

Kings, Farmers and Towns Early States and Economies

NCERT TEXTBOOK QUESTIONS SOLVED

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. Mahajanapadas were states that existed between 6th and 4th BC centuries. Buddhist and Jain texts mention sixteen Mahajanapadas. The name of all these are not uniform in all texts but some names are common and uniform which means they were the powerful ones. These Mahajanapadas are Vajji, Magadha, Kaushal, Kuru, Panchal, and Gandhar.

The important features of the Mahajanapadas are as follows.

1. Most of the Mahajanapadas were ruled by powerful kings. However, there were some Mahajanapadas where rule was in the hands of people, we call them republics. In some states the king and the subject had collective control on the economic resources of the state.
2. Every Mahajanapadas had its own capital. The capital normally would be surrounded by fort. The fortification of the capital was needed for protection and economic resources.
3. It was around 6th Century BC, Brahmins began to compile scripture called "Dharmshastra" which states rules of morality including that of monarch. Herein it was mentioned that the king should be Kshatriya.
4. The main job of the king was collection of taxes from farmers, traders, craftsmen. They also accepted donations.
5. It was considered fair to plunder neighbouring countries for riches.
6. Gradually Mahajanapadas began to have full time army and officials. Soldiers were from the ranks of farmers.

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:

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, sandal-wood, pepper, flowers, etc. in addition to many birds and animals were also given as gifts. On the contrary, items produced in the village of Danguda 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 the epigraphists.

Ans. The specialists who study inscriptions are called Epigraphists. Some of the important problems they encounter when they try to decipher inscriptions are as follows:

1. Many of the inscriptions are not found in proper shape, they are partly damaged, hence deciphering them becomes a knotty problem.
2. The inscriptions are written from the point of view of those who have created it. Hence, in order to get an impartial understanding, we need to go beyond the written words, get into its interpretations.
3. Many of the inscriptions have descriptions in symbolic words. Hence deciphering them have become difficult.
4. Sometimes the inscriptions are engrafted in very light colors. Hence, deciphering them becomes difficult.

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

Ans. Asokan inscriptions mention all the main features of the administration of the Mauryan Empire. Thus, the features of the administration are evident in the inscriptions of the Asokan age. The important features of the same are as follow:

1. The capital of the Mauryan Empire was Pataliputra. Apart from the capital there ' were four other centres of political power in the empire. They were Taxila, Ujjaini, Tosali and Suvamagiri.
2. Committee and subcommittees were formed to run the administration and safety of boundaries. Megasthenes has mentioned that there were one committee and six sub-committees. The six subcommittees and their areas of activities are as follows:
 - (i) The first sub committee looked after navy.
 - (ii) The second sub committee looked after transport and communications.
 - (iii) The third sub committee looked after infantry.
 - (iv) The fourth sub committee had the responsibility of horses.
 - (v) The fifth had the responsibility of chariots.
 - (vi) The sixth had the responsibility of elephants.
3. Strong network of roads and communications were established. It is notable that no large empire can be maintained in the absence of the same.
4. Asoka made an attempt to keep the empire united by the philosophy of Dhamma. Dhamma are nothing but moral principles that actuated people towards good conducts. Special officers called Dhamma Mahamtras were appointed to propagate Dhamma. In fact Romila Thapar has made it the most important element of the Asokan state's governing principle.

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. Sircar 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.

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.