

THEME-2
KINGS FARMERS AND TOWNS
EARLY STATES AND ECONOMIES
(C. 600 BCE - 600 CE)

Key concepts in nutshell

Several developments in different parts of the subcontinent (India) the long span of 1500 years following the end of Harappan Civilization:-

- Rigveda was composed along the Indus and its tributaries.
- Agricultural Settlements emerged in several parts of the subcontinent.
- New mode of disposal of the dead like making Megaliths.
- By 600 BCE growth of new cities and kingdoms.
- 600 BCE major turning point in early Indian history.
- Growth of 16 Mahajanapadas. Many were ruled by kings.
- Some known as Ganas or Sanghas were Oligarchies
- Between the 600 BCE and 400 BCE Magadha became the most powerful Mahajanapada.
- Emergence of Mauryan Empire, Chandragupta Maurya founder of the empire extended control upto Afghanistan and Baluchistan.
- His grandson Ashoka, the most famous ruler conquered Kalinga.
- Variety of sources to reconstruct the history of the Mauryan empire archaeological finds especially sculpture, Ashoka's Inscriptions, Literary sources like Indica account of megasthenes, Arthashastra of Kautilya and Buddhist, jaina and puranic literature.
- Ashoka's Dhamma to hold his empire together.
- 16 Mahajanpadas - Vajji, Magdha, Kaushal, Kuru, Panchal, Gandhar, Avanti, Shuasena, Matsaya, Vatsa, Ujjayeni, Kashi, Malla, Anga, Kamboja, Ashmaka.

New Notions of Kingship

- By C 200 BCE emergence of new chiefdoms and kingdoms in several parts of the subcontinent.
- Cholas, Cheras and Pandyas in Tamilakam, known from Sangam text.
- Most of these states including Satavahanas and Shakas had control over long distance trade networks.
- Kushanas(First century BCE to first century CE) ruled over a vast kingdom extending from central Asia to north West India.
- Their history has been reconstructed from Inscriptions, Coins and sculptures which convey a sense of the notions of kingship.
- History of the Guptas (4th century CE) has been reconstructed from literatures, coins and inscriptions including Prashastis.

- What did subjects think about their rulers? Historians have tried to know this by examining stories contained in the Jatakas and Panchatantra.
- Strategies for increasing agricultural production - use of plough with iron plough share, introduction of transplantation and use of irrigation through wells, tanks, less commonly canals.
- Land grants to religious institutions or Brahmins, to extend agriculture to new areas or to win allies by making grant of land.
- Emergence of urban centers such as Pataliputra, Ujjayini, Puhar, Mathura etc.
- In the towns different types of people used to live such as washing folk, weavers, scribes, carpenters, potters, religious teachers, merchants, kings.
- Artisans and traders organized themselves in guilds or shrenis.
- Trading prevailed both in the subcontinent with east and North Africa, West Asia, South East Asia, China.
- India used to export spices, fine pearls, ivory, silk cloth, medicinal plants.
- Exchanges were facilitated by the introduction of the coinage. Punch marked coins made of silver and copper were amongst the earliest to be minted and used. The first gold coins were issued in (first century CE) by the Kushanas.
- James Prinsep an officer in the mint of the East India Company was able to decipher Ashokan Brahmi script in 1838.
- Limitations of Inscriptional evidence - (1) Technical Limitations - letters are very faintly engraved, damaged or letter missing, not sure about the exact meaning of the words.
(2) Historical Fundamental Problem-Issues related to political or economic significance may not have been recorded (i) routine agricultural practice (ii) Joy & sorrows of the people.

V. S. A. (2 Marks)

Q1. What is Megalith?

Ans:-

- Megalith was elaborate stone structure in central and south India in first Millennium B.C
- These were kept on burials

Q2. Why is six century B.C.E often considered as a major turning point in Indian History?

Ans:-

- Emergence of early states, cities growing use of iron.
- Use of coin.
- New Religion- Mainly Buddhism, Jainism.

Q3. Who were Dhamma Mahamatras?

Ans:-

- Special Officer appointed by Ashoka
- Appointed to spread the message of Dhamma.

Q4. Who were Kushanas?

Ans:-

- Important dynasty of ancient India.
- First to issue gold coins in India.

Q5. In which language and script Ashoka's scripts were written?

Ans:-

- Language - Prakrit, Aramic, Greek,
- Script - Brahmi, Greek, Aramaic and Kharosthi

Q6. Who was Gahapati?

Ans:-

- The Owner , master or head of household
- Owner of the resource - land, animal and other thing that belonged to the house hold.

Q7. Write any two sources of Mauryan History.

Ans:-

- Arthashastra of Kautilya.
- Ashoka's Inscriptions.

Q8. What were Mahajanpadas? Name a few important Mahajanpada?

Ans:-

- Hints- (i) Big states in 600 B.C in Northern India
(ii) Important Mahajanpada - (a) Magadh (b) Koshala (c) Avanti (d) Panchal
(e) Vajji (f) Gandhar

Q9. What is Manusmriti? What advice has been given to the king through it?

Ans:-

- Legal book, written in Sanskrit, compiled between 200 B.C to 200 A.D.
- Advice to king - Border security.

Q10. Name the two sacrifice / performed by kings during the Vedic times?

Ans:- (a) Rajsuya Yagya (b) Ashwamedha Yagya

Q11. The Inscription of land grants help us to understand rural society in ancient times "How?

Ans:-

- It - shows the relationship between the state and the farmers.
- Hunters, fisherman, sculptors and nomadic farmer were not under the control of feudal lord.

Q12. List some of the problems faced by epigraphists?

Ans:-

- Epigraphists - persons who study inscription
- Sometimes the words are engraved very lightly, so it is very hard to describe them.
- The inscriptions reflect the views of those who write them. So it may be biased

Q13. Describe briefly the sources for reconstructing the history of the Gupta rulers?

Ans:-

- Literary sources e.g. - Arthshastra by Kautilya.

- Description by foreigners - e.g. Fahiyān.
- By Prashastis - Harisen prashastis in Prayag.
- With the help of coins issued by various Kings.
- With the help of Inscriptions.

S. A. (4 Marks)

Q.14 What is the significance of the inscription of Ashoka in the Indian History?

Ans: -

- It helps to determine the extent of Ashoka's Empire.
- It tells about his religion and his thought
- It tells us about his policy
- This inscription throws light on the work done by Ashoka
- These are the beautiful specimen of Mauryan Art.

Q.15. James Princep provided a new direction to Indian political history how?

Ans:-

- He deciphered two scripts - Brahmi, Kharoshti.
- These inscriptions were used earliest inscriptions and coins
- He throws light on Mauryan ruler Ashoka
- The research of James Princep gave a new direction to Indian political history
- Scholars - (both Indian and Europeans) used the inscription and coins to draw information about the major dynasty.

Q.16. What method did the Kushanas adopt to attain upper social status?

Ans:-

- They represented themselves as a divine figure (Explanation).
- They prefixed the title Devputra before their name which means the son of God.
- They show themselves as Divine Kings.
- They constructed their vast statues.

Q.17. Why did the Kings or Powerful people donate land?

Ans:-

- It was an expansion policy of Agriculture in new fields.
- Kings donated land to find new supporters.
- To spread their power and glory by donating land.

Q-18 What factors were responsible for the Growth of Magadh from Mahajanpada to powerful Empire?

Ans:-

- Powerful ruler - Bimbisara and Ajatassattu, Mahapadma Nanda.
- Availability of Iron

- Fertile soil
- Availability of elephants in forest.
- Role of River - Ganga , Son, Punpun,

Q-19 Describe any five features of Mahajanpada?

Ans:-

Ruled by Kings, some were ruled by Ganas or Sanghas.

- Fortified Capital
- Permanent Army
- Functions of King to collect taxes and Tributes from people
- Dharmasutras laid down norms for Kings and other People.

Q-20 Value Based Questions.

1. Ashoka's Dhamma is fruitful even today. How?

Ans: - Because it teaches to respect elders, love for young and kindness to subordinate/servants.

- Religious tolerance to other religions.
- Liberal policies towards Brahmanas and learned persons.
- Non- Violence.

Q-21 How does inscription help in reconstruction of history?

Ans: -

- Knowledge about the rulers and their achievement (By prashasti)
- Script and language of that time
- Land grant and economic condition
- Extent of the empire
- Social and Religious conditions of Kingdom.

L. A. (8 Marks)

Q-22 What were the main features of Mauryan Administration?

Ans:-

- Central administration - King had Control over legislative, executive and Judiciary. Actually he was the most powerful person in empire.
- Provincial Administration - the Empire was divided into many provinces governed by governor.
- Local Government - There was a committee of 3 members to maintain rules and regulations in Pataliputra.
- Existence of cabinet to give advice and to help for running of Administration
- Five major political centers in empire
- Organized Army - a Committee with six subcommittees for coordinating military activity.
- To spread Dhamma Mahamatra.
- Officers for the land revenue, irrigation and road.
- Strict Law and Order system was setup.
- Institution of spies was very strong and working effectively.

SOURCE BASED QUESTIONS

Q1. What the king's officials did?

Here is an excerpt from the account of Megasthenes:

Of the great officer of state, some ... superintend the rivers, measure the land, as is done in Egypt, and inspect the sluices by which water is let out from the main canal into their branches, so that everyone may have an equal supply of it. The same person has charge also of the huntsmen, and is entrusted with the power of rewarding or punishing them according to their deserts. They collect the taxes, and superintend the occupations connected with land; as those of the woodcutters, the carpenters, the blacksmiths, and the miners.

Questions:

- Explain the duties of the great officers of the state.
- Explain the role of sub-committees for coordinating military activities.
- What did Ashoka do to hold his empire together?

Answers:

- The great officers of the state under the Mauryas did a lot of duties. Some superintend the rivers, measure the land, and inspect the sluices by which water was let out from the main canals into their branches. All officers collected the taxes, and superintend the occupation concerned with land, as those of the woodcutters, the carpenters, the blacksmiths, and the miners.
- According to Megasthenes, there were about six sub-committees for coordinating military activities, one looked after the navy, the second managed transport and provisions, and the third was responsible for foot - soldiers, the fourth for horses, the fifth for chariots and the sixth for elephants.
- Besides laying the foundation of a strong administrative system, which he inherited from his grandfather Chandragupta Maurya, Ashoka tried to hold his empire together by propagating dharma and ensuring the well-being of his subjects in this world and the next.

QUESTIONS BANK**VERY SHORT ANSWER**

Q.1 What were Mahajanpadas? Name a few important Mahajanpadas?

Q-2. Who were Kushanas?

Q-3. Write any two sources of Mauryan History.

SHORT ANSWER

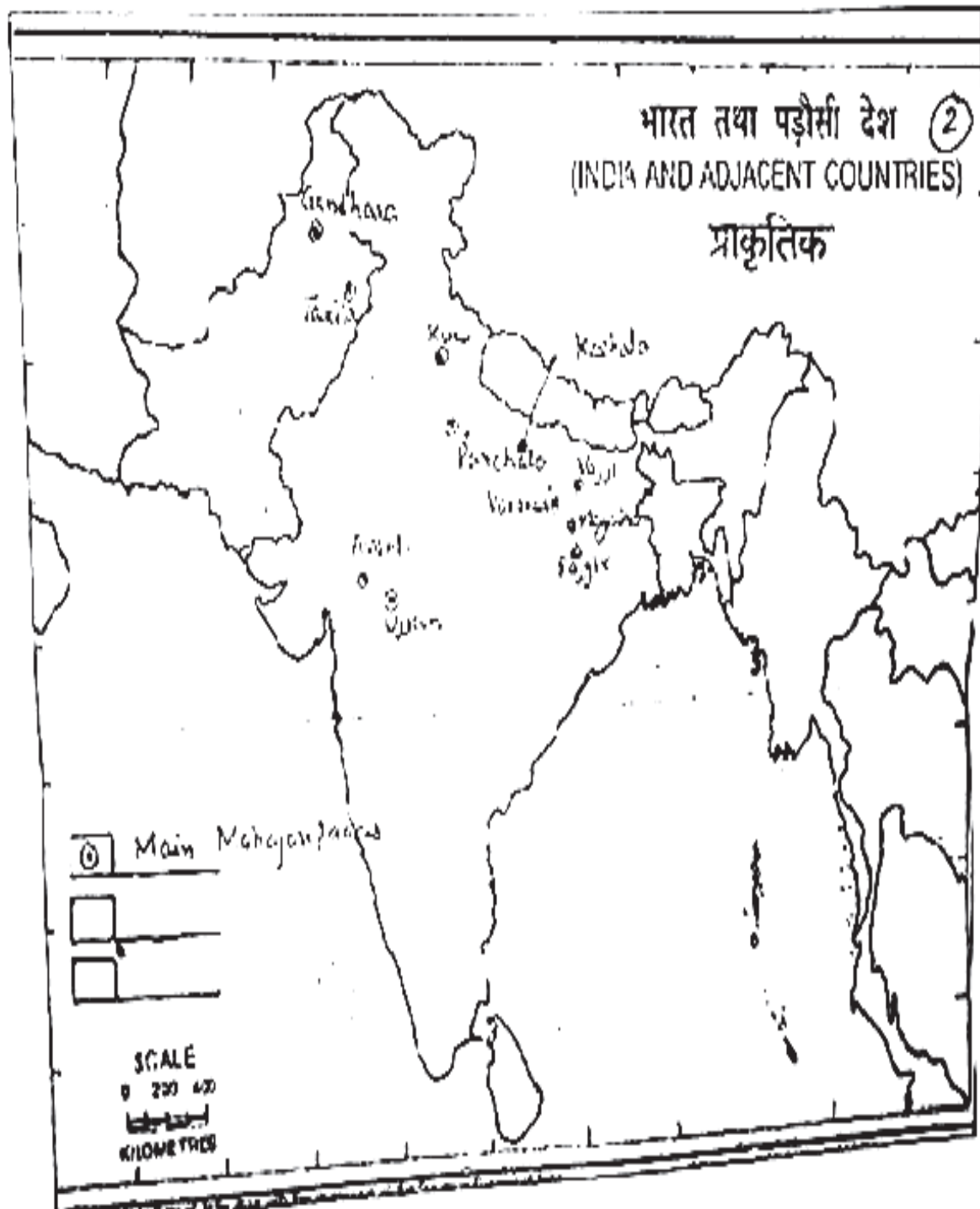
Q-1 What factors were responsible for the Growth of Magadh from Mahajanpadas to a powerful Empire?

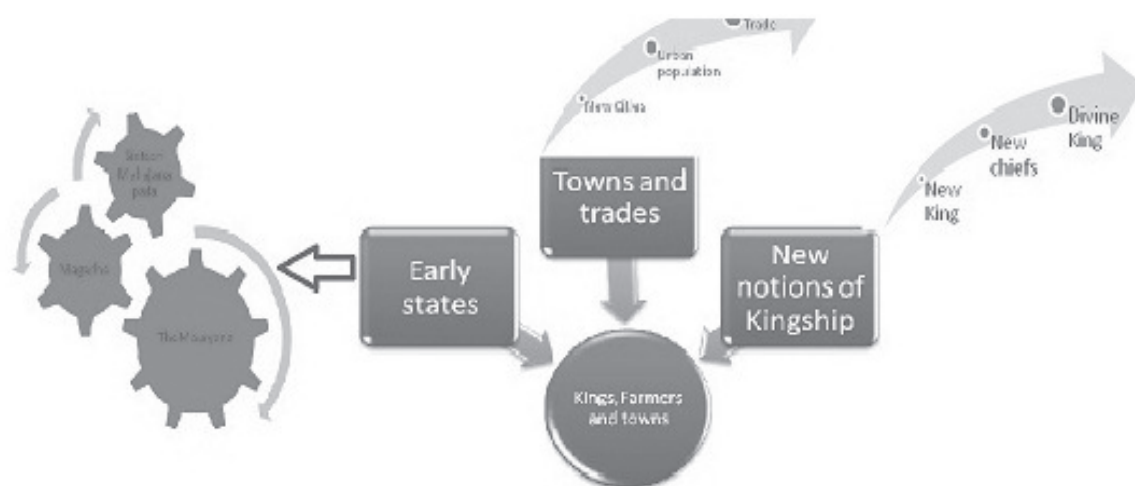
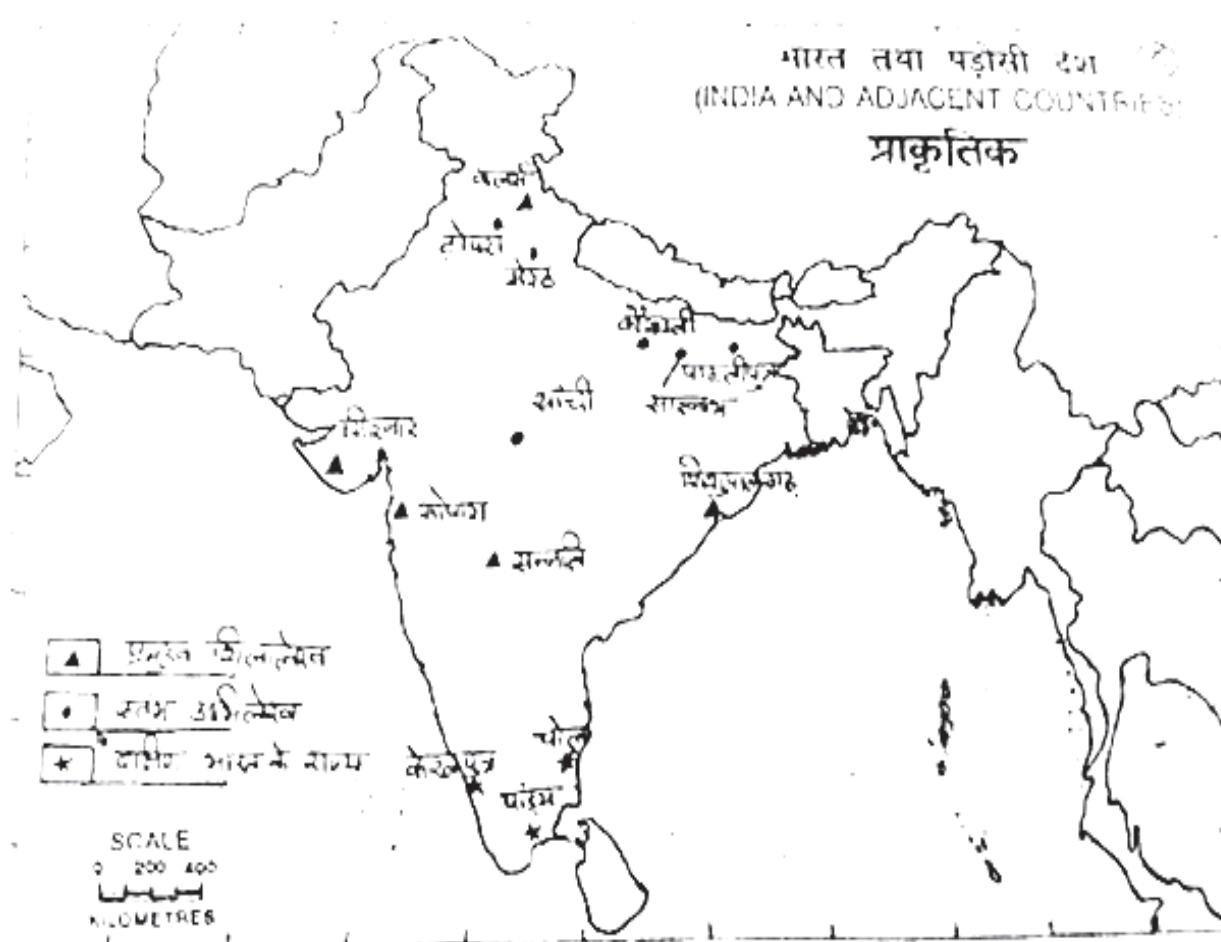
Q.2 What is the significance of the inscriptions of Ashoka in the Indian History?

Q-3 Describe any five features of Mahajanpada.

LONG ANSWER

Q-1 What were the main features of Mauryan Administration?





Mind Mapping