

ANCIENT HISTORY UPSC Civil Services Exam Questions (2015-19)

Q1. Which of the following kingdoms were associated with the life of the Buddha?

1. Avanti
2. Gandhara
3. Kosala
4. Magadha

Select the correct answer using the code given below.

- (a) 1, 2 and 3
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 1, 3 and 4
- (d) 3 and 4 only

Ans : D

Explanation

A similar question was asked in 2014 Prelims.

Avanti and Gandhara were not associated with life of Buddha, while Magadha and Kosala were. Hence **eliminate 1 and 2 in options, answer is D.**

- Magadha, Kosala, Vaishali, Vajji etc were the kingdoms and regions that the wandering Buddha covered relentlessly.
- Buddha left Kapilavasthu at the age of 29 and headed for Magadha in search of spiritual truth.
- Anathapindika was noted for his great generosity and a few years after Buddha's return to Kosala, he paid a huge amount of gold to buy a park in Savatthi. The Kosala King Pasenadi first met the Gotama Buddha at Jeta's Grove, when the Buddha was about forty years old. The Buddha greatly impressed the King, and subsequently Pasenadi also became one of his patrons and followers.

Q2. Which one of the following books of ancient India has the love story of the son of the founder of Sunga dynasty?

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- (a) Swapnavasavadatta
- (b) Malavikagnirnitra
- (c) Meghadoota
- (d) Ratnavali

Ans : B

Explanation :

- **Malavikagnirnitra** : It is a Sanskrit play by Kalidasa. It is known to be his first play. It is a play that depicts the love story of Agnimitra , the Shunga Emperor. He falls in love with the picture of an exiled servant girl named Malavika.
- **Swapnavasavadatta** : It is a Sanskrit play in six acts written by the ancient Indian poet Bhasa.
- **Meghadoota** : It is a lyric poem written by Kalidasa.
- **Ratnavali** : It is a Sanskrit drama about a beautiful princess named Ratnavali, and a great king named Udayana. It is attributed to the Indian emperor Harsha (606–648).

Q3. In the context of the history of India, consider the following pairs:

Term	Description
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|--------------|---|
| (1) Eripatti | : Land, revenue from which was set apart for the main tenance of the village tank |
| (2) Taniyurs | : Villages donated to a single Brahmin or a group of Brahmins |
| (3) Ghatikas | : Colleges generally attached to the temples |

Which of the pairs given above is/are correctly matched?

- (a) 1 and 2
- (b) 3 only
- (c) 2 and 3
- (d) 1 and 3

Ans : D

Explanation

Statement 1 is correct : Eripatti or tank land, is a special category of land only in south India. It was donated by individuals, the revenue from which was set apart for the maintenance of the village tank, which indicates the dependence of the village on the tank for irrigation.

Statement 2 is incorrect : The Taniyurs were distinct revenue units under Cholas.

Statement 3 is correct : Ghatikas were centres of higher learning in South India. There was a famous Ghatika at Kanchi, drawing students from far and near. These **Ghatikas were run in temples.**

Q4. With reference to the cultural history of India, the memorizing of chronicles, dynastic histories and Epictales was the profession of who of the following?

- (a) Shramana
- (b) Parivraajaka
- (c) Agrahaarika
- (d) Maagadha

Ans : D

Explanation

The **Maagadha** and the suutas were associated with memorizing of chronicles, dynastic histories or Epic tales.

Q5. Who of the following had first deciphered the edicts of Emperor Ashoka?

- (a) Georg Bihler
- (b) James Prinsep
- (c) Max Muller
- (d) William Jones

Ans : B

Explanation :

James Prinsep, British archeologist and historian decoded the edicts of emperor Ashoka. He deciphered Brahmi script in 1838. Prinsep found that on most of the earliest inscriptions and coins, there

is a mention of a king referred to as King 'Piyadasa' (Beloved-of-the-Gods). The deciphering to the Brahmi script by Prinsep provided a new direction to investigations into early Indian political history.

Q6. With reference to the religious history of India, consider the following statements :

1. The concept of Bodhisattva is central to Hinayana sect of Buddhism.
2. Bodhisattva is a compassionate one on his way to enlightenment.
3. Bodhisattva delays achieving his own salvation to help all sentient beings on their path to it.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 2 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Ans : B

Explanation

Statement 1 is incorrect : The concept of Bodhisattva is central to Mahayana sect of Buddhism.

Statements 2 and 3 are correct : A bodhisattva is a living being (sattva) who aspires to enlightenment (bodhi) and carries out altruistic practices. The bodhisattva ideal is central to the Mahayana Buddhist tradition as the individual who seeks enlightenment both for him- or herself and for others.

The compassion and an empathetic sharing of the sufferings of others, is the greatest characteristics of Bodhisattva. Also, it is held that the bodhisattva makes four vows expressing a determination to work for the happiness of others. Thus, he **delays achieving his own salvation to help all sentient beings on their path to it.**

Q7. With reference to the difference between the culture of Rigvedic Aryans and Indus Valley people, which of the following statements is/are correct?

1. Rigvedic Aryans used the coat of mail and helmet in warfare whereas the people of Indus Valley Civilization did not leave any evidence of using them.
2. Rigvedic Aryans knew gold, silver and copper whereas Indus Valley people knew only copper and iron.

3. Rigvedic Aryans had domesticated the horse whereas there is no evidence of Indus Valley people having been aware of this animal.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 1 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Ans : C

Explanation

- Rigvedic Aryans used the coat of mail and helmet in warfare whereas the people of Indus Valley Civilization did not leave any evidence of using them. Hence, **statement 1 is correct.**
- Indus Valley people had knowledge about gold, silver, copper and bronze but not iron. Hence, **statement 2 is incorrect.**
- Harappans did not know about the horses whereas Rig vedic Aryans had domesticated the horse. Hence, **statement 3 is correct.**

Q8. With reference to the religious history of India, consider the following statements:

1. Sautrantika and Sammitiya were the sects of Jainism.
2. Sarvastivadin held that the constituents of phenomena were not wholly momentary, but existed forever in a latent form.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Ans : B

Explanation

- Sautrantika and Sammitiya were related to Tibetan Buddhism. Hence, **statement 1 is incorrect.**

- This sect of Buddhism believes that all things exist, and exist continuously, in the past and the future as well as in the present. Hence, **statement 2 is correct.**

Q9. With reference to Indian history, who among the following is a future Buddha, yet to come to save the world?

- (a) Avalokiteshvara
- (b) Lokeshvara
- (c) Maitreya
- (d) Padmapani

Ans : C

Explanation

According to the Buddhist tradition, **Maitreya is a Bodhisattva** who will appear on Earth in the future, achieve complete enlightenment, and teach the pure dharma. According to scriptures, Maitreya will be a successor to the present Buddha. Hence, **option C is correct.**

Q10. With reference to the religious practices in India, the "Sthanakvasi" sect belongs to

- (a) Buddhism
- (b) Jainism
- (c) Vaishnavism
- (d) Shaivism

Ans : B

Explanation

- Sthanakvasi is a sect of **svetambara Jainism** founded by a merchant named Lavaji in 1653 AD.
- It believes that the **idol worship is not essential** in the path of soul purification and attainment of Nirvana/Moksha.

Q11. Which one of the following is not a Harappan site?

- (a) Chanhudaro
- (b) Kot Diji

(c) Sohgaura

(d) Desalpur

Ans : C

Explanation :

- Sohgaura located in Uttar Pradesh is a **Mauryan Site**. Sohgaura copper-plate, is a Mauryan record that mentions famine relief efforts.
- Early Harappan site : Kot Diji (now in Pakistan)
- Mature Harappan sites : Chanhudaro (Pakistan) and Desalpur (Gujarat)

Q12. In which of the following relief sculpture inscriptions is 'Ranyo Ashoka' (King Ashoka) mentioned along with the stone portrait of Ashoka?

(a) Kanganahalli

(b) Sanchi I

(c) Shahbazgarhi

(d) Sohgaura

Ans : A

Explanation

Kanaganahalli

- It is a **Buddhist site** in Karnataka
- The inscription was written in Brahmi script reading **Ranyo Ashoka**(King Ashoka) and a stone sculpture of King Ashoka.

Shahbazgarhi

- It is a ancient town in Pakistan
- It is known for one of the rock edicts of the Mauryan emperor Ashoka.

Sohgaura

- Sohgaura located in Uttar Pradesh
- Sohgaura copper-plate, is a Mauryan record that mentions famine relief efforts.

Sanchi I

- It is historic site in Madhya Pradesh
- It was built by Ashoka and was damaged during the break-up of the Maurya Empire.

Q13. With reference to forced labour (Vishti) in India during the Gupta period, which one of the following statements is correct?

- (a) It was considered a source of income for the State, a sort of tax paid by the people.
- (b) It was totally absent in the Madhya Pradesh and Kathiawar regions of the Gupta Empire.
- (c) The forced labourer was entitled to weekly wages.
- (d) The eldest son of the labourer was sent as the forced labourer.

Ans : A

Explanation

- **Forced labour (Vishti) was considered as a source of income for the state, a sort of tax by the people.**
- It was most prevalent during Gupta period.
- The fact that most of the inscriptions referring to Vishti come from Madhya Pradesh and Kathiyawar regions may suggest this practice for more prevalent in this areas.

Q14. Consider the following:

1. Deification of the Buddha
2. Treading the path of Bodhisattvas
3. Image worship and rituals

Which of the above is/are the feature/ features of Mahayana Buddhism?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 1 and 2 only
- (c) 2 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Ans : D

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Explanation

- Mahayana Buddhism was started in deification or worship of Buddha. The monks in the tradition were called as Bodhisattvas. The followers treading the path of Bodhisattvas.
- The image worship and rituals were introduced by Mahayana Buddhists.

Hence, **all are correct features.**

