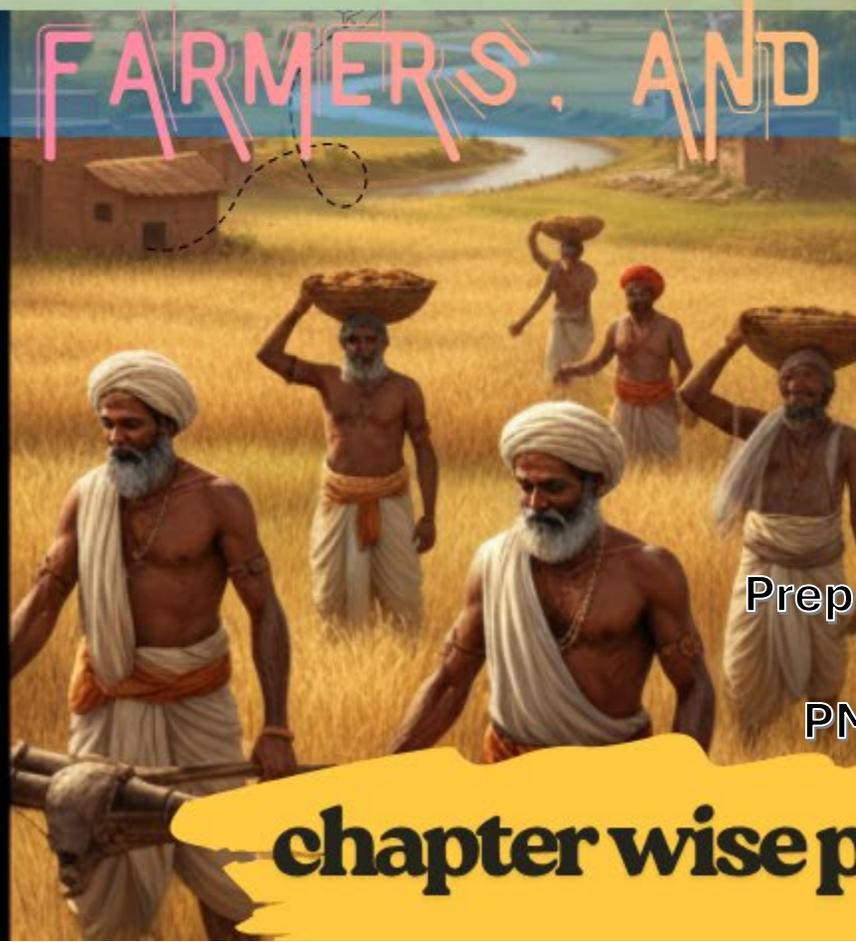


TOP 60

Part-3

HISTORY QUESTIONS FOR THE CBSE EXAM 2025-26"

KINGS, FARMERS, AND TOWNS



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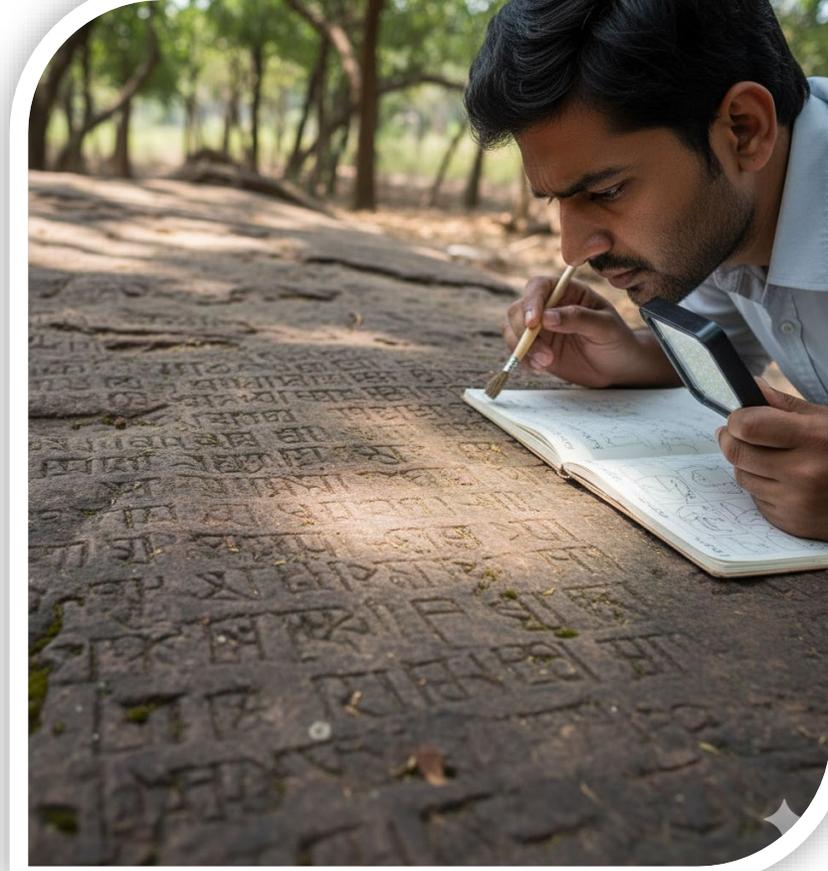
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7. Who was James Prinsep? Mention his contribution to the ancient Indian history? (3 Marks, 2023 Supp)

(List some of the problems faced by epigraphists.)

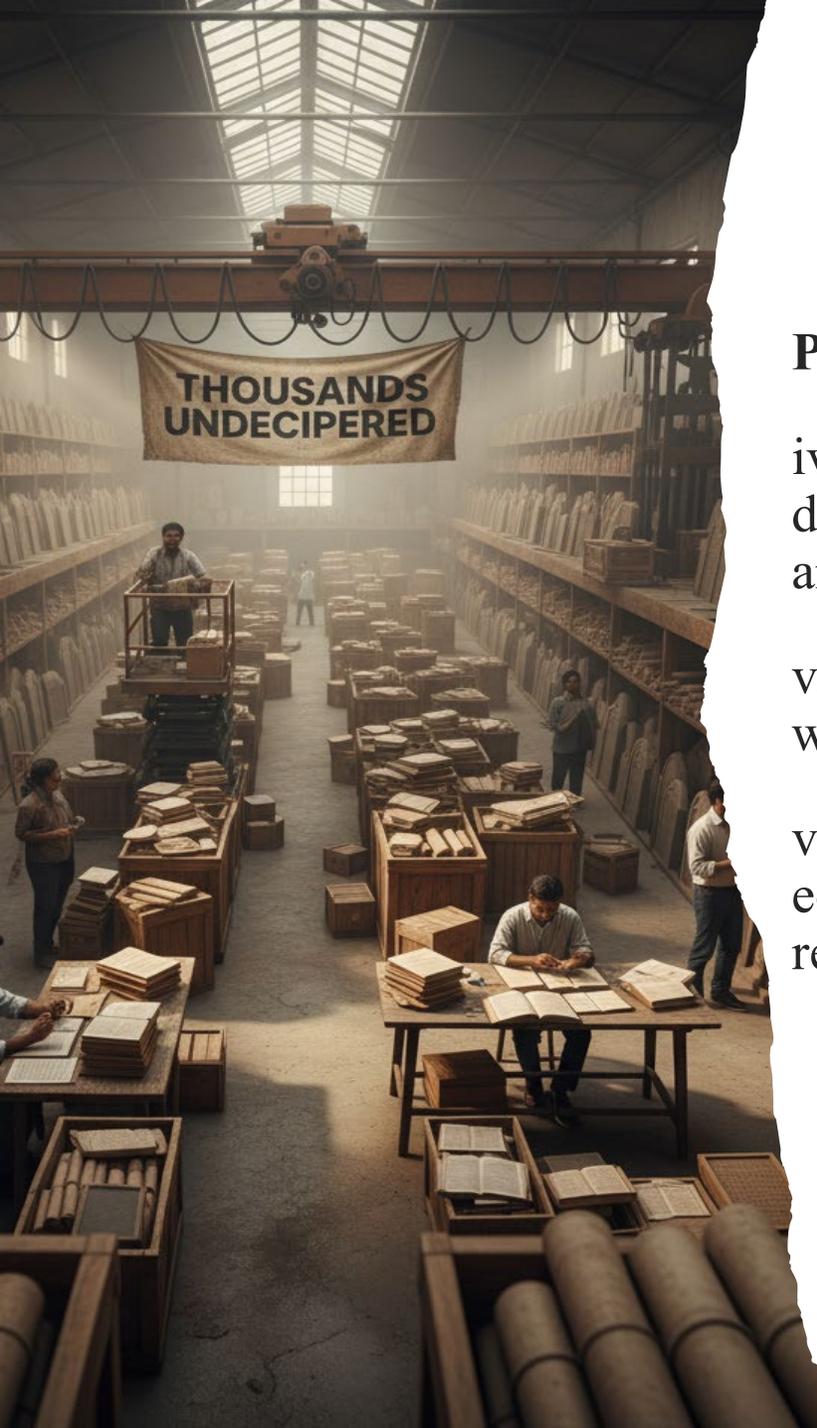
- James Prinsep was an officer in the mint of the East India Company.
- His primary contribution (in 1838) was deciphering Brahmi and Kharosthi, two ancient Indian scripts.
- This breakthrough allowed historians to read Ashokan inscriptions and identify King Ashoka (often named 'Piyadassi'), revolutionizing the understanding of early Indian history.





Problems faced by epigraphists:

- i. Sometimes, the letters of inscriptions are very faintly engraved.
- ii. Sometimes, the inscriptions may be damaged or letters missing.
- iii. It is not easy to be sure about the exact meaning of the words used in the inscriptions.



Problems faced by epigraphists:

iv. Several thousand inscriptions have been discovered but not all have been deciphered and translated.

v. Many more inscriptions must have existed, which have not survived.

vi. What we consider politically or economically significant may not have been recorded in inscriptions.



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8. Explain any three sources to know about the Mauryan empire. (3 Marks, 2024 Main)

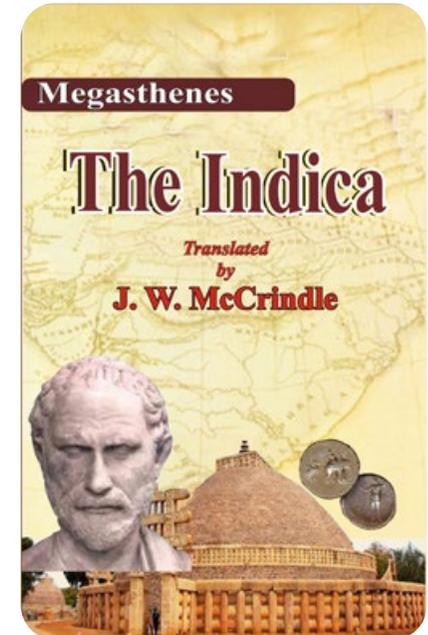
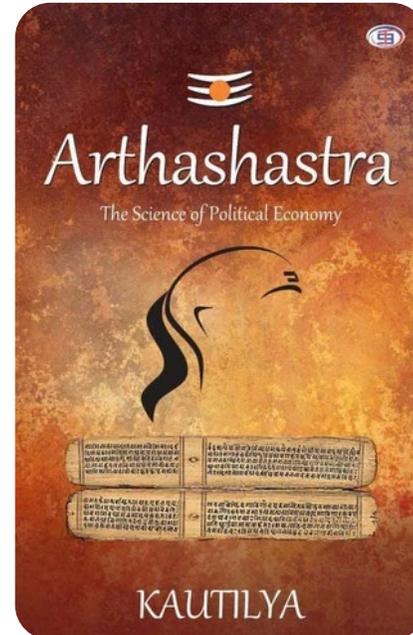
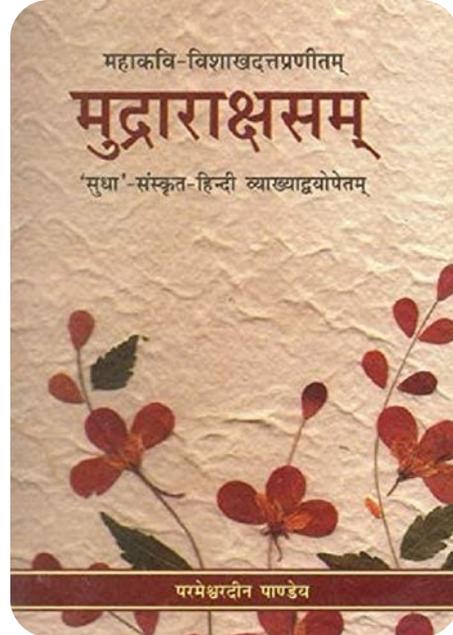
"The history of Mauryan empire has been constructed on the variety of sources." Explain the statement. (3 Marks, 2025 Main - OR)

(Explain the sources used by historians to reconstruct the history of the Mauryan Empire.)

Three key sources for the Mauryan empire are:

i. Literary Sources: Megasthenes' *Indica* (account by a Greek ambassador) and Kautilya's *Arthashastra*, gives a beautiful depiction of society and the administrative system.

- **“Mudrarakshasa” by Vishakhadutta** tells about how Chandragupta overtook rule from the Nanda dynasty.



ii. Archaeological Sources: Ashokan inscriptions (edicts on rocks and pillars) are a significant source describing Ashoka's dhamma.

iii. Later Literature: Buddhist, Jaina, and Puranic texts, which mention Mauryan rulers, events and tells us about the life and religious views of Mauryan kings.



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Follow up Questions

**"Ashokan inscriptions are the most significant sources to understand the administration of Ashoka."
Explain the statement. (3 Marks, 2025 Main)**

Ashokan inscriptions, written in Prakrit, are crucial for understanding his administration:

- They detail his policy of *Dhamma* (moral order) and the appointment of special officers (*Dhamma Mahamattas*) to spread it.
- They reflect Ashoka's ideal of paternal kingship, where he referred to his subjects as "my children."

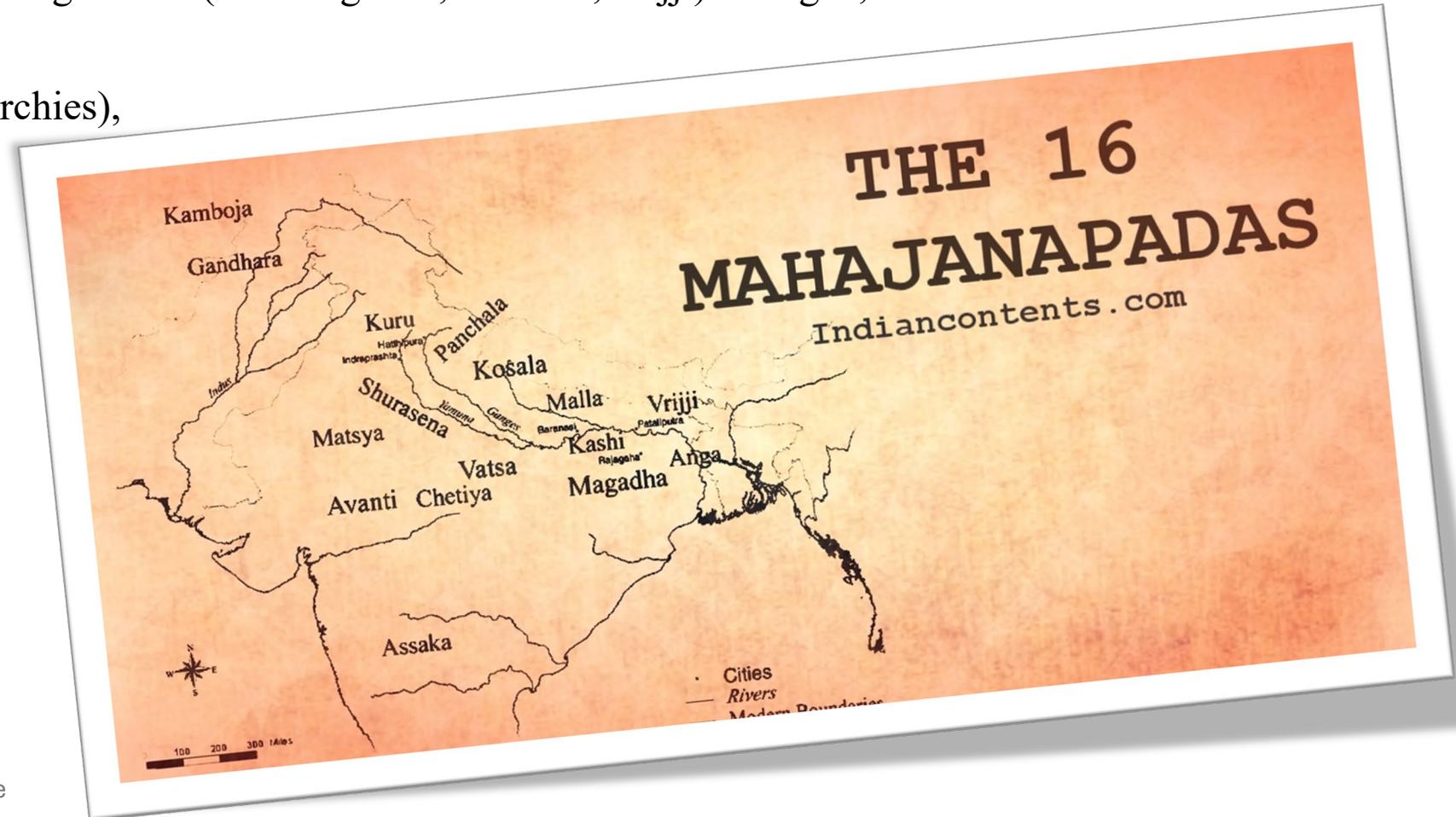
They identify the major political and administrative centers of the empire (e.g., Tosali, Ujjayini, Suvarnagiri).

9. Describe any three features of the Mahajanapadas. (3 Marks, 2024 Supp)

Describe the salient features of mahajanapadas.

Answer:

- Around the 6th century BCE, 16 large states (like Magadha, Koshala, Vajji) emerged, known as Mahajanapadas.
- Most were ruled by kings (monarchies),



- But some, like the Vajji sangha, were oligarchies (*ganas* or *sanghas*), where power was shared by a number of men, called rajas.
- Each Mahajanapada had a fortified capital city and maintained standing armies and bureaucracies,
- They were collecting regular taxes from people.



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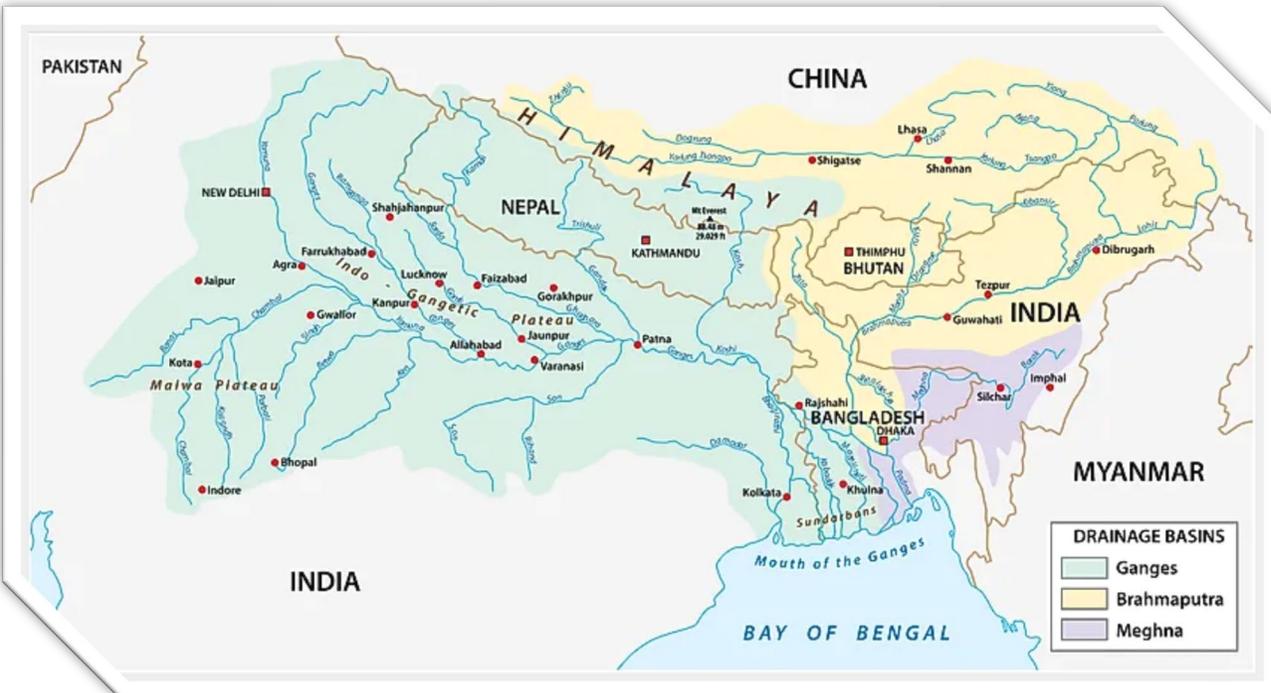
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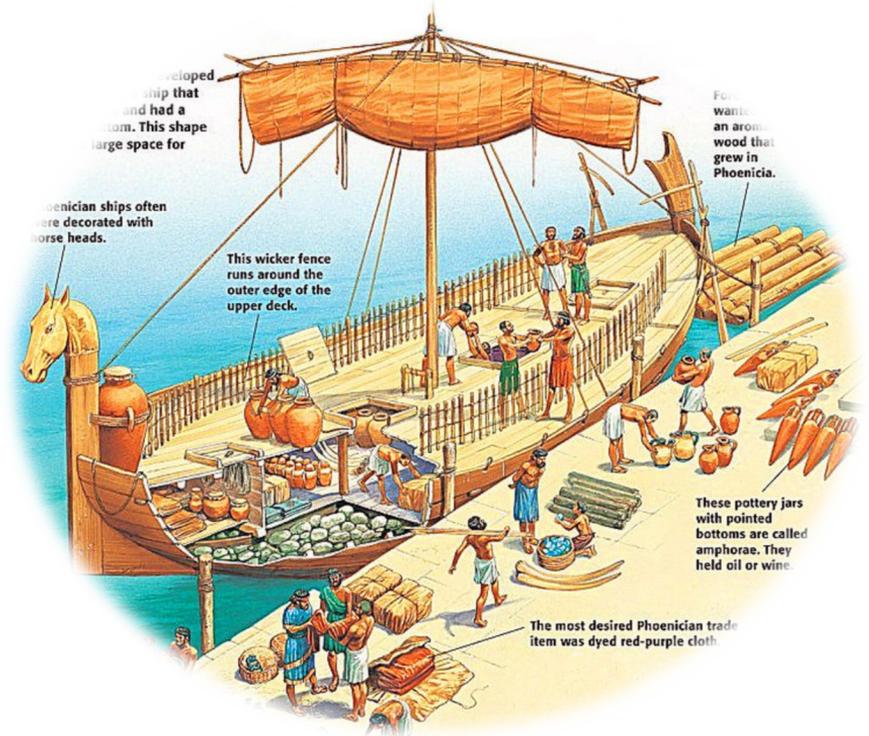
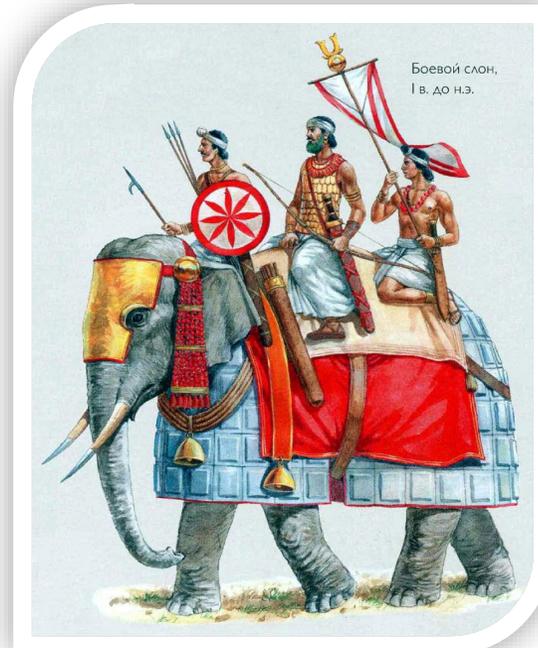
10. Describe any three causes of the growth of Magadha as a powerful Mahajanapada. (3 Marks, 2024 Supp - OR)

Which Mahajanapada emerged as the strongest state during the period 6th to 4th century BCE? What were its reasons?

- i. **Powerful Mahajanapada:** Between the sixth and the fourth centuries BCE, Magadha (in present-day Bihar) became the most powerful mahajanapada.
- ii. **Fertile Belt:** Magadha was a region where agriculture was especially productive.



- iii. **Rich Deposit of Iron:** Iron mines (in present-day Jharkhand) were accessible and provided resources for tools and weapons.
- iv. **Elephant:** Elephants, an important component of the army, were found in forests.
- v. **Efficient Transport system:** The Ganga and its tributaries provided a means of cheap transportation for communication, trade, and military movement.



- vi. **Ambitious King:** The early Buddhist and Jaina writers, wrote about powerful kings like Bimbisara, Ajatashatru and Mahapadma Nanda.
- vii. **Twin Capital:** Initially: Rajagaha (Prakrit word, Present day Rajgir in Bihar) was the capital of Magadha, located amongst hills. Later, in the fourth century BCE, the capital was shifted to Pataliputra, present-day Patna.



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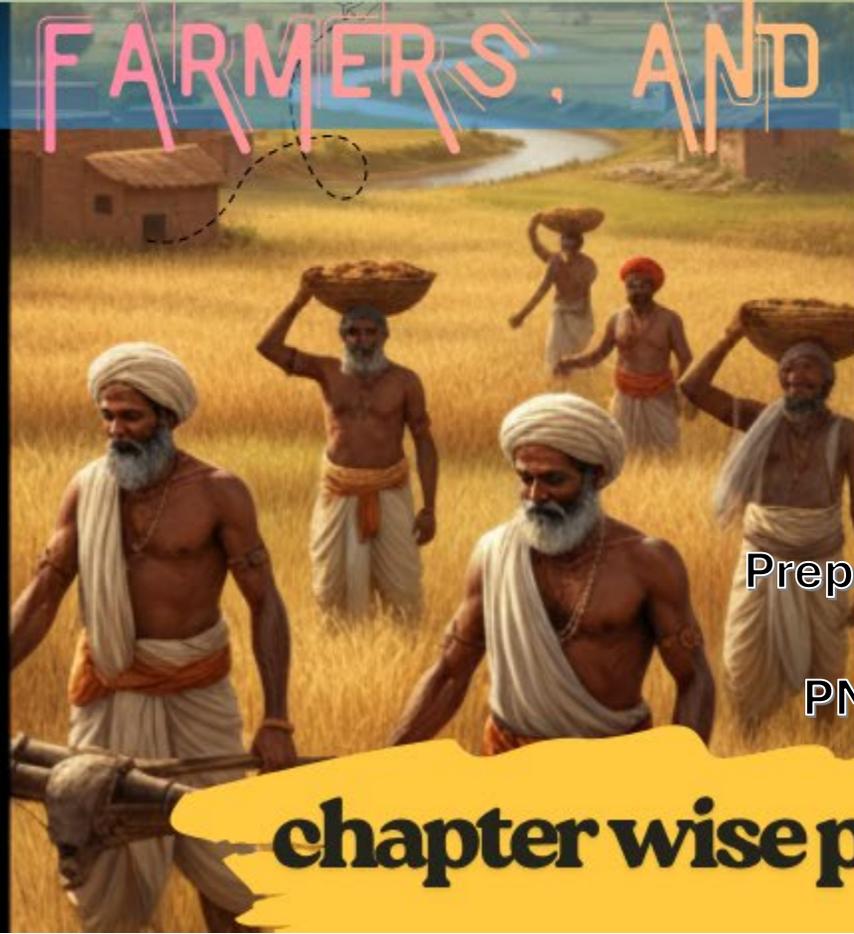
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TOP 60

Part-4

HISTORY QUESTIONS FOR THE CBSE EXAM 2025-26"

KINGS, FARMERS, AND TOWNS



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chapter wise previous year paper

11. "The political power or kingship was rarely dependent on birth as Kshatriyas but also open to anyone who could muster support and resources." Explain the statement with the examples from sixth century BCE onwards. (8 Marks, 2025 Main - OR)

The Brahmanical Shastras prescribed that only Kshatriyas could be kings. However, evidence shows that political power was often open to anyone who could gather support and resources, regardless of varna.

- 1. The Mauryas:** The founders of the vast Mauryan empire were described in Buddhist and Jaina texts as belonging to the Moriya clan, suggesting a humble origin, not a high Kshatriya lineage.
- 2. Brahmana Kings:** The successors to the Mauryas, the Shungas and Kanvas, were Brahmanas..
- 3. 'Outsider' Rulers:** The Shakas, who came from Central Asia, were regarded by Brahmanas as *mlechchhas* (outsiders), yet they established powerful kingdoms. The famous Shaka ruler Rudradaman is a key example.
- 4. The Satavahanas:** The Satavahana ruler Gotami-puta Siri-Satakani claimed to be both a unique Brahmana and a destroyer of Kshatriya pride.

These examples demonstrate that military might, strategic alliances, and control over resources were often more important than ritual Kshatriya status for acquiring kingship.

12. Describe the economic and social conditions of rural people from c. 600 BCE to 600 CE.

Ans.

(i) Economic conditions:

(a) Kings often imposed **high taxes**, which peasants found oppressive, as mentioned in texts like the Jataka and Panchatantra.

(b) Agricultural productivity increased through the use of iron ploughshares, plough agriculture, and irrigation systems like wells and tanks.



(c) Land grants became common (to brahmanas).

(d) Land grants helped expand agriculture but also indicated **weakening political control**, as kings lost power over samantas.





- **(ii) Social conditions:**

- (a) There was growing differentiation in rural society, with **landless laborers, small peasants, and large landholders.**

- (b) Early Tamil texts (Sangam literature) mention social divisions, such as:

- **Vellalar** (large landowners),
- **Uzhavar** (ploughmen), and
- **Adimai** (slaves).

- (c) Social differences often arose due to **unequal access to land, labor, and technology.**

- (d) The term **Gahapati** referred to the head of a household who owned land, animals, and resources.

- (e) Women typically had limited property rights, reflecting **gender inequality.**

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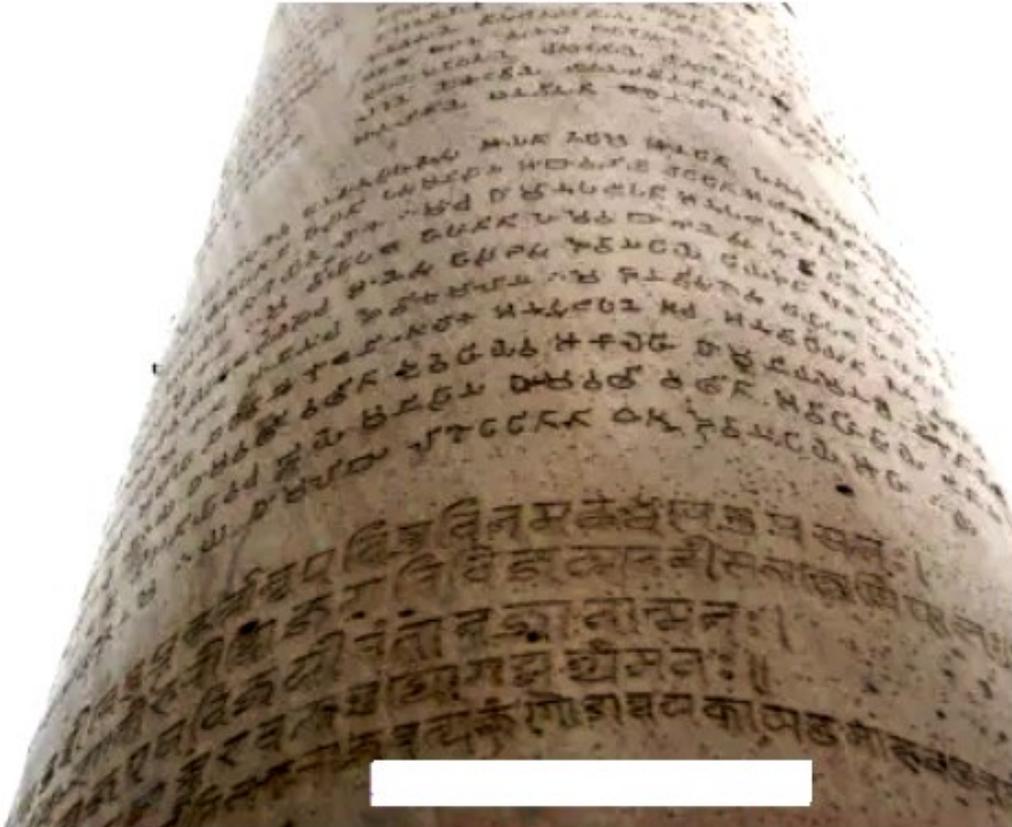
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13. Describe briefly the sources used for reconstructing the history of Gupta rulers.

Ans. The Gupta Empire, which flourished in the 4th century, has been reconstructed using the following sources:

(i) Inscriptions:

- Writings engraved on hard surfaces like stone or metal.
- For example, the **Allahabad Pillar Inscription (Prayaga Prashasti)** was composed in Sanskrit by Harisena.



(ii) Coins:

- Gupta rulers issued spectacular gold coins.
- Coins often had scripts, images, and other elements that provide insights into trade, economy, and governance.

(iii) Literature:

- Historians use Prashastis (eulogies) to gather factual information.
- These texts praised the rulers and their deeds.
- For example, the **Prayaga Prashasti** gives a detailed account of Samudragupta's conquests and achievements.



Follow up Questions

How has Coinage played a valuable role in determining certain periods of Indian history?

Ans. Coinage has played a significant role in reconstructing certain periods of Indian history in the following ways:

- (a) **Punch-marked coins** made of silver and copper were among the earliest coins minted.
- (b) It reconstruct **commercial networks** and trade routes of the time.
- (c) **Symbols on punch-marked coins** are linked to specific ruling dynasties like the Mauryas.
- (d) **Indo-Greeks** issued coins with the name and image of rulers.
- (e) The **Kushanas introduced the first gold coins**, signifying wealth and prosperity.
- (f) **Roman coins found in South India** indicate trade links.
- (g) The **Guptas issued pure gold coins**, which facilitated long-distance trade.

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

Ans.

Land Grants:

- (a) Land grants were often given to **religious institutions or Brahmanas**.
- (b) These land grants were usually exempted from taxes.
- (c) Women generally did not have access to land, but aristocratic women like **Prabhavati Gupta**, daughter of Chandragupta II, owned land.
- (d) Some historians believe land grants were a strategy to **extend agriculture** to new areas.
- (e) Kings also used land grants to win allies or strengthen their control over samantas.

Trade:

- (a) Trade routes (land and river) criss-crossed the subcontinent, connecting distant regions.
- (b) Rulers controlled these routes by providing protection in exchange for payments.
- (c) Merchants traveled in caravans with goods like salt, grain, textiles, and spices.
- (d) Seafarers transported goods across the Arabian Sea to the Mediterranean, despite the risks.
- (e) Wealthy merchants, such as **Manigramam in Tamil regions** or **Setthis in Prakrit**, played a significant role in trade.