

## Kings, Farmers and Towns

### Multiple Choice Type Questions

1. Who deciphered Brahmin and Kharoshti scripts?  
(a) James Prinsep  
(b) Cunningham  
(c) Wheeler  
(d) John Marshall
2. How many Mahajanapadas were there?  
(a) 17  
(b) 14  
(c) 18  
(d) 16
3. Which of these was the most powerful Mahajanapada from 6th to 4th century BCE?  
(a) Kuru  
(b) Magadha  
(c) Pindara  
(d) Gandhara
4. Who appointed Dhamma Mahamatras?  
(a) Bimbisara  
(b) Samudragupta  
(c) Asoka  
(d) Pandya
5. Who founded the Mauryan Empire?  
(a) Ashoka  
(b) Chandragupta Maurya  
(c) Bindusara  
(d) Ajatashatru

### Answer

1. (c)      2. (b)      3. (c)      4. (c)      5. (B)

### SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS

1. After the Harappan Civilization, during a period of about 1500 years, different kinds of development were undertaken in various parts of the sub-continent. Elucidate by citing examples.

#### Answer:

1. During this period, the people who lived on the banks of the Indus river or its tributaries, accomplished the task of writing Rig Veda.

2. The peasant settlements emerged in North India, Deccan Plateau and Karnataka. Besides this, there is evidence of settlements of those who grazed animals in the Deccan Plateau and South India.
3. In the millennium that preceded the Before Christ Era (B.C.E.), new methods of performing last rites on the dead bodies came into existence. It included vast structures made of stone. They were called Mahapashan. At many places, along with the dead bodies, different kinds of instruments and weapons were also buried.

3. How did the political history of 'early India get a new direction with the research work of James Prinsep?

Or

why is James Prinsep's contribution considered as the historic development? In the Indian epigraphy?

**Answer:** There was a lot of development in the Indian epigraphy around 1830 in which James Prinsep, who was an officer in the unit of the East India Company, played a great role. He deciphered two scripts namely Brahmi and Kharosthi. These scripts were used in the earliest inscriptions and coins. James Prinsep came to know that most of the inscriptions and coins had the name of king who was referred to as Piyadassi that is, "Pleasant to behold" as the one with a handsome face. There was also the name of Ashoka on a few inscriptions. According to Buddhist texts, Ashoka was one of the most important rulers of the era. This research of James Prinsep gave a new direction to Indian political history. All the Europeans and Indian scholars used the inscriptions and coins to get information about the major dynasties. They reconstructed the lineages of major dynasties that had ruled the sub-continent. As a result, by the early decades of the 20th century, an outline of the political history of the sub-continent was ready.

4. Describe in your own words the story of the rise of Magadha state.

Or

how do modern historians explain the development of Magadha as the most powerful Mahajanapada? Explain.

**Answer:** Magadha included the modern Patna and parts of Shahabad district. This state made commendable progress during the reign of Bimbisara. He strengthened his position by establishing marital relations with other states. He prepared himself for expansion towards the west. However, he was assassinated by his own son, Ajatasatru who himself took charge of the state. After Ajatasatru, the state was governed by Uddaiyan who defeated the king of Koshala.

Thereafter, the reign of Shishunag dynasty started. The kings of this dynasty defeated Avanti. After the reign of Shishunag dynasty, the rule of Nand dynasty started. They enhanced the power of Magadha by winning Kalinga. During the time of an attack by Alexander, Magadha was ruled by Mahapadam Nanda.

The strength of Alexander was even acknowledged by the soldiers of Mahapadam Nanda. After the decline of Nand dynasty, Magadha was reined by the Mauryas. The kings of this dynasty enhanced the glory of Magadha and took it to the apex of glory and prestige

5. Describe briefly about the sources of Mauryan history.

Or

Describe sources used to construct the history of the Mauryan Empire.

Or

Describe the sources historians have used to reconstruct the history of the Mauryan Empire.

**Answer:** The most important source of information about the Maryann period was the book “Indica” written by Megasthenes, a Greek ambassador in the court of Chandragupta Maurya. It gives a beautiful depiction of the society and the administrative system.

- Another important source of information is the book, “Arthashastra” written by Kautilya or Chanakya. It gives detailed knowledge about the Mauryan administrative system.
- “Mudrarakshasa” by Vishakhadutta tells a lot about how Chandragupta snatched the reins of rule from the Nanda dynasty.
- The texts of Jain and Buddhist religions throw a great deal of light on the life and religious views of Mauryan kings.
- The inscriptions of Ashoka also help a lot in understanding the history of the Mauryan period.

6. What is the importance of the establishment of the Mauryan empire in Indian history?

**Answer:** Establishment of the Mauryan empire has the following importance in Indian history:

- Many small states came to an end and in place of these a large empire was established.
- There were a number of small states in the country before the Mauryan Empire who had no proper history but the establishment of the Mauryan Empire was just like a ray of light in the darkness.
- Establishment of Mauryan Empire led to the beginning of Indian contacts with other countries. It made huge progress in the trade of the country.
- Foreign power in India came to an end with the establishment of the Mauryan Empire.

### **LONG ANSWER QUESTION**

1. How did Ashoka propagate Buddhism?

**Answer:** Ashoka served a lot for Buddhism. He was deeply hurt by the Kalinga war. His mind became peaceful only because of simple rules of Buddhism. He adopted Buddhism and spent the whole of his life in propagating Buddhism. Some of the works done by him for propagating Buddhism are given below:

1. He himself showed an example to the people by accepting Buddhism and motivated the people. He himself obeyed those rules which he propagated among the masses.

2. After Kalinga War he himself became a Buddhist. He whole-heartedly propagated Buddhism. Common masses were greatly influenced as they saw their king as a monk. As a result, a number of people adopted this religion.
3. Ashoka wanted to propagate Buddhism which is why he engraved inscriptions, pillars and caves which mentioned the rules of Buddhism. People were influenced by those ideas and started to adopt Buddhism.
4. Ashoka built many stupas and Viharas. These Stupas and Viharas, later on, became the centres of Buddhism.
5. Ashoka called Third Conference of Buddhism at Pataliputra in 252 B.C.E. Because of the Conference, the Buddhists were united and this religion became popular.
6. Ashoka tried to convince people through religious acts or plays that living life according to Buddhism leads to the attainment of salvation. People got influenced by these acts and many of them adopted Buddhism.
7. Pilgrimages also proved fruitful in this direction. He himself visited pilgrims related to Buddhism. In his way, he arranged many meetings and propagated rules of Buddhism.
8. Ashoka appointed special officials called Dhamma Mahamatras to propagate Buddhism. They used to move from one place to another to propagate Buddhism. Indirectly it also helped in propagating Buddhism.
9. Ashoka engraved teachings of Buddhism, on inscriptions, rocks, etc., in Pali language. He also translated some of the famous Buddhist epics in Pali language because it was the most commonly spoken language. That is why it became very easy for people to understand the teachings of Buddhism.
10. He not only propagated Buddhism in India but in foreign countries as well. He sent Mahamatras to Gandhar, Sri Lanka, China, Syria, Egypt, etc. His son and daughter went over to Sri Lanka to propagate Buddhism. That is why Buddhism spread to different countries of the world.

2. Analyse the character of 'Ashoka the Great'.

Or

Write about the character of Ashoka on the basis of given descriptions. Why is he considered as 'Great'?

**Answer:** Ashoka was a great king of the world. None of the kings of the world could reach the status of Ashoka. Other kings of the world know only how to expand their Empire, to run their rule and wanted to rule over the people. But Ashoka wanted to rule over the hearts of

the people and that also with love, peace and tolerance. Following things made Ashoka – the Great:

- ❖ **Service of Humanity:** After the Kalinga war, he left the policy of wars and took an aim of service of humanity. He left the life of leisure and hunting and started to preach the people by moving from one place to another. He himself left eating flesh. This was the greatest ideal and we cannot find such an example in world history.
- ❖ **Safety of Animals:** Ashoka was the first king who not only opened hospitals for humans but for animals as well. Hunting of animals was strictly prohibited in his state. In 243 B.C.E. he made a declaration that no one could kill animals during 56 days in a year fixed by the state. That is why he was known as Ashoka the Great.
- ❖ **Public Welfare Works:** Ashoka always considered his subjects as his children. He built a number of roads for public welfare. He planted trees on both sides of roads, built rest houses, opened hospitals. Patients were given free medicines in these hospitals.
- ❖ **Ideal Administration:** Administration of Ashoka was of top quality. He appointed Mahamatras who used to convey the grievances of masses to the king. No discrimination took place while giving justice.
- ❖ **Propaganda of Buddhism:** Ashoka himself adopted Buddhism after the Kalinga war. He sent Dhamma Mahamatras to other countries to propagate Buddhism. He changed a small religion into a world religion.
- ❖ **Lover of Peace:** Ashoka started to hate wars after the Kalinga war. He left the policy of war and became a lover of peace.
- ❖ **Art:** Arts also made great progress during his tenure. He built many Stupas and Viharas and founded two new cities of Srinagar and Devapattan.
- ❖ **Ashoka's Dhamma:** Ashoka propagated Dhamma for the moral upliftment of his subjects. According to this, one should live a simple and pure life and respect his parents and teacher.
- ❖ **Religious Tolerance:** He equally respected all the religions. That is why he helped other religions as well as Buddhism. It tells us about his greatness.
- ❖ **Large Empire:** Ashoka had a large empire which stretched from the Himalayas to Karnataka, from the Bay of Bengal to Hindukush and to Arabian Sea in the west.

**Conclusion:** After looking at the given description we can say that Ashoka was actually one of the greatest kings of the world. That is why Dr R.K. Mukherji wrote that “In the annals of kingship there is scarcely any record comparable to Ashoka”.

3. Write a note on the main sources of Mauryan history.

Or

explain any four sources to reconstruct the history of Maurya.

**Answer:**

Maurya dynasty is the first dynasty of India about which we have correct and enough historical information. It tied whole of India with a thread of unity. This dynasty was founded by Chandragupta Maurya. We get this information from various sources which are given below:

**1. Description of Megasthenes:** Megasthenes was a Greek resident. He remained as an ambassador of Seleucus in the court of Chandragupta Maurya from 302 B.C.E. to 298 B.C.E. He wrote a book called ‘Indica’ in which he wrote about the Mauryan ruler, his administration and social condition of that age. Although this book is not available, still some of the descriptions of his book are available in a few Greek and other books. We can clearly get information about Mauryan Empire by collecting all these descriptions.

**2. Arthashastra of Kautilya:** Kautilya (Chanakya) was the teacher and prime minister of Chandragupta Maurya. Kautilya wrote an epic called ‘Arthashastra’. He wrote about various political theories in his book. Kautilya wrote that “King should run the administration with the help of his ministers even if he is an autocratic ruler”. Actually, Chandragupta used his political concepts and became a successful king. Proper analysis of Kautilya’s Arthashastra gives us enough information about administration and society under Mauryan rule.

**3. Mudrarakshasa:** It is a historical play written in the fifth century. It was written by the famous writer of Gupta age, Vishakhadutta. This play tells us how Nanda dynasty was destroyed by Chandragupta Maurya and how he founded the Mauryan Empire.

**4. Epics of Jainism and Buddhism:** Jain and Buddhist literature also give us enough information about Mauryan age. We can take Mahavams, Dipavams and Mahabodhivams for this purpose. Kalpasutra of Jainism can also be used in this regard. Jain literature tells us that Chandragupta Maurya became a follower of Jainism in the last days of his rule. Buddhist literature informs us that Ashoka was very cruel at an early age but became very kind when he adopted Buddhism.

**5. Puranas:** Puranas also give us enough information about the Mauryan age. They inform us that Nanda rulers were Shudras. Chanakya destroyed them and made Chandragupta as the new king. But modern scholars are of the view that many things written in Puranas could have been imaginary.

## **6. Other Sources:**

- (a) Ashoka engraved descriptions on caves, inscriptions and rocks in his empire. These descriptions give us enough information about his administration, religious policy, Mauryan age and the character of Ashoka.
- (b) Coins issued by Mauryan rulers also proved to be a vital source of Mauryan history.

## **4. What is the importance of the emergence of Gupta age in Indian history?**

**Answer:** Gupta age occupies an important place in ancient Indian history. All the rebellious elements remained no more with the advent of this age and political unity came into the scenario. Peace and security were established in the country and all the internal conflicts came to an end. The country made huge progress in the fields of art and literature. The whole atmosphere was filled with peace and prosperity. In short, the following are the important aspects of this age :

- 1. End of Darkness:** After the Mauryan Empire, peace was established in-country during Kushanas. But it lasted only for a short span of time. After Kushanas, again, internal conflicts and wars started. We do not have enough information about the kings who ruled during this age of chaos but this darkness came to an end with the advent of the Gupta age. We have enough sources to know about the history of Gupta kings and life during the Gupta age. In short, we can say that the dark age of our history remained no more with the advent of Gupta age.
- 2. Political Unity:** Country was divided into smaller states before the Gupta age. Nag and Vakataks were important dynasties. Except these, Yoddeya, Licchavi, Malwa, etc., dynasties were also present. Kings of these dynasties were often engaged in wars with each other. There was no powerful king in the country who could establish political unity in the country. Kanishka was an able and powerful ruler but his tenure was very small. Gupta kings established political unity in the country.
- 3. Peace and Prosperity:** Gupta kings provided top quality administration and established peace in the country. Trade was encouraged and the country became prosperous.
- 4. Re-emergence of Hinduism:** Hinduism re-emerged during the Gupta age. Buddhism made huge progress during the reign of Ashoka and Kanishka. But Gupta kings were the followers of Hinduism which spread to a great deal during their reign.
- 5. Progress in Fine Arts:** Fine arts also made huge progress during the Gupta age. Beautiful sculptures and paintings of Hindu gods and goddesses were made. Ajanta Caves were built during this age. The art of metal sculptures also developed in this age.
- 6. Progress in Literature:** Gupta age was very important from the literary point of view. Sanskrit language and Sanskrit literature made huge progress in the country. Kalidasa was born in this age and so was Vishakhadatta. Harissa and Amarsena held an important place in Sanskrit

literature. Except these, books were written on astrology, mathematics, geography, chemistry, etc. Aryabhatta, Varhamihira and Brahma Gupta were the great scientists of this age.

**7. Foreign Relation:** Actually Gupta age holds an important place in Indian history. The first time, Indians went over to foreign countries to spread their culture. Centres of Indian culture were made in Java, Sumatra, Bali, Burma and other countries. Even Indians made colonies in various other countries.

**Conclusion** Foreign powers in the country came to an end during this age. Samudragupta defeated foreign kings and made India free from the rule of foreign kings.

5. Communication along both land and riverine routes were vital for the existence of the Mauryan Empire.” Justify the statement. (C.B.S.E. 2010) (D))

**Answer:** Communication along both land and riverine routes were vital for the existence of the empire. Journeys from the centre to the provinces could have taken weeks if not months. This meant arranging for provisions as well as protection for those who were on the move.

**Megasthenes mentioned a committee with six subcommittees for coordinating military activity.**

1. One out of these looked after the navy.
2. The second one managed transport and provisions.
3. The third one was responsible for foot soldiers.
4. The fourth one managed horses, whereas
5. the fifth for chariots and
6. The sixth for elephants.

The activities of the second sub-committee were rather varied: arranging for bullock carts to carry equipment, procuring food for soldier's and fodder for animals, and recruiting servants and artisans to look after the soldiers. Maintenance of these means was also necessary for the progress of trade.