

# History of India from the earliest times Upto 300 CE

## PYQ 2022

### **Q1. Evaluate the significance of literary sources for the reconstruction of early Indian history.**

Ans1. Literary sources play a crucial role in the reconstruction of early Indian history. The literary sources include the Vedas, the Puranas, the Epics, the Buddhist and Jain texts, and various other ancient texts.

The Vedas, which are the oldest texts in India, provide information about the religious and social life of the early Vedic people. The Rigveda, for instance, provides information about the early Vedic religion, the early society, and the early political organization. The Puranas, on the other hand, provide information about the genealogy of the ruling dynasties, the origin of the universe, and the stories of the gods and goddesses. The Epics, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, provide information about the social, cultural, and political life of ancient India.

The Buddhist and Jain texts provide important information about the society, economy, and polity of the period in which they were written. For instance, the Buddhist texts provide valuable information about the social and economic conditions of the Mauryan period. Similarly, the Jain texts provide information about the social, cultural, and religious life of the people during the Gupta period.

Apart from the above-mentioned texts, inscriptions, coins, and archaeological evidence also provide valuable information about the early history of India. However, literary sources are the most significant as they provide insights into the beliefs, customs, and practices of the early Indian people.

In conclusion, literary sources play a crucial role in the reconstruction of early Indian history. They provide valuable information about the social, cultural, religious, and political life of the people of that period. However, it is important to critically examine these sources and compare them with other sources of information to arrive at a more accurate and comprehensive understanding of the early history of India.

### **Q2. Describe the features of Neolithic cultures of India.**

Ans2. The Neolithic period in India, which started around 7000 BCE and lasted until 2000 BCE, saw the emergence of a new way of life based on agriculture and animal domestication. During this period, the people of India made significant advances in technology and social organization. Some of the key features of Neolithic cultures of India are:

**Agriculture:** The Neolithic period marks the beginning of agriculture in India. People started to cultivate crops such as wheat, barley, rice, and millets. This led to the development of settled communities and a more complex social structure.

**Animal domestication:** Along with agriculture, the people of India also started domesticating animals such as cattle, sheep, and goats. This provided them with a reliable source of food, as well as wool, milk, and other products.

**Pottery:** The Neolithic people of India were skilled in making pottery. They used pottery for cooking, storage, and transportation of goods.

**Trade:** The Neolithic people of India engaged in trade with other regions. This is evidenced by the presence of exotic materials such as obsidian, which was not available in India, found in Neolithic sites.

**Megalithic structures:** The Neolithic people of India also built megalithic structures, which are large stone structures such as dolmens and cairns. These structures were used for burial purposes.

**Social organization:** With the emergence of agriculture, a more complex social organization emerged in India. The Neolithic people lived in settled communities and had a more hierarchical social structure.

**Religion:** The Neolithic people of India had a rich religious and cultural life. They worshipped various deities and had elaborate burial practices.

In conclusion, the Neolithic period in India marked a significant transformation in the way of life of the people. The emergence of agriculture and animal domestication led to the development of settled communities and a more complex social structure. The Neolithic people of India were skilled in pottery making and engaged in trade with other regions. They also had a rich religious and cultural life, as evidenced by the megalithic structures and burial practices.

### **Q3. Write a note on the economy and religion of the Harappans.**

Ans3. The Harappan civilization, which flourished in the Indus Valley between 2600 BCE and 1900 BCE, had a complex economy and religion. The economy was based on agriculture, trade, and craft production, while the religion was characterized by a belief in deities and ritual practices.

**Economy:**

The Harappans had a well-developed agricultural system that was supported by the fertile soil of the Indus Valley. They grew a variety of crops such as wheat, barley, and cotton. The irrigation system was also well developed, with canals and reservoirs used to manage water resources. In addition to agriculture, the Harappans engaged in trade, both within the Indus Valley and with regions outside. The trade network extended as far as Mesopotamia, where Harappan goods such as cotton, indigo, and ivory were in high demand. The Harappans were also skilled in craft production, with evidence of metallurgy, pottery, and textile manufacturing.

**Religion:**

The Harappan religion was polytheistic, with multiple deities worshipped. The most prominent deity was the mother goddess, who was associated with fertility and protection. Other deities included a male deity, possibly the god of water, and animal deities such as the bull and the unicorn. The Harappans also practiced ritual bathing, with public bathing platforms found at various sites. The presence of animal bones and figurines at Harappan sites suggests that animal sacrifice was also part of their religious practices.

In conclusion, the Harappan civilization had a complex economy based on agriculture, trade, and craft production, while the religion was characterized by a belief in multiple deities and ritual practices. The Harappans were skilled in craft production, and their trade network extended to regions outside the Indus Valley. The presence of public bathing platforms and evidence of animal sacrifice suggests that the Harappans had a rich religious and cultural life.

#### **Q4. Analyse the social and religious conditions of later Vedic period.**

Ans4. The later Vedic period, which lasted from around 1000 BCE to 500 BCE, saw significant changes in social and religious conditions compared to the earlier Vedic period. Some of the key social and religious features of the later Vedic period are:

**Social Conditions:**

**Emergence of social hierarchy:** The later Vedic period saw the emergence of a social hierarchy, with four main classes or varnas: Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, and Shudras. This hierarchy was based on occupation, with the Brahmins occupying the highest position and the Shudras the lowest.

**Caste system:** The later Vedic period saw the development of the caste system, which was a system of social stratification based on birth. The caste system was closely linked to the varna system, with each varna further divided into multiple castes.

**Patriarchal society:** The later Vedic period was a patriarchal society, with men occupying positions of power and authority. Women had limited rights and were mostly confined to the domestic sphere.

**Religious Conditions:**

**Emergence of new gods and goddesses:** The later Vedic period saw the emergence of new gods and goddesses, such as Shiva, Vishnu, and the goddess Durga. These deities were associated with new rituals and practices.

**Rise of bhakti movement:** The later Vedic period saw the rise of the bhakti movement, which was characterized by a focus on devotion and individual experience of the divine. This movement was associated with the worship of new deities such as Krishna and Rama.

**Growth of ritualism:** The later Vedic period was marked by the growth of ritualism, with elaborate sacrifices and ceremonies becoming an important part of religious life. The Brahmins played a central role in these rituals, and the performance of the rituals was seen as a way to gain merit and attain salvation.

In conclusion, the later Vedic period saw significant changes in social and religious conditions compared to the earlier Vedic period. The emergence of social hierarchy and caste system, as well as the patriarchal society, characterized the social conditions. The religious conditions were marked by the emergence of new gods and goddesses, the rise of bhakti movement, and the growth of ritualism. These changes laid the foundation for the development of Hinduism as a major religious tradition in India.

**Q5. Describe the factors responsible for the rise of Buddhism and Jainism.**

Ans5. Buddhism and Jainism were two major religions that emerged in ancient India in the 6th century BCE. Both religions challenged the existing social and religious norms and attracted a large number of followers. There were several factors responsible for the rise of Buddhism and Jainism, some of which are:

**Social inequality:** Ancient Indian society was characterized by social inequality, with the caste system and other forms of discrimination prevalent. Buddhism and Jainism challenged these social hierarchies and offered a path to spiritual liberation that was open to all, irrespective of caste or social status.

**Influence of Upanishads:** The Upanishads, which were philosophical texts that emerged in the later Vedic period, emphasized the concept of karma and the cycle of birth and death. This had a profound impact on the development of Buddhism and Jainism, which both rejected the idea of caste and ritualism and emphasized personal morality and spiritual liberation.

**Dissatisfaction with Vedic rituals:** The Vedic religion was based on elaborate rituals and sacrifices, which were performed by the Brahmins. Many people were dissatisfied with the complexity and exclusivity of these rituals and sought a simpler and more accessible path to spirituality.

**Influence of non-Vedic traditions:** There were several non-Vedic traditions that emerged in ancient India, such as the Sramana tradition, which rejected the authority of the Vedas and emphasized the importance of personal experience and spiritual practices. Buddhism and Jainism were influenced by these traditions and incorporated many of their teachings.

**Influence of charismatic leaders:** Both Buddhism and Jainism were founded by charismatic leaders - Siddhartha Gautama (the Buddha) and Mahavira, respectively. These leaders attracted large numbers of followers through their teachings and personal example.

In conclusion, the rise of Buddhism and Jainism in ancient India was influenced by a complex set of factors, including social inequality, dissatisfaction with Vedic rituals, the influence of non-Vedic traditions, and the charisma of the religious leaders. These religions challenged the existing social and religious norms and had a profound impact on the development of Indian philosophy and spirituality.

**Q6. Discuss Ashoka's Dhamma in the light of his inscriptions.**

Ans6. Ashoka was one of the greatest emperors of ancient India who ruled from 269 BCE to 232 BCE. He is known for his extensive empire, his policies of non-violence and social welfare, and his promotion of Buddhism. Ashoka's Dhamma was a moral and ethical code that he developed based on Buddhist principles, which he sought to spread throughout his empire. This can be seen in his many inscriptions, which provide valuable insights into Ashoka's Dhamma.

Ashoka's inscriptions provide a detailed account of his Dhamma and its key principles. The most important of these are:

**Ahimsa:** Ashoka's Dhamma emphasized non-violence and compassion for all living beings. This was reflected in his edicts, which urged his subjects to treat animals with kindness and to refrain from hunting or killing them.

**Religious Tolerance:** Ashoka's Dhamma was inclusive of all religions, and he promoted religious tolerance and harmony throughout his empire. His edicts speak of the importance of respecting other religions and seeking to understand their teachings.

**Social Welfare:** Ashoka's Dhamma was focused on the welfare of his subjects, particularly the poor and marginalized. He encouraged the construction of hospitals, wells, and rest-houses, and established an extensive system of governance to ensure that his subjects were well cared for.

**Moral Values:** Ashoka's Dhamma emphasized the importance of moral values such as truthfulness, kindness, and generosity. His edicts urged his subjects to cultivate these virtues and to lead ethical lives.

**Environmental Protection:** Ashoka's Dhamma also emphasized the importance of protecting the environment. His edicts encouraged the planting of trees and the preservation of forests, and he spoke out against the destruction of wildlife and natural resources.

Overall, Ashoka's Dhamma was a comprehensive moral and ethical code that sought to promote non-violence, social welfare, religious tolerance, and environmental protection. His inscriptions provide a valuable window into the ideals and principles that guided his rule, and his legacy has had a lasting impact on Indian history and culture.

#### **Q7. Critically evaluate the administrative system of the Mauryas.**

Ans7. The Maurya Empire, which existed in ancient India from 322 BCE to 185 BCE, was one of the most powerful and extensive empires in Indian history. The Mauryan administrative system was highly centralized and efficient, with a complex bureaucracy that helped to manage the vast empire. However, there were also several shortcomings and limitations to the Mauryan administrative system, which are worth evaluating.

One of the key strengths of the Mauryan administrative system was its centralized and efficient governance structure. The empire was divided into several provinces, each of which was headed by a governor or viceroy, who was responsible for maintaining law and order, collecting taxes, and ensuring the smooth functioning of local administration. The central government in Pataliputra was responsible for overseeing these provincial administrations and for making important policy decisions.

Another key strength of the Mauryan administrative system was its sophisticated bureaucracy. The central government in Pataliputra had a large number of officials and advisors, who were responsible for managing various aspects of governance, such as taxation, trade, and foreign affairs. The Mauryan state also maintained an extensive network of spies and informants, who provided valuable intelligence on internal and external threats.

However, there were also several shortcomings to the Mauryan administrative system. One of the biggest challenges was the difficulty of managing such a vast and diverse empire. The Mauryan state was composed of several different regions, each of which had its own unique culture, language, and customs. This made it difficult to enforce uniform policies and regulations throughout the empire.

Another limitation of the Mauryan administrative system was the heavy emphasis on taxation and revenue collection. The Mauryan state relied heavily on taxes and tariffs to fund its operations, which led to widespread corruption and exploitation. The heavy burden of taxation also led to widespread poverty and discontent among the population.

Finally, the Mauryan administrative system was limited by the lack of effective communication and transportation infrastructure. Although the empire had a sophisticated bureaucracy, it was difficult to communicate quickly and effectively across the vast distances of the empire. This made it difficult to respond quickly to emergencies or to manage crises.

In conclusion, while the Mauryan administrative system had several strengths, such as its centralized governance structure and sophisticated bureaucracy, it also had several limitations, such as the difficulty of managing a vast and diverse empire, the heavy emphasis on taxation and revenue collection, and the lack of effective communication and transportation infrastructure.

#### **Q8. What is the significance of the 'Sangam Age' in Indian history? Discuss.**

Ans8. The Sangam Age is an important period in the history of southern India, which is believed to have lasted from the 3rd century BCE to the 4th century CE. This period is characterized by the flourishing of Tamil literature and the development of a unique Tamil culture, which had a profound impact on the region's history and society. The Sangam Age is significant for several reasons:

**Tamil Literature:** The Sangam Age is known for its vibrant literary culture, which produced some of the most important works of Tamil literature. These texts provide a window into the social, cultural, and political life of ancient Tamil society, and they continue to be an important source of knowledge and inspiration for contemporary Tamil culture.

**Political and Economic Development:** The Sangam Age was a period of significant political and economic development in southern India. The region was divided into several small kingdoms, each of which had its own distinct culture and political system. The development of trade and commerce during this period also helped to stimulate economic growth and prosperity.

**Social and Cultural Development:** The Sangam Age witnessed the emergence of several important social and cultural institutions, such as the caste system, which had a profound impact on Tamil society. The period also saw the development of unique art forms, such as dance, music, and sculpture, which continue to be an important part of Tamil culture today.

**Religious Development:** The Sangam Age was a period of religious diversity and innovation, with the emergence of several important religious traditions, such as Jainism and Buddhism. The period also saw the development of the Bhakti movement, which emphasized devotion and worship of the divine.

**Linguistic Diversity:** The Sangam Age was a period of significant linguistic diversity, with Tamil emerging as the dominant language of southern India. The period also saw the emergence of several other Dravidian languages, such as Telugu and Kannada, which continue to be spoken in southern India today.

In conclusion, the Sangam Age was a period of significant cultural, social, and political development in southern India, which had a profound impact on the region's history and society. Its legacy

continues to be felt in contemporary Tamil culture and society, and its importance in the broader context of Indian history cannot be overstated.

**Q9. Review the social, economic and cultural conditions of India during c. 200 BC to 300 AD.**

Ans9. The period between c. 200 BC to 300 AD in India was marked by significant social, economic, and cultural changes. This period saw the rise and fall of several important empires and dynasties, including the Mauryan, Satavahana, and Gupta empires, as well as the Kushan dynasty. Here are some of the key social, economic, and cultural conditions of India during this period:

**Social Conditions:**

The caste system continued to be an important social institution, with Brahmins occupying the highest position and untouchables at the lowest rung.

The position of women varied across different regions and communities. In some places, women had more freedom and agency, while in others, they were subjected to strict patriarchal norms.

Buddhism and Jainism emerged as important religious movements, which challenged the authority of Brahmanical Hinduism and offered new ethical and spiritual frameworks for Indian society.

**Economic Conditions:**

The period saw significant economic growth and prosperity, with the development of trade and commerce along the Silk Road and other trade routes.

The emergence of new cities, such as Pataliputra, Mathura, and Ujjain, helped to stimulate economic growth and create new opportunities for trade and commerce.

Agriculture continued to be an important source of livelihood, with the development of new irrigation systems and techniques helping to increase agricultural productivity.

**Cultural Conditions:**

The period saw significant cultural diversity and innovation, with the emergence of new art forms, literature, and philosophy.

The Sanskrit language emerged as an important literary and cultural medium, with the composition of important texts such as the Mahabharata and the Ramayana.

The period also saw the development of important artistic and architectural styles, such as the Gandhara and Mathura schools of art.

In conclusion, the period between c. 200 BC to 300 AD in India was marked by significant social, economic, and cultural changes, which helped to shape the trajectory of Indian history. The legacy of this period continues to be felt in contemporary Indian society and culture.

**Q10. Write short notes on any two of the following:**

### **(a) Palaeolithic period**

Ans10 a The Paleolithic period, also known as the Old Stone Age, is the earliest and longest period of human history, stretching from about 2.6 million years ago to around 10,000 BCE. During this period, humans were primarily hunter-gatherers, relying on their environment to provide food and shelter.

Here are some key features of the Paleolithic period:

**Stone tools:** Humans during the Paleolithic period used stone tools, which were made by chipping, flaking, and shaping rocks into various forms. These tools were used for hunting, cutting, scraping, and digging.

**Nomadic lifestyle:** The Paleolithic humans were mostly nomadic, moving from place to place in search of food and resources. They lived in small, mobile groups, and did not settle in one place for long periods.

**Fire:** Humans during this period learned to control fire, which helped them to stay warm, cook food, and scare away predators.

**Art and culture:** The Paleolithic humans created art, such as cave paintings and sculptures, which provide insights into their beliefs, practices, and daily lives.

**Evolution of humans:** During the Paleolithic period, humans underwent significant evolution, with various species of Homo developing and evolving over time.

**Environmental factors:** The Paleolithic period was characterized by changing climatic conditions, which influenced the development of human societies and the distribution of resources.

In conclusion, the Paleolithic period was a crucial period in human history, during which humans evolved and developed various cultural and technological innovations that laid the foundation for later civilizations.

### **(b) Harappan town planning**

Ans10 b The Harappan civilization, also known as the Indus Valley Civilization, was one of the earliest urban civilizations in the world, flourishing from about 2600 BCE to 1900 BCE in the northwestern regions of the Indian subcontinent. The Harappan town planning was characterized by a sophisticated system of urban organization, which is evident in the layout of their cities and towns. Here are some key features of the Harappan town planning:

**Grid pattern:** The Harappan cities were planned in a grid pattern, with streets and roads cutting across each other at right angles. This grid pattern provided the cities with a sense of order and symmetry, and made it easier for people to navigate through the city.

**Complex drainage system:** The Harappans had a complex system of drainage, which helped to manage the flow of water in their cities. They built underground sewage systems, which were connected to large public baths and private houses.

**Citadel and Lower Town:** The Harappan cities were divided into two distinct parts, the Citadel and the Lower Town. The Citadel was a fortified area, located on a high ground, which served as a center



for political and religious activities. The Lower Town, which was located outside the Citadel, was a residential area.

**Brick structures:** The Harappans built most of their structures, including houses, public buildings, and fortifications, using baked bricks. They also used mud bricks for construction.

**Public buildings:** The Harappans built a number of public buildings, including granaries, public baths, and assembly halls. These buildings served as centers for economic, social, and religious activities.

In conclusion, the Harappan town planning was a remarkable achievement, which demonstrated the sophisticated level of urban organization and architectural knowledge of the Harappan civilization.

The principles of town planning developed by the Harappans had a lasting influence on the urbanization of the Indian subcontinent, and continue to be studied and admired by scholars and architects around the world.

### **(c) Mahajanapada**

Ans10 c Mahajanapada refers to the sixteen powerful and independent states that emerged in northern India during the 6th century BCE. These states developed in the aftermath of the decline of the Indus Valley Civilization and the Vedic Period, and played a significant role in the political and social evolution of ancient India.

Here are some key features of the Mahajanapada period:

**Rise of cities:** The Mahajanapada period saw the emergence of several important cities, including Pataliputra, Rajgir, Vaishali, and Taxila. These cities served as centers of trade, commerce, and culture, and played an important role in the development of ancient India.

**Social and political changes:** The Mahajanapada period saw significant social and political changes, including the rise of new social classes and the emergence of powerful monarchies. The period also witnessed the evolution of new political institutions, such as the sangha and the sabha, which played an important role in the governance of the Mahajanapadas.

**Military power:** The Mahajanapada states were known for their military prowess, and developed sophisticated strategies and weapons for warfare. The period saw the rise of important military leaders, such as Ajatashatru and Bimbisara, who played a critical role in expanding the territorial boundaries of their respective states.

**Economic growth:** The Mahajanapada period witnessed significant economic growth, driven by increased trade and commerce between different regions of India. The period also saw the emergence of new industries, such as iron production and weaving, which contributed to the growth of the Indian economy.

**Religious diversity:** The Mahajanapada period was marked by religious diversity, with the emergence of new religious traditions such as Jainism and Buddhism. The period also saw the evolution of new philosophical and spiritual ideas, which influenced the religious and cultural practices of ancient India.

In conclusion, the Mahajanapada period was a significant period in the history of ancient India, which witnessed the emergence of powerful states and the development of new social, political, and economic institutions. The period laid the foundation for the later Mauryan and Gupta empires, and contributed to the rich cultural and intellectual heritage of the Indian subcontinent.

#### **(d) Kanishka**

Ans10 d Kanishka was one of the greatest emperors of the Kushan Empire, which flourished in Central Asia and northern India from the 1st to the 3rd century CE. He was the successor of Vima Kadphises and ruled over a vast territory, extending from the Aral Sea in the north to the Ganges River in the south.

Here are some key features of Kanishka's reign:

**Military conquests:** Kanishka was a great military leader and expanded the boundaries of the Kushan Empire through a series of successful military campaigns. He conquered parts of Central Asia, Afghanistan, and northern India, and established his capital at Peshawar in present-day Pakistan.

**Patronage of Buddhism:** Kanishka is best known for his patronage of Buddhism and his contribution to the development of Mahayana Buddhism. He convened the Fourth Buddhist Council at Jalandhar in present-day Punjab, where Buddhist scholars from across the empire gathered to discuss and codify the Buddhist scriptures.

**Art and architecture:** Kanishka was a great patron of art and architecture, and commissioned several monuments and buildings across the empire. The most famous of these is the Kanishka Stupa at Peshawar, which is believed to have been one of the tallest structures in the ancient world.

**Religious tolerance:** Kanishka was known for his religious tolerance and patronized not only Buddhism, but also other religions such as Hinduism and Zoroastrianism. He encouraged the exchange of ideas and beliefs between different religious communities, and promoted religious harmony across the empire.

**Economic prosperity:** Kanishka's reign was marked by economic prosperity, with the Kushan Empire serving as an important hub for trade and commerce between India, Central Asia, and China. The empire also produced some of the finest examples of Kushan art and coinage, which were renowned for their artistic beauty and technical excellence.

In conclusion, Kanishka was a great emperor of the Kushan Empire, whose reign was marked by military conquests, patronage of Buddhism, art and architecture, religious tolerance, and economic prosperity. His legacy continues to be celebrated in India and Central Asia, where his contributions to the development of Buddhism and the arts are still admired and studied.