

VERY SHORT QUESTIONS

1. Throw light on the significance of the Brahmi script.
2. Who was the first to decipher Brahmi script?
3. Throw light on the limitations of the inscriptional evidence.
4. Discuss the meaning of the term Janapada.
5. What do you mean by votive inscriptions?
6. How did the transplantation of paddy affect the agricultural production?
7. Throw light on Allahabad Pillar Inscription.
8. Mention any two ways through which the Gandatinder jatakas describe the political relations between the king and his subjects. (*Delhi 2013*)
9. Who was James Prinsep? What was his contribution in the development of Indian epigraphy?

1. Brahmi script is the mother of almost all the scripts used in modern Indian languages. The scripts of the languages like Hindi, Punjabi, Bangla, Gujarati, Marathi, Tamil, Telugu, Kannad etc. evolved from the Brahmi script.
2. James Prinsep, who had a high rank in the service of the British East India Company in Bengal, was first to decipher Brahmi script in 1838.
3. The epigraphists have to constantly assess statements made in inscriptions so as to find out historical evidences. They have to investigate the inscription very carefully in order to catch out its original substances.
4. Janapada means the land where a Jana (a people, clan or tribe) sets its foot or settles. It is used in both Prakrit and Sanskrit.
5. The inscriptions recording gifts made to religious institutions are known as votive inscriptions.
6. The introduction of transplantation, helped increase the production of paddy dramatically. Under this technique, seeds are first broadcast; when the saplings have grown they are transplanted in waterlogged fields. It ensures a higher ratio of survival of saplings and higher yields.
7. The Allahabad Pillar Inscription was composed in Sanskrit by Harishena, the court poet of Samudragupta. It provides an elaborate description of the conquests and policies of Samudragupta.
8. (i) The king would make his subjects secure from the attacks of the decoits.
(ii) The king would levy land revenue on the farmers.
We come to know from the Gandatindu Jatakas that the concerned king neither attempted to make his subjects secure from the decoits nor from his own tax-collectors. The people were attacked by robbers at night and by tax-collectors during the day.
9. James Prinsep held a high rank in the service of the British East India Company in Bengal. He was first to decipher Brahmi script in 1838. The deciphering of the Brahmi script provided a new direction to investigations into early Indian political history. The Indian and the European scholars started using inscriptions and texts composed in various languages in order to reconstruct the lineages of major dynasties ruling the sub-continent.

✓ **The Sixteen Mahajanapadas⁶**

We find mention of sixteen⁷ states known as mahajanapadas in early Buddhist and Jaina texts. Though the lists vary, the names of important mahajanapadas such as, Vajji, Magadha, Koshala, Kuru, Panchala, Gandhar and Avanti find mention in all texts.

Salient Features of Mahajanapadas

Among these sixteen mahajanapadas some were republics and some were monarchies. Vajji, Kuru, Malla, Sursena etc. were republics and Magadha, Vats, Avanti and Koshala were the renowned monarchies.

The republics were ruled over by the representatives of the people and monarchies by the hereditary kings.)

(Some republics were united in a confederacy. For example, Vajji was a confederacy of eight clans. Of these the Videhas, Lichchhavis and the Jnatikas were the most well-known. They were known as Ashtakulik. The Jnatikas had their capital at Kundgram. Mahavira Swami, 24th and the last tirathankara of Jains, was born at Kundagram. Similarly, Mahatma Buddha was associated with the Shakya republic of Kapilvastu.) Ganas or sanghas were oligarchies⁸, where power was exercised by a group of men. Every member of the group was known as raja.

(Religious rites were performed collectively by all the rajas. All important issues were decided collectively after discussion in Samiti. All the elected or eligible men would gather at a place to discuss the important issues. All issues were decided by majority of votes and the members were free to express their viewpoint. The matter for discussion was placed before the assembly and debated and if a unanimous decision could not be reached it was put to vote. The members of the executive enjoyed some privileges. They were empowered to elect important members like senapati and treasurer. The rajas collectively controlled the economic resources such as land in the gana or sangha.

(Most of the mahajanapadas had monarchical system of governance. The kingship was hereditary and king was the supreme authority. He was the pivot in the administration and all the powers were concentrated into his hands. He exercised an absolute

control on all the departments of the administration. However, despite of his immense powers, the king could not do whatever he liked. He had to follow the law of the country and had to govern according to the customs of the land. There was a council of advisors to advise the king in administrative matters. However, he was not bound to act accordingly. Purohita and Senani enjoyed very significant place in the administration. Purohita was the minister of religious affairs and Senani was the highest official of army. He would

advise the king on matters like military organisation, war and making or violating peace.

Every mahajanapada had a fortified capital. In order to make it secure against the external offensives, it had become imperative to fortify the capital. Besides, the fortified area perhaps, helped run the administration smoothly. Some kings in order to display their power and resources would build a tall, huge and imposing wall around their capital. Some kings started organising large armies in order to secure their kingdoms and to maintain law and order.

S.No.	Mahajanapada	Capital	S.No.	Mahajanapada	Capital
1.	Anga	Champa	9.	Kuru	Indraprastha
2.	Magadha	Rajagriha (later, Pataliputra)	10.	Panchala	Ahichchatra, Kampilya
3.	Vajji	Vaishali	11.	Surasena	Mathura
4.	Malla	Kushinagar	12.	Matsya	Viratnagar
5.	Kashi	Varanasi	13.	Avanti	Ujjain
6.	Koshala (Kosala)	Shravasti	14.	Ashmak	Pratishthan
7.	Vats	Kaushambi	15.	Gandhar	Taxila
8.	Chedi	Shuktimati (Sothivati)	16.	Kamboja	Dwarka or Rajauri