

# IAS Prelims Exam: Ancient History

## NCERT Questions: Kings, Farmers and Towns

Questions asked from Ancient Indian History section in IAS Prelims Exam are quite easy but the candidates need to memorise well before appearing in the exam. The candidates should have balanced preparation of overall three sections of the History and its chronology is one of the most important parts of the subject history which enable candidates to memorise well every important aspects of history.

Following Multiple Choice Questions of Ancient Indian History would help students in understanding the nature of questions asked in IAS Prelims Exam.

### Q1. Consider the following statements associated with James Prinsep:

- I. James Prinsep is considered as the first European Scholar to decipher the Ashokan Edicts of Ancient India.
- II. James Prinsep deciphered Brahmi and Khrosthī in which he found mentioned a king referred to as “piyadassi”.
- III. James Prinsep was appointed as an officer in the mint of British East India Company.

### Which of the following statement(s) is/are correct?

- A. Only I
- B. I and II
- C. I and III
- D. All of the above

### Answer: D

**Explanation:** Some of the most momentous developments in Indian epigraphy took place in the 1830s. This was when 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. He found that most of these mentioned a king referred to as Piyadassi – meaning “pleasant to behold”; there were a few inscriptions which also referred to the king as Asoka, one of the most famous rulers known from Buddhist texts.

**Q2. Consider the following statements regarding the developments after deciphering the Ashokan Edicts by James Prinsep:**

- I. James Prinsep's successful attempt to decipher gave a new direction to investigations into early Indian political history as European and Indian scholars.
- II. Scholars used inscriptions and texts composed in a variety of languages to reconstruct the lineages of major dynasties that had ruled the subcontinent.
- III. Subsequently, scholars began to shift their focus to the context of political history, investigating whether there were connections between political changes and economic and social developments.

**Which of the following statement(s) is/are correct?**

- A. Only I
- B. I and II
- C. I and III
- D. All of the above

**Answer: D**

**Explanation:** This gave a new direction to investigations into early Indian political history as European and Indian scholars used inscriptions and texts composed in a variety of languages to reconstruct the lineages of major dynasties that had ruled the subcontinent. As a result, the broad contours of political history were in place by the early decades of the twentieth century. Subsequently, scholars began to shift their focus to the context of political history, investigating whether there were connections between political changes and economic and social developments. It was soon realised that while there were links, these were not always simple or direct.

**Q3. Consider the following statements regarding most evident happenings of Sixth century BCE in Indian History:**

- I. The sixth century BCE is often regarded as a major turning point in early Indian history.
- II. It is an era associated with early civilisation, the growing use of gold and silver, the development of paper currency, etc.
- III. It also witnessed the growth of diverse systems of thought, including Buddhism and Jainism.

**Which of the following statement(s) is/are correct?**

- A. Only I
- B. I and II
- C. I and III
- D. All of the above

**Answer: C**

**Explanation:** 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.

**Q4. Consider the following statements regarding the Mahajanapadas of the sixth century BCE:**

I. Early Buddhist and Jaina texts mention, amongst other things, sixteen states known as mahajanapadas.

II. 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.

III. 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.

**Which of the following statement(s) is/are correct?**

- A. Only I
- B. I and II
- C. I and III
- D. All of the above

**Answer: D**

**Explanation:** Early Buddhist and Jaina texts mention, amongst other things, sixteen states known as mahajanapadas. Although the lists vary, some names such as Vajji, Magadha, Koshala, 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.

**Q5. Who laid the foundation of the city of Pataliputra?**

- A. Ajatashatru
- B. Bimbisara
- C. Udayin
- D. Prasenjit

**Answer: A**

**Explanation:** The reign of Ajatashatru, son of Bimbisara, regarded as important because he laid the foundation of the city of Pataliputra at the confluence of his son Udayin after which the capital of Magadha shifted from Rajagriha to Pataliputra.

**Q6. Where was the capital of Anga, one of the Mahajanapada?**

- A. Champanagari
- B. Rajgriha
- C. Mithila
- D. Kausambi

**Answer: A**

**Explanation:** Rajagriha was the capital of Magadha while Mithila was the capital of Vajji. Kausambi was the capital of Vatsa, now in the district of Allahabad in UP.

**Q7. Consider the following statements regarding Rajagaha:**

- I. Initially, Rajagaha (the Prakrit name for presentday Rajgir in Bihar) was the capital of Magadha.
- II. Rajagaha was a fortified settlement, located amongst hills.
- III. Later, in the fourth century BCE, the capital was shifted to Pataliputra, present-day Patna, commanding routes of communication along the Ganga.

**Which of the following statement(s) is/are correct?**

- A. Only I
- B. I and II
- C. I and III
- D. All of the above

**Answer: D**

**Explanation:** Initially, Rajagaha (the Prakrit name for presentday 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.

**Q8. Which one of the following Mahajanapadas, was a monarchical state?**

- A. Vajji
- B. Malla
- C. Kosala
- D. Panchal

**Ans. C**

**Explanation:** The Mahajanapadas were divided into two types of states- Monarchical and Non-Monarchical states. The states like Vajji, Malla, Panchal, Kuru, Kamboja, Shakya etc were republican or Non-Monarchical states whereas states like Anga, Magadha, Kashi, Kosala, Vatsa, Chedi etc were Monarchical states.

**Q9. Who among the following often described as the “the first empire builder of Indian history”**

- A. Shisunaga
- B. Mahapadma
- C. Kalashoka
- D. Dhanananda

**Answer: B**

**Explanation:** Mahapadma often regarded as the “the first empire builder of Indian history” because he was so powerful that he overthrown all the dynasties ruled at the time of Shisunaga dynasty.

**Q10. Which among the following places, the Major Rock Edict of Ashoka has not been found?**

- A. Sarnath
- B. Girnar
- C. Kandahar
- D. Jaugada

**Answer: A**

**Explanation:** In places such as Girnar, Kandahar, Jaugada, Mansehra Sopara etc the Major Rock Edicts have been founded whereas in the places like Sarnath Gujjarra, Kaushambi, Sahasram etc where the Minor Rock Edicts have been found.