magadha.
- b. Chandragupta was one of the early rulers of Magadha who ruled in 6 BCE.
- c. Magadha became the most powerful Mahajanapada in 6 BCE.
- d. Ashoka was the founder of Mauryan dynasty.

Q 12. Which of the following statements is not correct?

- a. Punch marked coins were only made of copper
- b. The first gold coins were issued by Kushanas
- c. The first coins to bear the names and images of rulers were issued by Indo-Greeks
- d. Copper coins were issued by tribal republics

Q 13. Land grants during the rule of Chandragupta II provide some insight into the relationship between which of the following parties?

- a. Artisans and hunter-gatherers
- b. Fishermen and Samantas
- c. Pastoralists and officials
- d. The state and cultivators

Q 14. Which of the following empire issued gold coins for the very first time in first century CE?

(CBSE SQP 2022-23)

- a. Gupta Empire
- b. Maurya Empire
- c. Kushana Empire
- d. Yaudheya Empire

Q 15. Which of the following ruler identified themselves as 'Devaputra' and their statues have been found in shrines in Mathura as well as Afghanistan?

- a. Maurya rulers
- b. Kushana rulers
- c. Satavahana chiefs
- d. Shaka chiefs

Q 16. Arrange the pillar inscriptions of Ashoka in the following locations in correct sequence from East to West:

- (i) Kaushambi
- (ii) Meerut
- (iii) Sahasram
- (iv) Sarnath

Codes:

- a. (ii), (i), (iv), (iii)
- b. (iii), (i), (iv), (ii)
- c. (iii), (iv), (i), (ii)
- d. (i), (iii), (iv), (ii)

Q 17. Arrange the following events in correct chronological sequence from the earliest to the latest:

- (i) Arabs conquer Sind
- (ii) Beginning of Gupta rule
- (iii) End of Mauryan Empire
- (iv) Alexander's invasion

Codes:

- a. (i), (ii), (iv), (iii)
- b. (ii), (iii), (i), (iv)
- c. (iii), (iv), (ii), (i)
- d. (iv), (iii), (ii), (i)

Q 18. Which of the following is incorrectly matched location with its properties?

- a. Ujjayini – Centre of commercial cultural and political activity
- b. Puhar – On a land trade route
- c. Pataliputra – On a riverine trade route
- d. Mathura – On a sea trade route

Q 19. Which of the following statements about Mahajanapadas are correct?

- (i) Mahajanapadas were Magadha, Koshala, Gandhara and Avanti only.
- (ii) Most Mahajanapadas were ruled by kings.
- (iii) Some, known as ganas or sanghas, were oligarchies ruled under rajas.
- (iv) Each Mahajanapadas had a capital city, which was often fortified. (CBSE SQP 2021 Term-1)

Codes:

- a. (i), (ii) and (iii)
- b. (ii), (iii) and (iv)
- c. (i), (iii) and (iv)
- d. (i), (ii) and (iv)

Q 20. Which of the following are the major literary sources to reconstruct the history of Mauryan Empire? (CBSE 2021 Term-1)

- (i) Work of Megasthenes, a Greek ambassador.
- (ii) Arthashastra of Kautilya.
- (iii) Buddhist, Jaina and Puranic literature.
- (iv) Meghaduta of Kalidasa.

Codes:

- a. (i), (ii) and (iv)
- b. (ii), (iii) and (iv)
- c. (i), (ii) and (iii)
- d. (i), (iii) and (iv)

Q 21. Identify the name of the historian from the following information:

- (i) He was an officer in the mint of the East India Company.
- (ii) He deciphered Brahmi and Kharosthi, two script used in the earliest inscriptions and coins.
- (iii) His findings gave a new direction to investigations into early Indian political history.

Codes:

- a. Elliot
- b. Lucy Alkin
- c. James Prinsep
- d. None of these

Q 22. Select the correct statements:

- a. Mahavira and Buddha did not belong to Ganas
- b. Megasthenes deciphered Kharosthi and Brahmi scripts
- c. Arthashastra was written by Kautilya
- d. Chandragupta Maurya conquered Kalinga



Assertion & Reason Type Questions

Directions (Q.Nos. 23-28): In the following questions given below, there are two statements marked as Assertion (A) and Reason (R). Read the statements and choose the correct option:

- a. Both (A) and (R) are true and (R) is the correct explanation of (A).
- b. Both (A) and (R) are true, but (R) is not the correct explanation of (A).
- c. (A) is true, but (R) is false.
- d. (A) is false, but (R) is true.

Q 23. Assertion (A): Ashoka inscribed his messages to his subjects and officials on stone surfaces.

Reason (R): He wanted to proclaim what religion should be followed by all. (CBSE SQP 2023-24)

Q 24. Assertion (A): Between 6th and 4th centuries BCE, Magadha became the most powerful Mahajanapada.

Reason (R): Magadha had agricultural productive area, Iron mines and vast forest area.

(CBSE 2021 Term-1)

Q 25. Assertion (A): Historians use a variety of sources to understand developments over the ages.

Reason (R): These sources include inscription, texts, coins, sculptures and other visual materials.

Q 26. Assertion (A): Ashoka inscribed his messages to his subjects and officials on stone surfaces.

Reason (R): He used it as a means of communicating with his people to spread the message of Dhamma.

Q 27. Assertion (A): Very large size statues of Kushana rulers have been found from many places.

Reason (R): The Kushana rulers considered themselves as son of God.

Q 28. Assertion (A): To some extent, exchanges were facilitated by the introduction of coinage.

Reason (R): These coins facilitated long-distance transactions from which kings also benefited.



Fill in the Blank Type Questions

Q 29. Ashoka erected a pillar at to mark that he had visited that place. (CBSE SQP 2023-24)

- a. Sarnath
- b. Sanchi
- c. Bodhi Gaya
- d. Lumbini

Q 30. The special officers who were appointed to spread the message of Dhamma were known as

- a. Ashoka Mahamatta
- b. Dhamma Mahamatta
- c. Kushana
- d. Magadha Mahamatta

Q 31. New modes of disposal of the dead including the making of elaborate stone structures were known as

- a. Stupa
- b. Brahmi script
- c. Inscription
- d. Megaliths

Q 32. was composed in praise of kings by poets.

- a. Prashastis
- b. Prinsep
- c. Piyadassi
- d. None of these

Q 33. The crop was grown by transplantation.

- a. Prinsep
- b. Piyadassi
- c. Paddy
- d. None of these

Q 34. script was used in inscriptions in the North-West.

- a. Kharosthi
- b. Brahmi
- c. Both a. and b
- d. None of these



Correct and Rewrite Type Questions

Q 35. In 1400 BCE, after the extinction of the Harappa Civilisation, Rigveda was composed by the people living along the Ganga and its tributaries.

Q 36. Early Vedic and Jaina texts In fourth century BCE mention, amongst other things, eighteen states known as Mahajanapadas.

Q 37. During the fifth century BCE, Dharmasutras were composed by the Brahmanas In Brahmi, it laid down norms for the rulers.

Q 38. Early Sangam texts, mentions different categories of people living in the towns large landowners of Uzhavar, ploughmen or vellalar and slaves or adimai.

Q 39. Prabhavati Gupta was the daughter of Samudragupta and was married to the Prince of Rashtrakuta Dynasty.

Q 40. Megasthenes visited the court of Samudragupta as a guest.



Match the Following Type Questions

Q 41. Match the following advances in epigraphy with their approximate dates and select the correct option accordingly:

Advances In Epigraphy	Approximate Dates
A. First Issues of Epigraphia Carnatica	1. 1784
B. First issue of Epigraphia Indica	2. 1838
C. Founding of the Asiatic Society (Bengal)	3. 1886
D. Decipherment of Brahmi by Prinsep	4. 1888

Codes:

- A B C D
- a. 3 1 4 2
- b. 2 4 3 1
- c. 4 3 1 2
- d. 3 4 1 2

Q 42. Match the following:

Column I	Column II
A. Mahapadma Nanda	1. Kushana dynasty
B. Kanishka	2. Magadha
C. Samudragupta	3. Maurya dynasty
D. Ashoka	4. Gupta dynasty

Codes:

- | | |
|------------|------------|
| A B C D | A B C D |
| a. 1 2 3 4 | b. 3 1 2 4 |
| c. 4 3 1 2 | d. 2 1 4 3 |

Q 43. Match the following:

Column I	Column II
A. Mathura	1. Samudragupta pillar inscription
B. Allahabad (Prayagraj)	2. Coastal town in South India
C. Rajagaha	3. Commercial and political capital under Kushanas
D. Puhar	4. Capital of Magadha

Codes:

- | | |
|------------|------------|
| A B C D | A B C D |
| a. 3 1 4 2 | b. 1 3 2 4 |
| c. 2 1 3 4 | d. 1 2 3 4 |

Answers

1. (d) 2. (b) 3. (d) 4. (c) 5. (b)
6. (c) 7. (b) 8. (a) 9. (a) 10. (c)
11. (c) 12. (a) 13. (d) 14. (c) 15. (b)
16. (c) 17. (d) 18. (b) 19. (b) 20. (c)
21. (c) 22. (c) 23. (b) 24. (b) 25. (b)
26. (a) 27. (a) 28. (a) 29. (d) 30. (b)
31. (d) 32. (a) 33. (c) 34. (a)
35. In 1500 BCE, after the extinction of the Harappa Civilisation, Rigveda was composed by the people living along the Indus and its tributaries.
36. Early Vedic and Jaina texts in sixth century BCE mention, amongst other things, sixteen states known as Mahajanapadas.
37. During the sixth century BCE, Dharmasutras were composed by the Brahmanas in Sanskrit, it laid down norms for the rulers.
38. Early Sangam texts mention different categories of people living in the villages large landowners or vellalar, ploughmen or Uzhavar and slaves or adimai.
39. Prabhavati Gupta was the daughter of Chandragupta II and was married to the Prince of Vakataka Dynasty.
40. Megasthenes visited the court of Chandragupta Maurya as a guest.
41. (d) 42. (d) 43. (a)



Picture Based Type Questions

Q 1. Study this figure of the 'Lion Capital' carefully and answer any three of the following questions by choosing the correct options:



(i) Why is this Lion Capital considered important today?

- a. It was well designed and carved beautifully from precious gemstones.
- b. It signifies the enlightenment of the Buddha.
- c. It is adopted as the official Emblem of India in 1950.
- d. It is included in the National Flag of India.

(ii) Which of the following is the significance of Lion Capital of Ashoka?

- a. It is adopted as official Emblem of India.
- b. The Wheel from its base has been placed in the centre of the National Flag of India.
- c. Both a. and b.
- d. None of the above

(iii) This Lion Capital has been erected by which of the following ancient empires of India?

- a. Maurya Dynasty
- b. Kushana Dynasty
- c. Satavahana Dynasty
- d. Gupta Empire

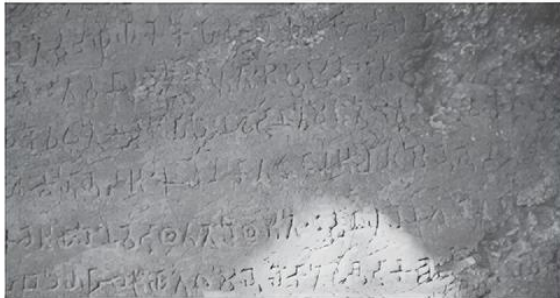
(iv) Which of the following animal is represented in the Lion Capital of Ashoka?

- a. Four Asiatic lions, Elephant
- b. Horse and Bull
- c. Both a. and b.
- d. Tiger and Deer

Answers

- (i) (c) It is adopted as the official Emblem of Indian in 1950.
- (ii) (c) Both a. and b.
- (iii) (a) Maurya Dynasty
- (iv) (c) Both a. and b.

Q 2. Study this figure of Asokan inscription carefully and answer any three of the following questions by choosing the correct option:



- (i) Which of the following historical evidences was collected from such inscriptions?
- General administration
 - Land grants to the learned person
 - Both a. and b.
 - Irregular agricultural practices
- (ii) Why do Ashoka erected such inscription all over the country?
- To propagate the essence of Dhamma
 - To establish direct communication with his subjects
 - Both a. and b.
 - To instigate fear among his adversaries
- (iii) The first person to decipher, the 'Asokan inscription' was:
- James Prinsep
 - Alexander Graham Bell
 - Colin Mackenzie
 - R.E.M. Wheeler
- (iv) Which of the following is true about Asokan inscription?
- Most Asokan inscription were in the Prakrit languages
 - Asokan inscription in North-West of the subcontinent were in Greek and Aramaic
 - The Aramaic and Greek scripts were used for inscriptions in Afghanistan
 - All of the above

Answers

- (i) (c) Both a. and b. (ii) (c) Both a. and b.
(iii) (a) James Prinsep (iv) (d) All of the above



Source Based Type Questions

Source 1

Read the source given below and answer the questions that follow by choosing the most appropriate option:

Prabhavati Gupta was the daughter of one of the most important rulers in early Indian history, Chandragupta II (C.375-415CE). She was married

into another important ruling family, that of the Vakatakas, who were powerful in the Deccan. According to Sanskrit legal texts, women were not supposed to have independent access to resources such as land. However, the inscription indicates that Prabhavati had access to land, which she then granted. This may have been because she was a queen (one of the few known from early Indian history) and her situation was therefore exceptional. It is also possible that the provisions of legal texts were not uniformly implemented.

Q 1. What was the main reason behind, Prabhavati Gupta has access to land which was forbidden by Sanskrit texts?

- She belonged to the ruling dynasty and was a queen
- Provision of ancient Sanskrit legal texts were not uniformly implemented.
- Both a. and b.
- None of the above

Q 2. Choose the correct option:

Assertion (A): Prabhavati Gupta had an access to land resources and made land grants.

Reason (R): She belonged to Chandala caste which was outside the peril of Hindu caste system.

Codes:

- Both (A) and (R) are true and (R) is the correct explanation of (A).
- Both (A) and (R) are true, but (R) is not the correct explanation of (A).
- (A) is true, but (R) is false.
- (A) is false, but (R) is true.

Q 3. What was the main reason for establishing matrimonial alliance in ancient India?

- To establish peace among two ruling dynasties
- To get strategic benefits such as access to natural and mineral resources
- To create alliance among two neighbouring ruling dynasties against a common adversaries
- All of the above

Q 4. According to the ancient Sanskrit texts, women had access to which of the following properties?

- Stridhana
- Land
- Ancestral properties
- All of these

Answers

1. (c) 2. (c) 3. (d) 4. (a)

Source 2

Read the following source carefully and answer the questions that follow:

The Sudarshana (beautiful) Lake in Gujarat

The Sudarshana lake was an artificial reservoir.

We know about it from a rock inscription (2nd century CE) in Sanskrit, composed to record the achievements of the Shaka ruler Rudradaman.

The inscription mentions that the lake, with embankments and water channels, was built by a local governor during the rule of the Mauryas. However, a terrible storm broke the embankments and water gushed out of the lake. Rudradaman, who was then ruling in the area, claimed to have got the lake repaired using his own resources, without imposing any tax on his subjects.

Another inscription on the same rock (C. 5th century) mentions how one of the rulers of the Gupta dynasty got the lake repaired once again.

Q 1. Why did this lake require repair?

Ans. The Sudarshana lake required repair because a terrible storm broke the embankments of the lake and water gushed out of the lake.

Q 2. How do we get to know about the Sudarshana lake?

Ans. We get to know about the Sudarshana lake from a rock inscription (2nd century CE) in Sanskrit, composed to record the achievements of the Shaka ruler, Rudradaman.

Q 3. Explain why did rulers make arrangements for irrigations.

Ans. Rulers made arrangements for irrigation that included the repair of lakes because irrigation was crucial for the advancement of agriculture and food security. Irrigation was adopted to increase the agricultural production through the provision of lakes, wells, tanks and canals.

Thus, better agricultural production would in turn lead to better economy.

Source 3

Read the following source carefully and answer the questions that follow:

Prabhavati Gupta and the Village of Danguna

This is what Prabhavati Gupta states in her inscription. Prabhavati Gupta commands the Gramakutumbinas (householders/peasants living in the village), Brahmanas and others living in the village of Danguna.

“Be it known to you that on the twelfth (lunar day) of the bright (fortnight) of Kartika, we have, in order to increase our religious merit donated this village with the pouring out of water, to the Acharya (teacher)

Chanalasvamin ... you should obey all (his) commands ...

We confer on (him) the following exemptions typical of an Agrahara ... (this village is) not to be entered by soldiers and policeman; (it is) exempt

from (the obligation to provide) grass, (animal); hides as seats and charcoal (to touring royal officers), exempt from (the royal prerogative of) purchasing fermenting liquors and digging (salt); exempt from (the right to) mines and Khadira trees, exempt from (the obligation to supply) flowers and milk; (it is donated) together with (to right to) hidden treasures and deposits (and) together with major and minor taxes”

This charter has been written in the thirteenth (regional) year. It has been engraved by Chakradasa.

Q 1. Examine the importance of the charter issued by Prabhavati Gupta.

Ans. The importance of the charter issued by Prabhavati Gupta indicated her supreme authority. Even though she was a woman but she had an access to resources which was forbidden for women during that era.

Q 2. What was the condition of women in that era?

Ans. Women during that era were not supposed to have independent access to resources such as land. But the inscription shows that Prabhavati Gupta had the authority to access the land.

Q 3. How did the inscription give us an idea about the rural population?

Ans. Through the inscription we come to know about the rural population which included Brahmanas and peasants, as well as others who were expected to provide a range of produce to the king or his representatives.



Very Short Answer Type Questions

Q 1. Give two features of Mahajanapada.

Ans. The two features of Mahajanapadas are:

- (i) Mahajanapadas had its own capital and it was fortified.
- (ii) Mahajanapadas developed gradually a standing army and bureaucracy.

Q 2. Write the difference between oligarchy and monarchy.

Ans. Oligarchy is a government run by only a few persons, often the wealthy. while monarchy is a government in which sovereignty is embodied within a single hereditary head of state.

Q 3. Who was the grandson of Chandragupta Maurya?

Ans. The grandson of Chandragupta Maurya was Ashoka, probably the most famous ruler of early India.

Q 4. Mention any one strategy used by Mauryans to increase agricultural production.

Ans. The strategies used by Mauryans to increase agricultural production included use of an Iron tipped ploughshare, use of irrigation and introduction of transplantation of paddy saplings.

Q 5. Name the capital of Magadha.

Ans. Rajagaha was the earliest capital but it was shifted to Pataliputra in the fourth century BCE.

Q 6. What do we get to know about Mauryan army?

Ans. According to Greek sources, the Mauryan ruler had a standing army of 6,00,000 foot-soldiers, 30,000 cavalry and 9,000 elephants.

Q 7. Why was Mauryan Empire regarded as a major landmark in the early Indian history? (CBSE 2015)

Ans. The Mauryan Empire was regarded as a major landmark in the early Indian history because for the first time Chandragupta Maurya founded a vast empire which extended as far North-West upto Afghanistan and Baluchistan.

Q 8. Which foreigner gave valuable information about the Mauryan Empire?

Ans. Megasthenes (a Greek ambassador to the court of Chandragupta Maurya), gave valuable information about the Mauryan Empire.

Q 9. How does Arthashastra help in the reconstruction of the history?

Ans. The Arthashastra reconstruct the history by laying down minute details of administrative and military organisation of Mauryan history.

Q 10. Give the meaning of the term Gahapati.

Ans. A Gahapati was the owner, master or head of a household and the owner of the resources, land, animals and other things that belonged to the household.

Q 11. Mention any one importance of inscriptions.

Ans. The importance of inscriptions was that they permanently recorded the achievements, activities or ideas of those who commissioned them and included the exploits of kings or donations made by women and men to religious institutions.

Q 12. Define Numismatics.

Ans. Numismatics is the study of coins, including visual elements such as scripts and images, metallurgical analysis and the contexts in which they have been found.

Q 13. Why is James Prinsep's contribution considered as a historic development in Indian epigraphy? (CBSE 2015)

Ans. James Prinsep contributed a lot in the Indian epigraphy by deciphering two scripts, viz Brahmi and Kharosthi, in the earliest inscriptions and coins.

Q 14. Name the last ruler of the Mauryan dynasty?

Ans. The last ruler of the Mauryan dynasty was Brihadratha.

Q 15. In which language the earliest inscriptions were written?

Ans. The earliest inscriptions were written in Prakrit, a name for languages used by common people.

Q 16. Why did rulers identify themselves with a variety of deities?

Ans. The rulers identified themselves with a variety of deities because they considered themselves God-like and adopted the title of Devaputra or 'Son of God'.

Q 17. How have the Prashastis drawn the factual information about the Gupta rulers? (CBSE 2015)

Ans. Prashastis were important sources for reconstructing the histories of Gupta rulers. Historians tried to draw factual information from such compositions. These were composed in praise of kings in particular and patrons in general by poets.

Q 18. Name three types of sources about the history of Gupta rulers.

Ans. (i) Literature
(ii) Coins and inscriptions
(iii) Prashastis, composed by poets in praise of kings.

Q 19. What are the four qualities of the rulers as mentioned in Prashasti of Samudragupta?

Ans. The four qualities of the rulers are:

- (i) Incomprehensible
- (ii) Compassion
- (iii) The supreme being
- (iv) Kindness to mankind

Q 20. How did Kushana rulers exemplify themselves with the high status? (CBSE 2015)

Ans. The Kushana rulers wished to project the notions of kingship in their coins and sculpture, so as to exemplify themselves with a high status.

Q 21. Who were Pativedakas?

Ans. Pativedakas functioned as special reporters of the king. They kept the king informed of public opinion.

Q 22. Who deciphered Brahmi and Kharosthi script and when?

Ans. The Brahmi and Kharosthi script was deciphered by James Prinsep in 19th century.



Identify the Image Type Question ➤

Q 1. Identify the following image:



Ans. The image shows the Lion Capital of Ashoka installed at Sarnath.



TIP

Before giving the answer, Students should have proper look at the image given in the question.



Short Answer Type Questions

Q 1. Critically examine the limitations of the inscriptional evidence in understanding political and economic history of India. (CBSE SQP 2023-24)

- Ans.**
- (i) Although several thousand inscriptions have been discovered, not all have been deciphered, published and translated.
 - (ii) Many more inscriptions must have existed, which have not survived the ravages of time.
 - (iii) The content of inscriptions almost invariably projects the perspective of the person(s) who commissioned them.
 - (iv) Routine agricultural practices and the joys and sorrows of daily existence find no mention in inscriptions.
 - (v) From the mid-twentieth century onwards, issues such as economic change, and the ways in which different social groups emerged have assumed far more importance for the historians which led to fresh investigations of old sources, and the development of new strategies of analysis.
 - (vi) Thus, the inscriptions had limitations in interpreting the political and economic history of India.

Q 2. Describe the salient features of Mahajanapadas.

- Ans.** The salient features of Mahajanapadas are as follows:
- (i) As per Buddhist and Jain texts, there were 16 Mahajanapadas. The most important Mahajanapadas are Vajji, Magadha, Kosala, Kuru, Panchala, Gandhara and Avanti.
 - (ii) Most Mahajanapadas were ruled by Kings, some known as Ganas or Sanghas, power was shared by a number of men, often collectively called Rajas.
 - (iii) Each Mahajanapadas had a capital city, which was often fortified. Maintaining these fortified cities as well as providing for incipient armies and bureaucracies required resources.
 - (iv) Rulers were advised to collect taxes and tribute from cultivators, traders and artisans.
 - (v) Mahajanapadas developed gradually a standing army and bureaucracy.
 - (vi) Sometimes raids on neighbouring states were conducted for acquiring wealth. These raids were recognised as legitimate means.

Q 3. How do historians reconstruct the lives of ordinary people?

Ans. Ordinary people could not leave behind any historical evidence about their life. Hence, the historians use a variety of sources to reconstruct the lives of the common people during ancient times.

These sources are:

- (i) Different types of food grains and animal bones have been found during excavation. It gives us information about dietary practices of people.
- (ii) Remains of houses and pottery give an idea of the lives of common men.
- (iii) There is a mention of different types of crafts and craftsmen on certain inscriptions. It is a very good source of knowing economic life of people.
- (iv) Changing agricultural tools and equipments throw some light on changing life of ordinary people.
- (v) Historians also depend upon folklore (Jatakas and Panchatantra) to reconstruct the lives of the people during ancient times.

Q 4. Compare and contrast the list of things given to the Pandyan chief with those produced in the village of Danguna. Do you notice any similarity or difference?

Ans. Things Given to the Pandyan Chief: The gifts given to the Pandyan chief include ivory, fragrant wood, fans made of the hair of deer, honey, sandalwood, red ochre, antimony, turmeric, cardamom, pepper, coconuts, mangoes, medicinal plants, fruits, onions, sugarcane, flowers, areca nut, bananas, baby tigers, etc.

Things Produced in the Village of Danguna: The village of Danguna produced grass, animal hides, charcoal, fermenting liquors, salt, khadira trees, flowers and milk.

Similarity:

Products that are directly achieved from plants and animals have few of the similarities. For example, flowers, fruits, ivory, etc.

Difference:

- (i) There are huge differences in the product of two community. By the sources we can see that the people are living in a very different places. The one offering gifts to Pandyan chiefs are people that are living in forest whereas those of Danguna are settled in settlement.
- (ii) Danguna people products are mostly cultivated or produced by other raw materials. For example, animal hides, mined products. Whereas gift given to Pandyan chief were purely the product of forest, for example, baby animal, fruits, flowers, etc.

Q 5. List some of the problems faced by epigraphists.

Ans. Some of the problems faced by epigraphists are as follows:

(i) **Technical Limitations:** Sometimes letters are very faintly engraved and thus doubts arise. Also, inscriptions may be damaged or letters missing.

It is not always easy to be sure about the exact meaning of the words used in inscriptions. Some of which may be specific to a particular place or time. It makes the work of epigraphists more difficult.

(ii) **Problem of Deciphering:** Several thousand inscriptions have been discovered, not all have been deciphered, published and translated. Besides many more inscriptions must have existed, which have not survived the ravages of time.

(iii) **Fundamental Problem:** It is not everything, that we may consider politically or economically significant was necessarily recorded in inscriptions. For example, routine agricultural practices and the joys and sorrows of daily existence find no mention in inscriptions that focus more often than not, on grand, unique events.

The epigraphy alone does not provide a full understanding of political and economic history for which historians often questioned both old and new evidences.

Q 6. Describe any three features of ancient numismatics.

(CBSE 2023)

Ans. The features of ancient numismatics are given below:

- (i) Ancient coins often featured intricate designs and inscriptions that provide valuable historical, cultural and artistic information.
- (ii) The study of ancient coins sheds light on the monetary systems and economic structures of ancient civilisation.
- (iii) Ancient numismatics plays a crucial role in establishing chronologies and understanding the historical context of various civilisations.

Q 7. Why is the 6th century BCE often regarded as a major turning point in early Indian history?

(CBSE 2015)

Ans. The 6th century BCE is considered most important in the history of India on account of the following reasons:

- (i) **Use of Iron:** The use of iron became extensive. Iron implements helped in clearing deep forests areas that increased the area of cultivation.
- (ii) **Coinage:** Large scale use of coins which was essential for trade and commerce.
- (iii) **Mahajanapadas:** Rise of Mahajanapadas (sixteen kingdoms) like Magadha, Koshala, Gandhara, Avanti, Kuru, etc.

(iv) **New Forms of Religions:** Buddhism, Jainism, Ajivikas, Charvakas, etc. come to the fore.

Q 8. Describe the economic and social conditions of the people living in rural areas from 600 BCE to 600 CE. (CBSE 2018)

Ans. The economic and social conditions of the people living in the rural areas from 600 BCE to 600 CE can be described as follows:

(i) **Economic Conditions:** Different strategies such as:

- (a) shift to plough agriculture.
- (b) iron ploughshare for the growth in agricultural productivity.
- (c) the use of irrigation through wells and tanks and less commonly, canals were adopted for increasing production.
- (d) moreover, in some parts of Ganga valley, production of paddy was dramatically increased by the introduction of transplantation.
- (e) exchanges were facilitated by the introduction of coinage. Silver and copper coins made exchange easy.

(ii) **Social Conditions:** There was a growing differentiation amongst people engaged in agriculture: landless agricultural labourers, small peasants, as well as large householders.

- (a) Landlords imposed large taxes on farmers or common people. To pay these taxes, farmers tried to increase the agricultural production.
- (b) Women were not given independent access to resources like land. But women from royal family like Prabhavati Gupta, daughter of Chandragupta II had access to land.

Q 9. Explain why the communication along both land and riverine routes was vital for the existence of the empire during the Mauryan period.

Ans. During the Mauryan period, communication along both land and riverine routes was vital for the existence of the empire because:

- (i) The Mauryan empire was a very vast empire. It was extended from modern Afghanistan to remote areas of the South or Karnataka, in West from Gujarat to Bihar and Bengal in the East. Thus, for political control, military activity and people's movement, both land and riverine routes were required.
- (ii) Communication along both land and riverine routes was vital for internal as well as external trade and commerce. It was also necessary for the exchange of ideas and knowledge etc.

Q 10. Critically examine the limitations of the inscriptional evidences in understanding political and economic history of India. (CBSE 2015)

Ans. The limitations of inscriptional evidences in understanding the political and economic history of India are as follow:

- (i) Thousands of inscriptions were discovered but only a few were deciphered and translated.
- (ii) The context of the inscription only gave a view of the perspective of the person who commissioned it. For example, routine agricultural practices, the joys and sorrows of common people were not mentioned in these inscriptions.
- (iii) From the mid 20th century, historians became more interested in political and economic change in society. This led to the fresh investigation of old sources to understand the ways in which the different social groups had emerged.

Here, inscriptions had their own limitations to interpret political and economic history of India.

Q 11. Mention any two pieces of evidence which referred to Ashoka as the most popular ruler of the 6th century BCE.

Ans. Ashoka was the most popular ruler of the 6th century BCE as:

- (i) Historians found that the messages on Asokan inscriptions were very different from that of most rulers and suggested that he was more powerful, industrious and humble than other rulers.
- (ii) Ashoka tried to hold his vast empire together by propagating Dhamma, the principles that was universally accepted by all. He was the first ruler who inscribed his messages to his subjects and officials on stone surface.

Q 12. What is the role played by coins in the decipherment of Kharosthi script?

Ans. The role played by the coins in the decipherment of Kharosthi script was:

- (i) The coins of Indo-Greek kings who ruled over the North-Western part of the subcontinent in the second century BCE were analysed by the epigraphists.
- (ii) The Indo-Greek coins contain the names of kings written in Greek and Kharosthi scripts. The Kharosthi script was compared with the Greek one.
- (iii) The European scholars who could read Greek compared it with Kharosthi. There were few similarities e.g., letter 'a' was used in both scripts for writing names such as 'Apollodotus'.
- (iv) James Prinsep identified the language of Kharosthi as Prakrit. After that, it became possible to read longer inscriptions easily.

Q 13. Discuss the trade in the subcontinent during 6th century BCE.

Ans. From the sixth century BCE, land and river routes criss-crossed the subcontinent and extended in various directions—overland into central Asia and beyond and overseas, from ports that dotted the coastline – extending across the Arabian sea to East and North Africa and West Asia and through to Bay of Bengal to South-East Asia and China.

Those who traversed these routes included:

- (i) **Peddlers:** They probably travelled on foot.
- (ii) **Merchants:** They travelled with Caravans of bullock carts and pack animals.
- (iii) **Seafarers:** Their ventures were risky but highly profitable.

A wide range of goods were carried from one place to another there were salt, grain, cloth, metal, ores and finished products, stone, timber, medicinal plants, to name a few. Pepper were in high demand in the Roman Empire, as were textiles and medicinal plants and these were all transported across the Arabian sea to the Mediterranean.

Q 14. State any three sources used by historians to reconstruct the history of Mauryan Empire.

(CBSE 2015)

Ans. Historians have used a variety of sources to reconstruct the history of Mauryan empire. These were:

- (i) Archaeological finds, especially sculpture.
- (ii) Arthashastra, probably composed by Kautilya or Chanakya.
- (iii) Contemporary works, such as the account of Megasthenes.
- (iv) The Mauryas are mentioned in later Buddhist and Jain scriptures.
- (v) Stupas
- (vi) Coins
- (vii) Puranic literature, as well as in Sanskrit literary works.

Q 15. How has coinage played a valuable role in determining certain period of Indian history?

(CBSE 2019)

Ans. Coinage plays a valuable role in determining certain period of Indian history:

- (i) Punch marked coins made of silver and copper were the earliest coins to be minted and used. These were recovered from excavations at a number of sites throughout the subcontinent.
- (ii) Indo-Greeks issued coins with the name and image of rulers who established control over the North-Western part of the subcontinent.
- (iii) Symbols on punch marked coins can be identified with specific ruling dynasties like Mauryas or merchants, bankers, etc.
- (iv) Pure gold coins were issued by Guptas that facilitated long distance trade.

Q 16. Why was Mauryan empire regarded as a major landmark in the early Indian history?

(CBSE 2019, 2015)

Ans. Mauryan empire was regarded as a major landmark in the early Indian history because of following reasons:

- (i) **Vast Empire:** For the first time Chandragupta Maurya founded a vast empire which extended control to as far as North-West in Afghanistan and Baluchistan and in South up to Andhra Pradesh. Mauryan Empire ruled India for about 150 years.
- (ii) **Asokan Inscriptions:** Historians found the message on Asokan Inscriptions very different from that of most other rulers, suggesting that Ashoka was more powerful and industrious, as also more humble than later rulers who adopted grandiose titles.
- (iii) **Spectacular Art:** Some of the archaeological finds associated with the Mauryas, including stone sculpture, were considered to be example of the spectacular art typical of empire.

Q 17. Why was James Prinsep's contribution considered as a historic development in Indian epigraphy?

(CBSE 2015)

Ans. James Prinsep

- (i) **Post:** He was an officer in the mint of the East India Company.
- (ii) **Work:** He was an epigraphist who deciphered Asokan Brahmi script in 1838.
- (iii) **Contribution:**
 - (a) His contribution in the development of Indian epigraphy was that he was able to decipher Brahmi and Kharosthi scripts used in the earliest inscriptions and coins, which were then used.
 - (b) His study of inscriptions gave a lot of information about the rulers.

Q 18. How did Kushana rulers exemplify themselves with the high status?

Ans. Kushana Rulers:

- (i) One means of claiming high status was to identify with a variety of deities.
- (ii) The notion of kingship they wished to project are seen in their coins and sculptures.
- (iii) Colossal statues of Kushana rulers were installed in Mathura and Afghanistan.
- (iv) They projected themselves godlike.
- (v) They adopted the title of Devaputra or "Son of God".

Q 19. Mention any two ways of propagation of Dhamma by Ashoka.

(CBSE 2017)

Ans. To propagate Dhamma, the following steps were taken by Ashoka:

- (i) The principles of Dhamma were engraved in Prakrit on rocks, pillars and caves so that people could read and follow them.
- (ii) Special officers, known as the Dhamma Mahamatta were appointed to spread the message of Dhamma.
- (iii) He sent learned Buddhist scholars to distant lands to spread Buddhism.
- (iv) He ordered the construction of Buddhist monasteries.

Q 20. How have the Prashastis drawn the factual information about the Gupta rulers?

Ans. Factual information from Prashastis about the Gupta rulers could be drawn by:

- (i) Histories of the Gupta rulers have been reconstructed from literatures, coins and inscriptions, including prashastis, composed in praise of kings by poets.
- (ii) The Prayaga Prashasti (Allahabad Pillar Inscription) was composed in Sanskrit by Harishena. It gave important information regarding the military conquests of Samudragupta.
- (iii) Those who composed and read them, consider them as works of poetry rather than as account.

Q 21. Give a brief description about the coins used in the first century CE?

(CBSE 2015)

Ans. Coins Used in the First Century CE:

- (i) The first gold coin were issued in the first century CE by the Kushanas. They were identical in weight with those issued by contemporary Roman kings and Parthian rulers of Iran.
The widespread use of gold coins indicates the enormous value of the transactions that were taking place.
- (ii) Coins were issued by tribal republics of Yaudheyas of Punjab and Haryana in 1st century.
- (iii) Several thousands of copper coins have been unearthed issued by Yaudheyas pointing to their interest in economic exchanges.

Q 22. Describe briefly the sources used for reconstructing the history of the Gupta rulers.

Ans. The sources used for reconstructing the history of the Gupta rulers are:

(i) **Coins:**

- (a) Coins are an important source of reconstructing the history of Gupta rulers, as they include elements like scripts, images and the context in which they are found.
- (b) Some of the most spectacular gold coins were issued by the Gupta rulers. These coins helps in long distance transactions from which the expansion of trade and commerce was known.

(ii) Inscriptions:

- (a) Inscriptions were also used to reconstruct the history of Gupta rulers. They are writing engraved on hard surfaces like stone or metal.
- (b) These are generally composed in praise of kings in particular, and patrons in general by the poets.

(iii) Prashastis:

- (a) They contribute prominently in reconstructing the histories of Gupta rulers. The court poet of Samudragupta, Harishena composed Prayaga Prashasti also known as Allahabad Pillar Inscription.
- (b) Samudragupta was described as the most powerful king of Gupta empire and considered as equally powerful to God.

Q 23. What insight do inscriptions provide in terms of rural population and land grants?

- Ans.** (i) The inscription indicates that Prabhavati Gupta had access to land, which she then granted. This may have been because she was a queen and her situation was therefore exceptional. It is also possible that the provisions of legal texts were not uniformly implemented.
- (ii) The inscription also gives us an idea about rural populations these included Brahmanas and peasants, as well as others who were expected to provide a range of produce to the king or his representative.
- (iii) The inscription indicates that they would have to obey the new lord of the village and perhaps pay him all these dues.

Q 24. "There are limits to what epigraphy can reveal" Justify with suitable arguments. (CBSE 2020)

Ans. Limits of Epigraphy:

- (i) There are technical limitations in studying the inscriptions. In some inscriptions letters are faintly engraved and reconstruction are uncertain.
- (ii) It is not always easy to be sure about the exact meaning of the word used in inscriptions, some of which may be specific to a particular place or time.
- (iii) Several thousand inscriptions have been discovered, not all have been deciphered, published and translated. Besides, many more inscriptions must have existed, which have not survived the ravages of time.

Q 25. Discuss any three features of Mauryan administration. Which of these elements are evident in the Asokan inscriptions that you have studied?

Ans. The features of Mauryan administration are as follows:

(i) Carefully Chosen Centres: The centres were carefully chosen. Both Taxila and Ujjayini being situated on important long-distance trade routes, while Suvarnagiri (literally, the golden mountain) was possibly important for tapping the gold mines of Karnataka.

(ii) Communication: Communication along both land and riverine routes was vital for the existence of the empire.

(iii) Committee and Subcommittee: Committee and subcommittees were formed to run the administration and safety of boundaries. Megasthenes has mentioned that there were one committee with six subcommittees. These were:

- (a) First looked after the navy.
- (b) The second managed transport and provisions.
- (c) The third was responsible for foot-soldiers.
- (d) The fourth for horses.
- (e) The fifth for chariots.
- (f) The sixth for elephants.

The activity of the second subcommittee were many, such as arranging for bullock carts to carry equipments and recruiting servants and artisans to look after the soldiers.

Asokan inscriptions mention all the elements of the administrative system of the Mauryan Empire. Thus, the features of the administration are evident in the inscriptions of the Asokan age.

Q 26. Describe the notions of kingship that developed in the Post Mauryan period.

Ans. In the Post Mauryan period, the idea of kingship got associated with divine theory of state. Monarchs were now talking about the divine sanction to rule the people.

The social origin of Shakas, who established kingdom in the North and North-West and Satavahanas- who ruled over Central and Western India was ambiguous. But once they acquired power, they attempted to claim social status in a variety of ways.

(i) Kushana Kings:

- (a) Kushana kings called themselves Devaputra which means a godly status. They built large statues of themselves in temples.
- (b) Kushana rulers coin depicts king Kanishka on one side and a deity on the other probably suggesting that the king was god like.

(ii) Gupta Rulers:

- (a) Another development of kingship is found during the Gupta dynasty. It was a period

of large-sized states. Such states were dependent on Samantas who sometimes became powerful enough to usurp the power of kings also.

- (b) In this inscription Samudragupta is referred as 'Purusha' or supreme being who bestows prosperity on the good and destruction on the bad.

(iii) Literature, Coins and Inscriptions:

- (a) Literature, coins and inscriptions helped us creating history of those days. Their rule and praise reflect the way of lifestyle and rule they had and the impact on the people.
- (b) Very often poets would describe monarchs often to praise them and also give insight into their history and kingship. A good example is of Harishena who praised Samudragupta, the great Gupta ruler.

Q 27. To what extent were agricultural practices transformed in the period under consideration?

Ans. With the increase in the agricultural activities new practices were introduced in the field in the early cities that were transforming in the 6th century BCE were:

(i) Use of Iron: Tipped Ploughshare:

- (a) Plough became common in agriculture activities. A new type of agriculture with the help of plough was introduced in the fertile alluvial river valley of the Ganga and Kaveri to enhance its sowing fertility.
- (b) In the areas of high rainfall, the use of iron-tipped plough turned the alluvial soil into high fertile ground.

(ii) Transplantation:

- (a) Paddy transplantation technique was used in which seeds were first broadcast and then the saplings were transplanted in waterlogged fields.
- (b) This ensured a higher ratio of survival of saplings and higher yields. It dramatically increased the production of the paddy crop.

(iii) Irrigation:

- (a) Irrigation was used to increase agricultural productivity through wells, tanks and canals. The artificial form of irrigation brought the turning point in the agricultural field.
- (b) Communities as well as individuals organised the construction of irrigation works. The use of such technologies led to an increase in agricultural production which ultimately led to a growing differentiation amongst people engaged in agriculture.

Thus, there was a remarkable change in the field of agriculture during this period.



Long Answer Type Questions

Q 1. This is a statement made by one of the best known epigraphists of the twentieth century, D.C. Sircar 'There is no aspect of life, culture and activities of the Indians that is not reflected in inscriptions.' Discuss.

Ans. This statement is correct as inscriptions are helpful in reflecting the aspect of life, culture and activities of the Indians in the following ways:

(i) Determination of State's Boundaries:

- (a) The ancient kings got installed the inscriptions within the borders of their states. This helps us to find out boundaries of kingdoms and their expansions.
- (b) Inscriptions were carved in the territories of kings.

(ii) Names of Kings: From inscriptions we also come to know about the names of various kings. For example, titles like Devanampiyasa and Piyadasi refers to Ashoka.

(iii) Historic events:

- (a) Inscriptions also help us to understand about historical events. In one inscription we get the information about Kalinga war fought by Ashoka.
- (b) Apart from this, we also get to know about major life events of Samudragupta from Allahabad Prashasti.

(iv) Information about Conduct of Kings: Inscriptions describe the conduct and character of kings quite well. It is through the inscriptions only that we know about Ashoka's Dhamma policy. He talked about respect towards elders, generosity towards Brahmanas, treating slaves and servants kindly etc.

(v) Information about Administration: Inscriptions gave information about administration. It is through the inscription, we know that Ashoka appointed his son as a viceroy.

(vi) Information about Land System: Through inscriptions, we also get information about land systems. Some of these inscriptions were probably given a record of the transaction to those who received the land.

(vii) Languages: Through inscriptions we come to know about the languages used during that period. These languages include Sanskrit, Pali, Prakrit, Tamil etc.

There is hardly any area of governance of our life that is not mentioned in the inscriptions.

Hence, we are inclined to agree with D.C. Sircar who says, "There is no aspect of life, culture, activities of the Indians that is not reflected in inscriptions."

Q 2. Magadha was the most powerful Mahajanapada. Examine this statement. (CBSE SQP 2022-23)

OR

How do modern historians explain the development and growth of Magadhan power. Explain briefly.

Ans. Between the 6th and 4th centuries BCE, Magadha became the most powerful Mahajanapadas.

Modern historians explain this development in variety of ways:

- (i) **Agriculture:** Magadha was region where agriculture was especially productive.
- (ii) **Iron Mines:** Iron mines (on present day Jharkhand) were accessible and provided resources for tools and weapons.
- (iii) **Elephants:** Elephants, an important component of the army, were found in the forests in the region.
- (iv) **Communication:** Also, the Ganga and its tributaries provided a means of cheap and convenient communication.
- (v) **Policies:** Early Buddhist and Jaina writers who wrote about Magadha attributed its power to the policies of individuals. Ruthlessly ambitious kings of whom Bimbisara, Ajatasattu and Mahapadma Nanda are the best known, and their minister, who helped implement their policies.
- (vi) **Capital:** Initially Rajagaha was the capital of Magadha. Rajagaha was a fortified settlement, located amongst hills.

Later, in the 4th century, the capital was shifted to Pataliputra. Pataliputra was easily communicable through the Ganga and its tributaries.

Q 3. What do Asokan inscriptions tell about the Mauryas? Describe the limitations of the inscriptional evidences. (CBSE 2016)

Ans. Asoka's inscriptions give the following information about the Mauryas:

- (i) Ashoka was the first ruler who inscribed his messages to his subjects and officials on stone surfaces, natural rocks as well as polished pillars. He used inscriptions to proclaim what he understood the meaning of Dhamma. It included:
 - (a) respect towards elders.
 - (b) generosity towards Brahmanas and those who renounced worldly life treating slaves and servants kindly.
 - (c) respect for religions and traditions other than one's own.

- (ii) There were five major political centres in the empire, the capital Pataliputra and the provincial centres of Taxila, Ujjayini, Tosali and Suvarnagiri.

- (iii) According to the Asoka's inscriptions, the administrative control was strongest in areas around the capital and the provincial centres.

- (iv) The centres were carefully chosen, both Taxila and Ujjayini being situated on important long-distance trade routes, while Suvarnagiri was possibly important for tapping the gold mines of Karnataka.

The limitations of inscriptional evidences are as follows:

- (i) **Technical Limitations:** The letters are very faintly engraved and thus reconstructions are uncertain. Also, inscriptions may be damaged or letters are missing. It makes the work of epigraphists more difficult because it is not always easy to be sure about the exact meaning of the word used in inscriptions.
- (ii) **Undeciphered Inscriptions:** Several thousand inscriptions have been discovered but not all have been deciphered, published or translated. Many more inscriptions must have existed which have not survived the ravages of time.
- (iii) **Non-relevant Inscriptions:** Not everything that was politically or economically important was recorded in them. Thus, routine agricultural practices and the joys and sorrows of daily existence find no mention in inscriptions, which focus more often than not, on grand, unique events.

Thus, it is difficult for epigraphists to give a full understanding of society at that time by relying only on inscriptions.

Q 4. What do you mean by numismatics? How has the study of coins helped numismatist to reconstruct possible commercial networks? (CBSE 2016)

Ans. Numismatics: Numismatics is the study of coins, including visual elements such as scripts and images, metallurgical analysis and the contexts in which they have been found.

The study of coins has helped numismatist to reconstruct possible commercial networks in following ways:

- (i) **Introduction of Coinage for Trade Facilitation:**
 - (a) To some extent, exchanges were facilitated by the introduction of coinage. Punch-marked coins made of silver and copper (6th century BCE) were amongst the earliest to be minted and used.

(b) These have been recovered from excavations at a number of sites throughout the subcontinent. Numismatists have studied these and other coins to reconstruct possible commercial networks.

(ii) **Kings, Merchants and Bankers as Issuing Authority:** Attempts made to identify the symbols on punch-marked coins with specific ruling dynasties, including the Mauryas, suggest that these were issued by kings. It is also likely that merchants, bankers and townspeople issued some of these coins.

The first coins to bear the names and image of rulers were issued by the Indo-Greeks, who established control over the North-Western part of the subcontinent (second century BCE).

(iii) **Similarity of Kushana Coins with those of Greeks and Parthians:** The first gold coins were issued in 1st century CE by the Kushanas. These were virtually identical in weight with those issued by contemporary Roman emperors and the Parthian rulers of Iran. These coins have been found from several sites in North India and Central Asia.

(iv) **Close Connections with the Roman Empire:** The widespread use of gold coins indicates the enormous value of the transactions that were taking place.

Besides, hoards of Roman coins have been found from archaeological sites in South India. It is obvious that networks of trade were not confined within political boundaries. South India was not part of the Roman empire, but there were close connections through trade.

Q 5. Explain the system of land grants and trade from 600 BCE to 600 CE.

Ans. Land Grants: From the early centuries, grants of land were made, many of which were recorded in inscriptions. Some of these inscriptions were on stone, but most were on copper plates which were probably given as a record of the transactions to those who received the land.

(i) Grants were given to religious institutions or to Brahmanas. Most inscriptions were in Sanskrit. In some cases, and especially from the 7th century onwards part of the inscriptions was in Sanskrit while the rest was in a local language such as Tamil or Telugu.

(ii) According to Sanskrit legal texts, women were not allowed to have independent access to resources such as land. But the inscriptions indicate that Prabhavati had access to land, which she then granted. This may have been because she was a queen and her situation was therefore exceptional.

(iii) It is also possible that the provisions of legal texts were not uniformly implemented.

(iv) The inscription also gives us an idea about rural populations these included Brahmanas and peasants, as well as others who were expected to provide a range of produce to the kings or his representatives. According to inscription, they would have to obey the new lord of the village, and perhaps pay him all these dues.

(v) Land grants provide some insight into the relationship between cultivators and the state. However, there were people who were often beyond the reach of officials or Samantas: pastoralists, fisherfolk and hunter-gatherers, mobile or semi-sedentary artisans and shifting cultivators.

Trade: The system of trade from 600 BCE to 600 CE can be explained in the following ways:

(i) From the sixth century BCE, land and river routes criss-crossed the subcontinent and extended in various directions-overland into central Asia and beyond and overseas, from ports that dotted the coastline-extending across the Arabian Sea to East and North Africa and West Asia and through the Bay of Bengal to South-East Asia and China.

(ii) Rulers often attempted to control these routes, possibly by offering protection for a price.

(iii) Those who traversed these routes included peddlers who probably travelled on foot and merchants who travelled with Caravans of bullock carts and pack-animals. They were seafarers. Their ventures were risky but highly profitable.

(iv) A wide range of goods were carried from one place to another, these were salt, grain, cloth, metal ores and finished products, stone, timber, medicinal plants, to name a few, spices, especially pepper, were in high demand in the Roman Empire, as were textiles and medicinal plants and these were all transported across the Arabian Sea to the Mediterranean.

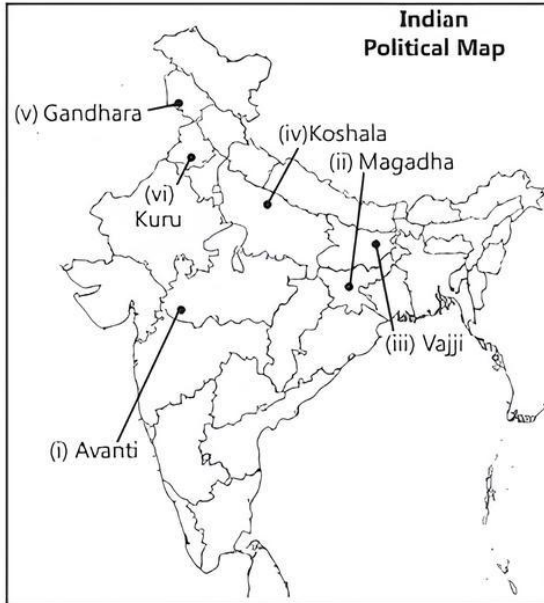


Map Based Questions ↘

Q 1. On the given outline map of India, locate and label the following:

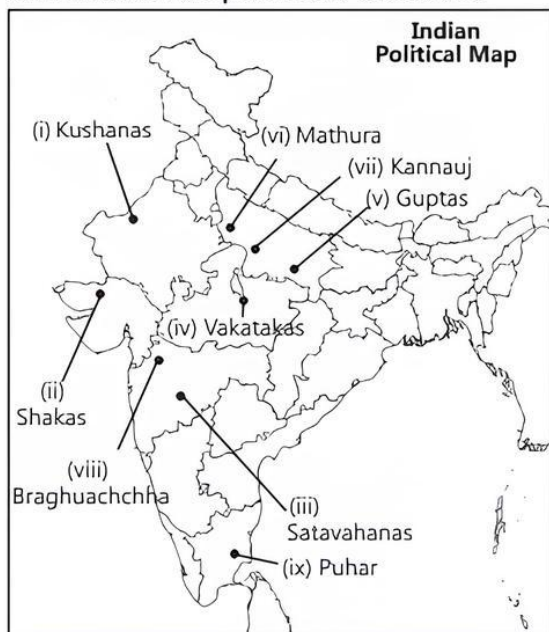
- | | |
|--------------|--------------|
| (i) Avanti | (ii) Magadha |
| (iii) Vajji | (iv) Koshala |
| (v) Gandhara | (vi) Kuru |

Ans.



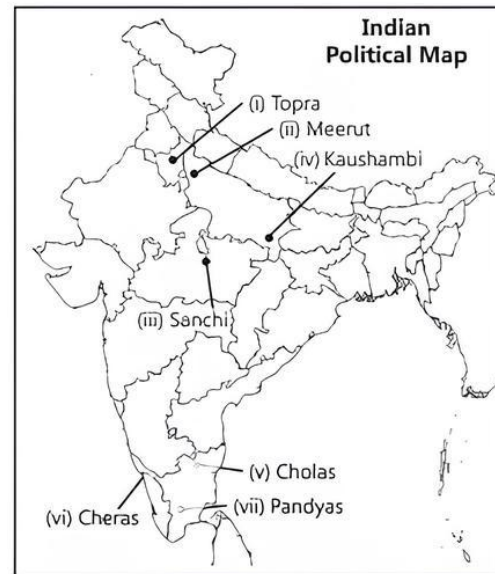
Q 2. Locate the important kingdoms and towns from where Asokan inscriptions have been found.

Ans.



Q 3. Locate the places from where pillar inscriptions of Ashoka have been found and the kingdom of Cholas, Cheras and Pandyas.

Ans.



Q 4. On the given outline map of India, identify the location with the help of specified information:

(CBSE SQP 2021 Term-1)

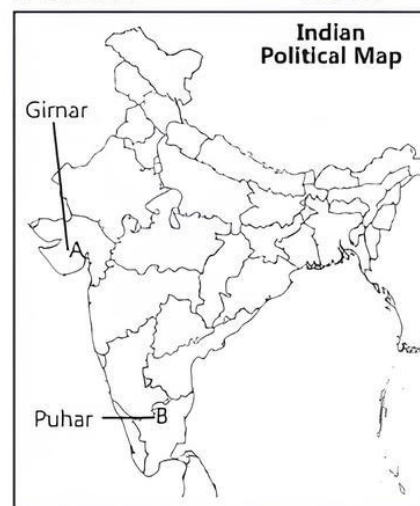
(i) On the political map of India 'A' is marked as major Asokan Inscription (Rock Edicts), identify it among the following options:

- a. Girnar
- b. Sopara
- c. Sannauti
- d. Shishpalgarh

(ii) On the same map 'B' is also marked as the important towns of second century BCE, identify it from the following options:

- a. Mathura
- b. Braghukachchha
- c. Shravasti
- d. Puhar

Ans.



Chapter Test

Multiple Choice Questions

Q 1. Which of these was Asoka reign?

- a. C. 268-231 BCE
- b. C. 600-500 BCE
- c. C. 606-647 BCE
- d. C. 200-100 BCE

Q 2. Scholars in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were primarily interested in the histories of:

- a. travellers
- b. kings
- c. inventions
- d. None of these

Assertion and Reason Type Question

- Q 3. In the question given below, there are two statements marked as Assertion (A) and Reason (R). Read the statements and choose the correct option:

Assertion (A): From the sixth century BCE, land and river routes criss-crossed the subcontinent and extended in various directions – overland into Central Asia and beyond, and overseas, from ports that dotted the coastline – extending across the Arabian Sea to East and North Africa and West Asia, and through the Bay of Bengal to South-East Asia and China.

Reason (R): Merchants travelled these routes with caravans of bullock carts and pack-animals.

- a. Both (A) and (R) are true and (R) is the correct explanation of (A).
- b. Both (A) and (R) are true, but (R) is not the correct explanation of (A).
- c. (A) is true, but (R) is false.
- d. (A) is false, but (R) is true.

Fill in the Blank Type Question

- Q 4. New modes of disposal of the dead including the making of elaborate stone structures were known as

- a. Stupa
- b. Brahmi script
- c. inscription
- d. Megaliths

Identify the Image Type Question

- Q 5. Identify the following image:



Correct and Rewrite Type Question

- Q 6. Megasthenes visited the court of Samudragupta as a guest.

Source Based Question

- Q 7. Read the following source carefully and answer the questions that follow:

Life in a Small Village

The Harshacharita is a biography of Harshavardhana, the ruler of Kannauj, composed in Sanskrit by his court poet, Banabhatta (C. seventh century CE). This is an excerpt from the text, an extremely rare representation of life in a settlement on the outskirts of a forest in the Vindhyas.

The outskirts being for the most part of forest, many parcels of rice-land, threshing ground and arable

land were being apportioned by small farmers it was mainly spade culture owing to the difficulty of ploughing the sparsely scattered fields covered with grass, with their few clear spaces, their black soil stiff as black iron ... There were people moving along with bundles of bark ... countless sacks of plucked flowers, ... loads of flax and hemp bundles, quantities of honey, peacocks' tail feathers, wreaths of wax, logs and grass. Village wives hastened en route for neighbouring villages, all intent on thoughts of sale and bearing on their heads baskets filled with various gathered forest fruits.

- (i) What was the activity of village women?
- (ii) Comment on Harshacharita.
- (iii) How was the outskirts of a forest in the Vindhyas?

Very Short Answer Type Questions

- Q 8. What are the votive inscriptions?
- Q 9. What do you mean by numismatics?

Short Answer Type Questions

- Q 10. Explain any two problems faced by epigraphists.
- Q 11. Describe the concepts of Kushana kings and Gupta Rulers.

Long Answer Type Question

- Q 12. To what extent do epigraphists face limitations of inscriptional evidence? Explain.

Map Based Question

- Q 13. On the given political map of India, locate and label the following:

- (a) Rajgir
- (b) Ujjayini
- (c) Panchala
- (d) Varanasi
- (e) Taxila

