

## 2. Kings; Farmers and Towns: Early States and Economies

### 1. Discuss the evidence of craft production in Early Historic cities. In what ways is this different from the evidence from Harappan cities?

**Ans:** Widespread and deep excavations in the early historic towns have not been possible due to the fact that these towns are still inhabited. In Harappan Civilisation, we have been fortunate enough that excavations have taken place widespread. Despite this shortcoming, we have found many artefacts in the historic towns. These throw light on the craftsmanship of those days. There are other evidences too, that throw light on the craftsmanship of those days. The salient features of such evidences are as follows:

1. From the sights the fine pottery bowls and dishes have been found. They are glossy too and we call them Northern Black Polished Ware. It looks they were used by the rich people.
2. There have also been evidence of ornaments, tools, weapons, vessels and figurines. There are a wide range of items made of gold, silver, copper, bronze, ivory, glass, shell and terracotta.
3. The donor inscription tells who all lived in towns in terms of professionals and craftsmen. It included washer men, weaver, scribes, carpenters, goldsmith, ironsmith, etc. It is notable in Harappan towns there are no evidences of iron use.
4. The craftsmen and artisans built their guilds too. They collectively bought raw materials, produced and marketed their products.

### 2. Describe the salient features of Mahajanapadas.

**Ans:** The salient features of mahajanapadas are as follows:

- The most important mahajanapadas were Vajji, Magadha, Koshala, Kuru, Panchala, Gandhara and Avanti.
- 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.
- In some cases, as in the case of the Vajji sangha, the rajas probably controlled resources such as land collectively.
- Each mahajanapada had a capital city, which was often fortified.
- Brahmanas composed the Dharmasutras which laid down norms for rulers as well as for other social categories. The rulers were ideally expected to be Kshatriyas. Rulers were advised to collect taxes and tribute from cultivators, traders and artisans.
- Sometimes raids on neighbouring states were conducted for acquiring wealth. These raids were recognised as legitimate means.

- Gradually, some states acquired standing armies and maintained regular bureaucracies. Others continued to depend on militia, recruited from the peasantry.

### 3. How do historians reconstruct the lives of ordinary people?

**Ans:** Ordinary people could not leave behind any historical evidence about their life. Hence, the historians use a variety of sources to reconstruct the lives of the common people during the ancient times. The important sources are:

1. Remains of houses and pottery give an idea of the life of common men.
2. Some inscriptions and scriptures talk about the relation between monarchs and the subject. It talks about taxes and happiness and unhappiness of the common men.
3. Changing tools of craftsmen and farmers talk about the lifestyle of the people.
4. Historians also depend upon folklores to reconstruct the lives of the people during the ancient times.

### 4. Compare and contrast the list of things given to the Pandyan chief (Source 3) with those produced in the village of Danguna (source 8). Do you notice any similarities and differences?

**Ans:** The gifts given to Pandya chief included things like ivory, fragrant wood, honey, sandalwood, pepper, flowers, etc. in additions to many birds and animals were also given as gifts. On the contrary, items produced in the village of Danguna included grass, skin of animals, flower salt and other minerals, etc. In both the lists the only common item is flower.

### 5. List some of the problems faced by epigraphists.

**Ans:** The problems faced by epigraphists are as given below:

1. Sometimes, the letters of inscriptions are very faintly engraved, and thus reconstructions are uncertain.
2. Sometimes, the inscriptions may be damaged or letters missing.
3. On certain occasions it is not easy to be sure about the exact meaning of the words used in the inscriptions, some of which maybe specific to a particular place or time. That is why scholars are constantly debating and discussing alternative ways of reading inscriptions.
4. Several thousand inscriptions have been discovered but not all have been deciphered, published and translated.
5. Many more inscriptions must have existed, which have not survived the ravages of time. Whatever is available, is only a fraction of all inscriptions.
6. There is also a possibility that what we consider politically or economically significant may not have been recorded in inscriptions. For example, there is no mention of routine agricultural practices and the joys and sorrows of daily existence in the inscriptions.

**6. Discuss the main features of Mauryan administration. Which of these elements are evident in the Asokan inscriptions that you have studied?**

**Ans:** The main features of Mauryan administration are as follows:

1. There were five major political centres in the empire i.e., the capital Pataliputra and the provincial centres of Taxila, Ujjayini, Tosali and Suvamagiri.
2. The communication system existed along both land and riverine routes. It was very vital for the existence of the empire.
3. As the journeys from the centre to the provinces could have taken a long time, there was arrangement for provisions as well as protection for the travellers,
4. The Mauryans kept a large army. Magasthenese mentions a committee with six subcommittees for coordinating military activity which were as mentioned below:
  - One to look after the navy;
  - The second for management of transport and provisions;
  - The third was responsible for foot soldiers;
  - The fourth for horses;
  - The fifth for chariots;
  - The sixth for elephants.

The element that there were five major political centres in the empire – the capital Pataliputra, and the provincial centres of Taxila, Ujjayini, Tosali and Suvamagiri – all have been mentioned in the Asoka's inscriptions.

**7. This is a statement made by one of the best-known epigraphists of the twentieth century, D.C. Sircar: "There is no aspect of life, culture, activities of the Indians that is not reflected in inscriptions." Discuss.**

**Ans:** The statement of eminent epigraphist D.C. Sircar has highlighted the importance of inscription as single source of information that touch upon all areas of our life. Following are the main areas we get information about from the inscriptions

- 1. Determination of state's boundaries:** the inscriptions were carved in the territories of the kings and even more important is not often close to the borders. This help us find out boundaries of kingdoms and their expansions thereto.
- 2. Names of Kings:** The names of the kings are mentioned in the inscriptions. The names and titles used by Asoka the Great got revealed through inscriptions only.
- 3. Historic events:** The important historical events are mentioned in the inscriptions. The best example is how the event of the Kalinga war is mentioned in the inscription and how Asoka takes to Dhamma.
- 4. Information about conduct of Kings:** Inscriptions describe the conduct and character of the

kings quite well. It is through the inscriptions only that we know Asoka worked for the welfare of the masses.

**5. Information about administration:** Inscriptions gave information about administration. It is through the inscription. We know that Asoka appointed his son as a Viceroy.

**6. Land settlement and Taxes:** inscriptions mention how land were granted or gifted. It also talks about various taxes imposed by the ruler.

There is hardly any area of governance of our life that is not mentioned in the inscriptions. Hence, we are inclined to agree with D.C. Sirkar who says, “There is no aspect of life, culture, activities of Indians that is not reflected in the inscriptions.”

### **8. Discuss the notions of kingship that developed in the post-Mauryan period.**

**Ans:** In the post-Mauryan age, the idea of kingship got associated with divine theory of state. Now, the monarchs began to talk about divine sanction to rule the people. Kushan rulers propagated the idea of the same at the unprecedented scale. They ruled from central Asia to western India. We can discuss the kingship based on the dynasties.

**1. Kushan Kings:** Kushan Kings called themselves Devputra and hence, godly status. They built great statues of themselves in temples.

**2. Gupta Rulers:** Second development of kingship is found during Gupta dynasty. It was a period of large-sized states. Such states were dependent on Samantas who sometimes became powerful enough to usurp the power of kings too.

**3. Literature,** coins and inscriptions helped us in creating history of those days. Very often poets would describe the monarch often to praise them but giving insight into the history and kingship too. A good example is of Harisena who praised Samudragupta, the great Gupta ruler.

### **9. To what extent were agricultural practices transformed in the period under consideration?**

**Ans:** The demand for taxes increased in the post 600 BC. In order to meet the demand of excessive taxes, without taking lesser produce, forced the farmers to increase productivity. This resulted in the use of new tools and practices of agriculture. The important ones are as follows:

**1. Use of plough:** Ploughs became commonplace. They were hardly heard of in the past. The use of ploughs began in the Ganga and Cauvery basins. In places where rain was abundant, the plough was used with iron tip. This increased the paddy production manifold.

**2. Use of spade:** Another tool that changed the system of agriculture is spade. Those farmers who lived in the areas of harsh land used spade.

**3. Artificial Irrigation:** Apart from rainfall, the farmers now began to look at artificial form of irrigation. This prompted farmers to build wells, ponds, and – canals often collectively. This increased the agricultural production.

The production increased due to new technology and tools. This created a new strata in the society. In the Buddhist literature, there is a description of small and big farmers. They were called Grihpatis. Similar description is given in the Tamil literature too. The position of village head was often hereditary. In such a situation the ownership of land became very important.