

NORTH-EX PUBLIC SCHOOL (Session 2020-21)
Class – XII
Subject – History
Theme – kings , Farmers and Towns
Chapter - Two
Assignment No - 5

***Note-** Before attempting the question and answers you must check the link given below which will help you understand the chapter thoroughly.

<https://youtu.be/xImvTAvDqh8>

<https://youtu.be/omKmpiNqXIY>

<https://youtu.be/j6S0wOTvbOQ>

<https://youtu.be/SQFICjyiQiM>

<https://youtu.be/TUAsOJb-RWg>

You can download the assignment or if you do not have the facility to get printout then you can ask your ward to copy the assignment in a simple notebook and must do question and answers in the notebook.

NOTES:

Developments between 1900 BCE and 600BCE

1. During the period between 1900 BCE and 600 BCE the *Rig-Veda* was composed by people living along the Indus and its tributaries.
2. During this period Agricultural settlements and pastoral populations emerged in many parts of the subcontinent, including north India, the Deccan and parts of Karnataka.
3. During this period new modes of disposal of the dead, including the making of elaborate stone structures known as **megaliths**, emerged in central and south India. In many cases, the dead were buried with a rich range of iron tools and weapons.

Sources to understand early Indian history(600 BCE to 600 BCE)

- a. Historians attempt to understand early Indian history (600 BCE to 600 BCE) by drawing on a range of sources – inscriptions, texts, coins etc
- b. Visual materials which 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.

The sixth century BCE is often regarded as a major turning point in early Indian history

1. It is an era associated with early states, cities.
2. It is an era associated with the growing use of iron.
3. It is an era associated with the development of coinage.
4. It is witnessed the growth of diverse systems of thought (Religions) including Buddhism and Jainism.
5. It is also associated with emergence of Sixteen Mahajanapadas.

What were the important Mahajanapadas?

Vajji, Magadha, Koshala, Kuru, Panchala, Gandhara and Avanti were amongst the most important *mahajanapadas*.

Explain the main features of sixteen mahajanapadas

1. While most mahajanapadas were ruled by kings some were oligarchies.
2. Each mahajanapada had a capital city, which was often fortified.
3. Each mahajanapada had a well maintained standing army and regular bureaucracies for administration.
4. Dharmasutras, written by Brahmins laid down norms for rulers. Rulers were ideally expected to be Kshatriyas.
5. Rulers were advised to collect taxes and tribute from cultivators, traders and artisans.
6. They were allowed to raid on neighbouring states which was a legitimate means of acquiring wealth.

How did Magadha become the most powerful mahajanapada?

1. agriculture was especially productive in Magadha region.
2. In Magadha iron mines were accessible and provided resources for tools and weapons.
3. Elephants(an important component of the army) were found in forests of this region.
4. The Ganga and its tributaries provided a means of cheap and convenient communication.
5. Buddhist and Jaina writers who wrote about Magadha attributed its power.
6. The ambitious kings of whom Bimbisara, Ajatasattu and Mahapadma Nanda are the best known, and their ministers, who helped implement their policies.

Sources to understand Mauryan Empire

1. Sources include archaeological finds, especially sculpture, buildings, monasteries etc
2. The account of Megasthenes- (a Greek ambassador to the court of Chandragupta Maurya), called **Indica** , which survives in fragments.
3. The *Arthashastra*, parts of which were probably composed by Kautilya, the minister of Chandragupta.

4. Later Buddhist, Jaina and Puranic literature, as well as in Sanskrit literary works have written about Mauryas.
5. The inscriptions of Asoka (c. 272/268-231BCE) on rocks and pillars are often regarded as amongst the most valuable sources.

What was the extend of Mauryan Empire?

Chandragupta Maurya, who founded the empire (c. 321 BCE), extended control as far northwest as Afghanistan and Baluchistan, and his grandson Asoka, the most famous ruler conquered Kalinga (present-day coastal Orissa).

Explain Administration of Maurian Empire

1. 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.
2. It is likely that administrative control was strongest in areas around the capital and the provincial centres. These centres were carefully chosen, both Taxila and Ujjayini being situated on important long-distance trade routes.
3. Megasthenes mentions a committee with six sub-committees for coordinating military activity. Of these, one subcommittee 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
4. Asoka also tried to hold his empire together by propagating *dhamma*, the principles which were simple and universally applicable. This would ensure the well-being of people in this world . Special officers, known as the *dhamma mahamatta*, were appointed to spread the message of *dhamma*. (***Dhamma Policy* included respect towards elders, generosity towards Brahmanas and those who renounced worldly life, treating slaves and servants kindly, and respect for religions and traditions other than one's own.**)
5. Asoka appointed Pativedakas to collect people's needs and report to the king directly.

The emergence of the Mauryan Empire was regarded as a major landmark in early Indian history- Why?)

1. Indian historians found the emergence of the Mauryan Empire in early India was both challenging and exciting.
2. Archaeological finds associated with the Mauryas, including stone sculpture, were considered to be examples of the spectacular art typical of Indian Empires.
3. Asoka was more powerful, industrious and humble than later rulers who adopted grandiose titles. So the nationalist leaders in the twentieth century regarded Asoka as an inspiring figure.

Mauryan Empire was not so important in Indian History

1. Mauryan Empire ruled India for about 150 years.
2. It extended control as far northwest as Afghanistan and Baluchistan and in the south up to Andhra Pradesh.
3. Administrative system was not similar in all the regions of Mauryan Empire.

New Notions of Kingship in Early Indian History

1. The chiefdoms that emerged in the south, Cholas, Cheras and Pandyas proved to be stable and prosperous under the control of chiefs, who performed special rituals, leadership in warfare, and settling disputes.
2. Many kings, including the Satavahanas who ruled over parts of western and central India and the Shakas, rulers of Central Asian origin who established kingdoms in the north-western parts of the subcontinent claimed social status through religious rituals and marriage alliances.
3. Colossal statues of Kushana rulers were found installed in a shrine at Mat near Mathura. Some historians feel that the Kushanas considered themselves god like. Many Kushana rulers also adopted the title *devaputra*, or “son of god”.
4. Rulers of the Gupta Empire depended on *samantas*, governors who maintained land and army and they offered homage and provided military support to rulers. Later Gupta rules became subordinates to powerful Samantas.
5. Guptas encouraged poets to compose poems in praise of them. While historians often attempt to draw factual information from such compositions, they found that rulers were compared equal to Gods. **In the Allahabad Pillar inscription (Sanskrit by Harishena, the court poet of Samudragupta) Samudragupta was compared with Gods.**

Changing Countryside (or) condition of villages in the Early Historic period

1. Popular perceptions of kings

- a) Historians have tried to reconstruct life in the country side with the help of the Jatakas and the Panchatantra. Many of these stories probably originated as popular oral tales that were later committed to writing.
- b) One story known as the Gandatindu Jataka describes the plight of the subjects of a wicked king.
- c) When the king went in disguise to find out what his subjects thought about him, each one of them cursed him for their miseries, complaining that they were attacked by robbers at night and by tax collectors during the day.
- d) To escape from this situation, people abandoned their village and went to live in the forest.
- e) As this story indicates the relationship between a king and his subjects, especially in the countryside. Kings frequently tried to fill their coffers by demanding high taxes, and peasants particularly found such demands oppressive.

2. Strategies for increasing agricultural production

- a) One such strategy to increase agricultural production 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.
- b) The iron-tipped ploughshare was used to turn the alluvial soil in areas which had high rainfall.

- c) 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.
- d) Areas which were semi-arid, such as parts of Punjab and Rajasthan and those living in hilly tracts in the north-eastern and central parts of the subcontinent practiced **hoe** agriculture, which was much better suited to the terrain.
- e) Another strategy adopted to increase agricultural production was the use of artificial irrigation, through wells and tanks, and less commonly, canals, which were constructed by kings and village communities.

3. Differences in rural society

- a) There was a growing differentiation amongst people engaged in agriculture. They were based on differential access to land, labour and some of the new technologies.
- b) In the country side of Northern India people were divided into three groups - landless agricultural labourers, small peasants, as well as large landholders.
- c) The term *gahapati* was often used in Pali texts to designate the small peasants, as well as large landholders.
- d) Early Tamil Sangam texts also mention different categories of people engaged in agriculture in south India.
- e) In south India people who were divided into three groups— large landowners or *vellalar*, ploughmen or *uzhavar* and slaves or *adimai*.

4. Land grants and new rural elites

- a. The land grants were made to religious institutions, Brahmanas, samantas and landless peasants.
- b. Prabhavati Gupta was the daughter of Chandragupta II, one of the most important rulers in early Indian history, According to Sanskrit legal texts, women were not supposed to have independent access to resources such as land.
- c. However, the inscription indicates 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.
- d. There were regional variations in the sizes of land donated – ranging from small plots to vast stretches of uncultivated land to donees (the recipients of the grant).
- e. Some Historians feel that land grants were part of a strategy adopted by ruling lineages to extend agriculture to new areas. Others suggest that when kings were losing control over their *samantas*, they tried to win allies by donating lands to people.

Towns and cities in early Historic period

1. New cities

- a. Many urban centres emerged in several parts of the subcontinent from c. sixth century BCE and many of these were capitals of *mahajanapadas*.
- b. Many major towns which were located along routes of trade and communication also became cities.

- c. Some cities were located on riverine routes, others were along land routes and yet others were near the coast.
- d. Many cities like Mathura were bustling centres of commercial, cultural and political activities.

2. Urban populations

- a. Kings and ruling elites lived in fortified cities. People who lived in towns were washing folk, weavers, scribes, carpenters, potters, goldsmiths, blacksmiths, officials, religious teachers, merchants etc.
- b. Inscriptions mention about **guilds or shrenis**, organisations of craft producers and merchants. These guilds probably procured raw materials, regulated production, and marketed the finished products.

2. Trade in the subcontinent and beyond

- a. From the sixth century BCE, land and riverine routes extended in various directions which connected all the parts of India.
- b. Rulers often attempted to control these routes, possibly by offering protection for a price. Those who used these routes included peddlers who probably travelled on foot and merchants who travelled with caravans of bullock carts.
- c. Sea routes connected across the Arabian Sea to Central Asia, North Africa, and West Asia and beyond. Sea routes also connected Southeast Asia and China through the Bay of Bengal.
- d. Also, there were seafarers, whose ventures were risky but highly profitable. Successful merchants of south India, designated as *masattuvan* in Tamil and *setthis* and *sattavahas* in Prakrit, could become enormously rich (some times more richer than kings)
- e. A wide range of goods were carried from one place to another – salt, grain, cloth, metal ores, finished products, stone, timber, medicinal plants, spices, especially pepper, etc.

4. Coins and kings

- a. Exchanges were facilitated by the introduction of coinage. **Punch-marked** coins made of silver and copper (c. 6th BCE onwards) were amongst the earliest to be minted and used by many dynasties including the Mauryas.
- b. 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. 2nd century BCE).
- c. The first gold coins were issued in the first century CE by the Kushanas. These were virtually identical in weight (4.5 gram gold) with those issued by Roman emperors and the Parthian rulers of Iran.
- d. Coins were also issued by tribal republics of Punjab and Haryana called the Yaudheyas. Archaeologists have unearthed several thousand copper coins issued by the Yaudheyas.
- e. Some of the most spectacular gold coins were issued by the Gupta rulers. The earliest coins issued by Guptas were remarkable for their purity. These coins facilitated long-distance transactions from which kings also benefited.

From c. sixth century CE onwards, finds of gold coins taper off. Does this indicate that there was some kind of an economic crisis?

- a. Historians are divided into two groups on this issue. Some suggest that with the collapse of the Western Roman Empire long-distance trade between India and Rome declined, and this affected the prosperity of India and trading communities.
- b. Others argue that new towns and networks of trade started emerging around this time within India.
- c. Some scholars point out that though finds of coins were few but coins continue to be mentioned in inscriptions and texts.
- d. Some historians suggest that people might have recycled the old coins or kept hoarded (hidden in secret places)

How were Brahmi and Kharosthi Inscriptions Deciphered?

- a. From the late eighteenth century, European scholars aided by Indian pundits worked backwards from contemporary Bengali and Devanagari manuscripts, comparing their letters with older specimens.
- b. James Prinsep, an officer in the mint of the East India Company, deciphered Brahmi and Kharosthi, two scripts used in the earliest inscriptions and coins. This gave a new direction to investigations into early Indian political history.
- c. Kharosthi, the script used in inscriptions and coins in the north western part of India by Indo-Greek kings. Indo-Greek coins contain the names of kings written in Greek and Kharosthi scripts. James Prinsep who could read the Greek script compared the letters and identified the language of the Kharosthi inscriptions as older form of Prakrit.
- d. James Prinsep found that Brahmi script is older form of Devanagari script.

Difficulties in understanding different names of Asoka

- a) Some of the inscriptions had the name Asoka, some had Devanampiya and some had Piyadassi.
- b) Epigraphists and historians who studied those inscriptions did not understand them.
- c) James Prinsep matched the inscriptions in terms of content, style, language and palaeo

Assignment No 5

Q1 Write the features of the mahajanapadas?

Q2 How Magadha became the most powerful mahajanapada ?

Q3 What are the various sources to know about the mauryas ?

Q4 What are the main features of the modern administration ?

Q5 What is the importance of the Maurya Empire ?

Q6 Describe the emergence of chiefs and kings after the decline of Mauryas.

Q7 How Kushana rulers define themselves as a divine Kings ?

Q8 What the ordinary people think about their Kings during the period of C 600 BCE to 600 CE ?

Q9 Briefly describe the Strategies for increasing agricultural production during this era.

Q10 How modern technologies in the agriculture differentiate the rural society?

Q11 What information is given in the inscriptions about the land grants?

Q12 Give brief description about the trade beyond the subcontinent from 6th century BCE.

Q13 Discuss the evidences of craft production in early cities.

Q14 How the exchanges were facilitated by the introduction of coinage ?

Q15 How Brahmi And kharosthi were deciphered?

Q16 "Inscriptions present a glimpse of every aspect of life" Discuss.

Q17 Critically examine the limitations of the inscriptions in understanding political and economical history of India.

ALL THE STUDENTS MUST DO NCERT QUESTIONS IN YOUR NOTE BOOK ALONG WITH THE EXTRA QUESTIONS