



FORTUNE
IAS ACADEMY

Ancient History and Art & Culture

Previous Year
Question Analysis
2021-2023

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PREFACE

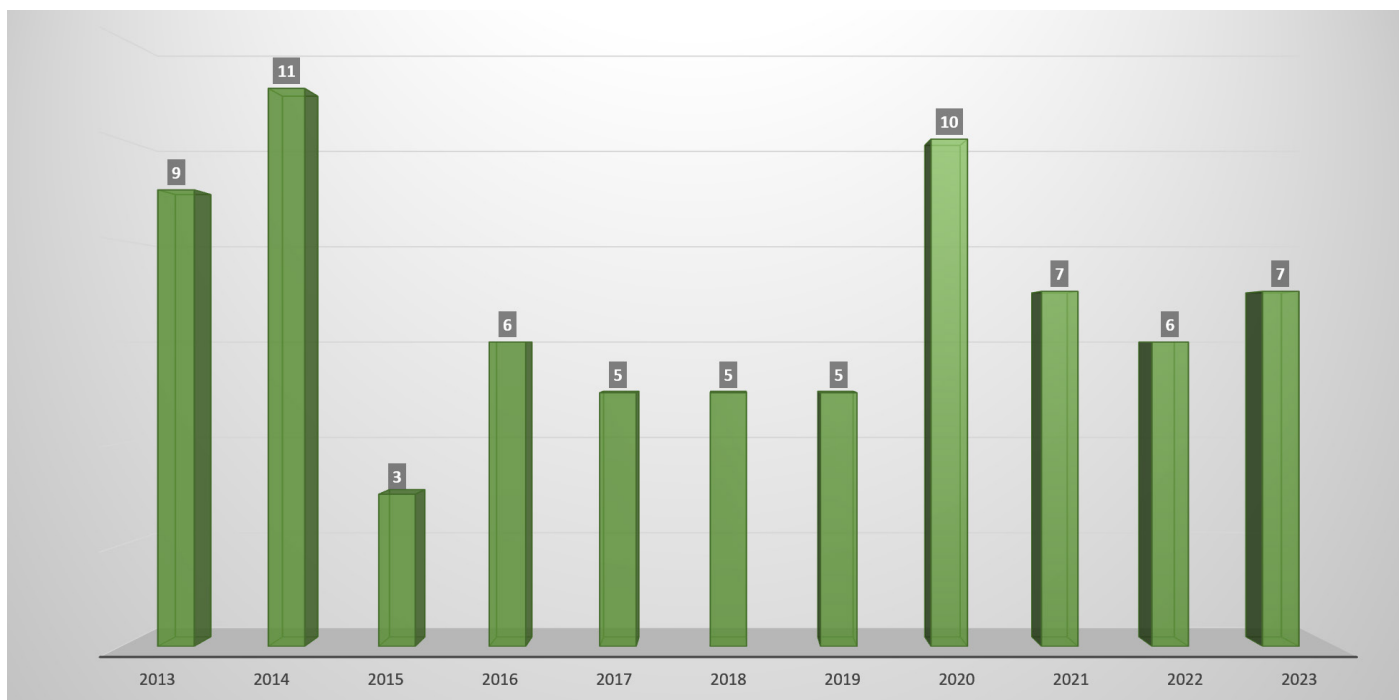
FORTUNE IAS ACADEMY

is presenting an in-depth analysis of past year's questions (from 2021 to 2023) and providing comprehensive explanations of the key terms and concepts essential for prelims preparation.

TREND ANALYSIS



The following graph examines the pattern of questions from Ancient India and Art and Culture spanning from 2013 to 2023:



Topic wise analysis of previous year questions:

TOPICS/ YEARS	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Pre Historic	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
Indus Valley Civilisation	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	-	-
Vedic Age	-	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Buddhism and Jainism	2	3	1	1	1	2	1	3	-	1	2
Mauryan period	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	1	-	-	-
Kushana	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Sangam Age	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	1	2
Gupta Empire	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	2	-	-	-
Post Gupta	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-
Architecture	2	1	1	1	1	-	1	-	2	2	2
Paintings	1	-	1	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-
Literature	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	2	1
Artforms (Dance, Music, Festivals)	1	5	-	-	1	2	-	1	-	-	-
Others (Location, Philsophy)	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-

STRATEGIC ANALYSIS



THE QUESTIONS FROM THE PAST THREE YEARS ARE DIVIDED INTO FOUR CATEGORIES:

Factual questions

It demands basic facts from static sources like NCERT, class notes, and other standard materials.

Current affairs questions

Current affairs questions demands general awareness about current events of National and International importance.

Conceptual questions

Such questions require knowledge of fundamental concepts along with conceptual clarity.

Application questions

It demands application of factual and conceptual knowledge to current events.

THE QUESTIONS ARE CLASSIFIED BASED ON ITS DIFFICULTY LEVEL:

EASY

The questions which can be answered from basics (NCERTs, and class notes) and does not need deep knowledge. Such questions are typically cracked by aspirants.

MODERATE

Moderate questions require decent level of conceptual clarity along with cognitive analysis. It can be solved through constant practice and revision.

HARD

Hard questions demand deeper understanding of concepts with critical thinking skills. Most of the aspirants leave such questions due to its increased difficulty.

Wishing you a productive and enjoyable learning experience!!

2021-PRELIMS PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTIONS

Type of the questions: Factual

1. From the decline of Guptas until the rise of Harshavardhana in the early seventh century, which of the following kingdoms were holding power in Northern India?

- 1) The Guptas of Magadha
- 2) The Paramaras of Malwa
- 3) The Pushyabhutis of Thanesar
- 4) The Maukharis of Kanauj
- 5) The Yadhavas of Devagiri
- 6) The Maitrakas of Valabhi

Select the correct answer using the code given below.

- a) 1,2 and 5
- b) 1,3,4 and 6 ✓
- c) 2,3 and 4
- d) 5 and 6

Difficulty level: Moderate

EXPLANATION

POST- GUPTA ERA

- The **successive invasion of Hunas from Central Asia** made the Guptas very weak. From the decline of Guptas until the rise of Harshavardhana in the early seventh century, Northern India witnessed the emergence of numerous ruling dynasties.
- The prominent among them were the **Guptas of Magadha, the Pushyabhutis of Thanesar, the Maukharis of Kanauj, and the Maitrakas of Valabhi.**

Major post Gupta Kingdoms

- **Guptas of Magadha [later Guptas]-** They succeeded the Imperial Guptas as the rulers of eastern Malwa or Magadha.
- **Pushyabhutis of Thanesar-** The famous ruler was Prabhakarvardhana, who was able to defeat the Hunas.
- **Maukharis of Kanauj-** They were the subordinate rulers of the Guptas and used the title of samanta.
- **Maitrakas of Valabhi-** they were tributary chiefs of the Guptas, who established an independent kingdom in western India. Dhruvasena II was the most important ruler.



Other Kingdoms mentioned in the options

- **Yadava dynasty** ruled in Deccan near Devagiri between 12th-14th century AD.
- The **Paramara dynasty** ruled Malwa and surrounding areas in west-central India between 9th and 14th centuries AD.
- Then it was **Harshavardhana** who unified most of northern India and ruled for four decades.

2. With reference to the history of ancient India, which of the following statements is/are correct?

- 1) Mitakshara was the civil law for upper castes and Dayabhaga was the civil law for lower castes.
- 2) In the Mitakshara system, the sons can claim right to the property during the lifetime of the father, whereas in the Dayabhaga system, it is only after the death of the father that the sons can claim right to the property.
- 3) The Mitakshara system deals with the matters related to the property held by male members only of a family, whereas the Dayabhaga system deals with the matters related to the property held by both male and female members of a family.

Select the correct answer using the code given below.

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

Difficulty level: Hard

EXPLANATION

- **Mitakshara** and **Dayabhaga** are two schools of Hindu law which **focus on property inheritance and individual rights to property**. They have **nothing to do with caste system**.

Mitakshara school

- Established by **Vijnanesvara**, is specifically a commentary on the **Yajnavalkya Smriti**.
- Primarily practised in **northern and western India**.
- Here **all family members have a claim to ancestral property** where the property is inherited through the **male lineage** and sons share it equally.
- It promotes **joint family property**.

Dayabhaga school

- Founded by **Jimutavahana**, and is mainly followed in **Bengal and eastern India**.
- Emphasises **personal ownership of property** and acknowledges **women's right to inherit property**.
- Dayabhaga **does not give anyone the right to property before the death of their forefathers**.
- **Joint family property isn't recognised** here.

3. With reference to the history of ancient India, Bhavabhuti, Hastimalla and Kshemeshvara were famous

- a) Jain monks
- b) playwrights ✓
- c) temple architects
- d) philosophers

Difficulty level: Moderate

EXPLANATION

NOTABLE PLAYWRIGHTS DURING ANCIENT TIMES

Bhavabhuti

- An **8th-century** scholar of India noted for his plays and poetry, written in **Sanskrit**.
- He is believed to be the **court poet of King Yashovarman of kannauj**.

Works: **Mahaviracharya** (depicting the early life of Rama), **Malatimadhava** (romance of Malati and Madhava) and **Uttararamacharitha** (depicts Rama's coronation, the abandonment of Sita and their reunion).

Hastimalla

- **13th century Kannada poet** and writer in **Hoysala empire**.
- He was a **Jain poet**.

Works: **Purvapurana, Vikrant Kaurava and Subhadra Harana**.

Kshemeshvara

- **11th century Sanskrit poet** from **Kashmir**.
- He was the **court poet of Mahipala of Kannauj**.

Works: **Dasavatar Charitha**.

4. Consider the following pairs :

(Historical place)	(Well-known for)
1) Burzahom	: Rock-cut shrines
2) Chandraketugarh	: Terracotta art
3) Ganeshwar	: Copper artefacts

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

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

Difficulty level: Moderate

EXPLANATION

PREHISTORIC PERIOD SITES

Burzahom (Jammu and Kashmir)

- The **Neolithic Site** of Burzahom, Srinagar brings to light transitions in human habitation patterns from Neolithic Period to the Megalithic period to the early historic period.
- **Rock-cut shrines were not found in the Neolithic period**.

- It has been in the **UNESCO World Heritage Sites List of Tentative Sites** since 2014.

Chandraketugarh (West Bengal)

- 2500 years old archaeological site Chandraketugarh (Fort of Chandraketu) located near the **Bidyadhari river**.
- Discoveries ranging from the **Mauryan to the post-Gupta period**.
- Once it was an **important hub of international maritime trade**.
- Chandraketugarh features many examples of **terracotta art**, displaying an unusual degree of precision and craftsmanship.
- Findings include **Northern Black Polished Ware (NBPW)** relics, many silver punch marked coins and a few gold coins.



Context: Researchers unearthed many links, which shows that the site was linked to international trade in the Harappan civilisation. The discoveries suggest that **Sandrocottus was the name used for king Chandraketu, by Megasthenes.**

Ganeshwar (Rajasthan)

- Ganeshwar is a famous site in **Khetri copper belt**.
- Excavations from Jodhpura and Ganeshwar in Rajasthan came to be known as **Ganeshwar-Jodhpura chalcolithic culture**.
- Ganeshwar mainly **supplied copper objects** to Harappa.
- The **Ochre Coloured Pottery (OCP)** was the pottery from the site as a characteristic feature of the culture.



5. Which one of the following statements is correct?
- Ajanta Caves lie in the gorge of Waghora river. ✓
 - Sanchi Stupa lies in the gorge of Chambal river.
 - Pandu-lena Cave Shrines lie in the gorge of Narmada river.
 - Amaravati Stupa lies on the gorge of Godavari river.

Difficulty level: Easy

EXPLANATION

CAVE ARCHITECTURE

Ajanta caves

- It is a **UNESCO Cultural World Heritage Site**, in **Maharashtra**.
- This **Buddhist rock-cut architecture** is situated in the gorge of **Waghora river**.
- The caves were **built in two phases**- the first phase coincides with the rule of the **Satavahana dynasty** from the 2nd century BCE to the 1st century BCE, while the second phase corresponds to the **Vakataka dynasty** in the 5th to 6th centuries CE.
- The first phase is attributed to the **Hinayana sect** of Buddhism (Buddha was worshipped in a symbolic form) and the second phase to **Mahayana tradition** (Buddha was worshipped in an idol form).
- **Jataka stories, paintings of various Bodhisattvas (Vajrapani, Manjusri, Padmapani) and the Dying Princess** are illustrated here.



Sanchi stupa

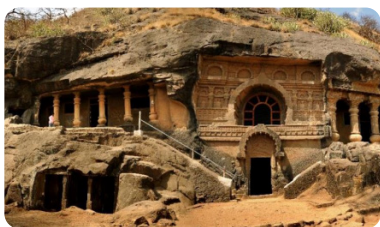
- It is located at **Sarnath, Madhya Pradesh**.
- There are **3 major Stupas**.
- **Stupa 1 (Great Stupa at Sanchi)** was built by **emperor Ashoka**.
- One of the finest examples of Mauryan Sculpture, made of **polished sandstone**.
- Commissioned **to commemorate the first sermon of the Buddha** or the **Dharmachakrapravartana** at Sarnath.
- Sanchi stupa lies in an upland plateau region just **west of the Betwa river**.
- It is an **UNESCO Cultural World Heritage Site**.



Pandu-lena caves shrines

- The **Buddhist** monuments Pandavleni caves (Pandu Lena caves or **Trirashmi** caves) are a group of **24 rock-cut caves**.

- Located in **Nashik city, Maharashtra**. (Nashik city situated on the banks of river **Godavari**).



- Inscriptions indicate that these excavations belong to the **Satavahana and Kshatrapa periods**, spanning 2nd century BC to the 3rd century AD.

Amaravati Stupa

- It is an ancient **Buddhist stupa** located in Amaravati, **Andhra Pradesh**.



- Built in the phases between the 3rd century BCE and 250 CE, by the representative of **emperor Ashoka**.
- It is **circular in shape** and was constructed using **bricks and limestone** which **houses Lord Buddha in a human form seated over an elephant**.
- It is situated near **river Krishna**.

RELATED PYQs

Q1. With reference to the history of Indian rock-cut architecture, consider the following statements:

1. The caves at Badami are the oldest surviving rock-cut caves in India
2. The Barabar rock-cut caves were originally made for Ajivikas by Emperor Chandra Gupta Maurya
3. At Ellora, caves were made for different faiths

Which of the given statements is/are correct?

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

[2013]

Q2. Some Buddhist rock-cut caves are called Chaityas, while the others are called Viharas. What is the difference between the two?

- a) Vihara is a place of worship, while Chaitya is the dwelling place of the monks
- b) Chaitya is a place of worship, while Vihara is the dwelling place of monks
- c) Chaitya is the stupa at the far end of the cave, while Vihara is the hall axial to it
- d) There is no material difference between the two

[2013]

Q3. Consider the following historical places:

1. Ajanta Caves
2. Lepakshi Temple
3. Sanchi Stupa

Which of the above places is/are known for mural paintings?

- a) 1 only
- b) 1 and 2 only
- c) 1, 2 and 3
- d) None

[2013]

Q4. With reference to the Indian history of art and culture, consider the following pairs:

<u>Famous work of sculpture</u>	<u>Site</u>
1. A grand image of Buddha's Mahaparinirvana with numerous celestial musicians above and the sorrowful figures of his followers below	Ajanta
2. A huge image of Varaha Avatar (boar incarnation) of Vishnu, as he rescues Goddess Earth from the deep and chaotic waters, sculpted on rock	Mount Abu
3. "Arjuna's Penance"/ "Descent of Ganga" sculpted on the surface of huge boulders	Mamallapuram

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

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

[2014]

Q5. What is/are common to the two historical places known as Ajanta and Mahabalipuram?

1. Both were built in the same period.
2. Both belong to the same religious denomination.
3. Both have rock-cut monuments.

Select the correct answer using the code given below.

- a) 1 and 2 only
- b) 3 only
- c) 1 and 3 only
- d) None of the statements given above is correct

[2016]

Q6. The painting of Bodhisattva Padmapani is one of the most famous and oft-illustrated paintings at

- a) Ajanta
- b) Badami
- c) Bagh
- d) Ellora

[2017]

Type of the questions: Current Affairs

1. With reference to Chausath Yogini Temple situated near Morena, consider the following statements:

- 1) It is a circular temple built during the reign of Kachchhapaghata Dynasty.
- 2) It is the only circular temple built in India.
- 3) It was meant to promote the Vaishnava cult in the region.
- 4) Its design has given rise to a popular belief that it was the inspiration behind the Indian Parliament building.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

Difficulty level: Moderate

Relevance: Discussions on building of a new Parliament House.

EXPLANATION

TEMPLE ARCHITECTURE

Chausath Yogini Temple (Ekattarso-Mahadeva Temple)



- It is an **11th century Shiva temple**, located in the Mitaoli village, of **Madhya Pradesh**.
- The **circular temple** was built around 1323 CE by the **Kachchhapaghata king Devapala**.
- While most of the Hindu temples have a shikhara, the Mitaoli temple is **hypaethral**, which means it has **no roof**.

- The temple is **believed to have inspired the design of the old Indian parliament** due to the similarities in the designs of both.
- Other circular temples- Chausath Yogini temple near Jabalpur, Yogini temple of Hirapur.

Kachchhapaghata dynasty

- The kachchhapaghata were **originally the vassals of the Gurjara Pratihars and the Chandelas**.
- They became powerful towards the end of 10th century after the death of Chandela king **Vidyadhara**.
- **Lakshmana** was the first prominent member of the dynasty and **Sulakshanapala** was the last ruler who lost his kingdom to a **Ghurid invasion**.
- The Dynasty **patronised Shaivism and Vaishnavism**, but was tolerant towards Buddhism and Jainism.
- **Other constructed temples: Sasbahu temple (Gwalior), Kakanmath(Sihoniya).**

Type of the questions: Application

1. Which one of the following ancient towns is well known for its elaborate system of water harvesting and management by building a series of dams and channelizing water into connected reservoirs?

- a) Dholavira ✓
- b) Kalibangan
- c) Rakhigarhi
- d) Ropar

Difficulty level: Easy

Relevance: Dholavira, Gujarat is the **first site of the ancient Indus Valley Civilisation (IVC) in India to get the UNESCO World Heritage Tag on July 27,2021 [India's 40th world heritage cultural site].**

EXPLANATION

Indus valley civilisation

- IVC or Harappan civilization flourished around **2,500 BC**, in contemporary **Pakistan and western India**.
- In **1924, John Marshall**, Director - General of the ASI, announced its discovery.



Dholavira (Gujarat)

- Locally known as **Kotada timba** and located on **Tropic of Cancer** [on Khadir bet island in the Kutch Desert Wildlife Sanctuary in the Great Rann of Kutch].
- City has **3 divisions**- The citadel, the middle town and the lower town.
- Dholavira is flanked by **two storm water channels**; the **Mansar in the north**, and the **Manhar in the south**.
- Well known for a **sophisticated water management system** of channels and reservoirs, built completely of stone.
- A **rectangular stepwell**, which is three times bigger than the Great Bath of Mohenjo Daro.
- Evidence for **inter-regional trade** with other Harappan cities, as well as the cities in the Mesopotamia region and the Oman peninsula have also been discovered.

Kalibangan (Rajasthan)

- Kalibangan- meaning '**black bangles**'.
- It was on the banks of the **Saraswati river**.
- Discovery of **fire altars, camel bones**.
- Evidence for the **world's oldest ploughed agricultural field**.
- There was **no drainage system**.
- It provided the proof of the world's **first documented "earthquake"**.

Rakhigarhi (Haryana)

- Rakhigarhi is the **largest harappan site** in the Indian subcontinent.
- It was part of the **mature phase** of IVC with **planned township** and a **proper drainage system**.
- Located near the **Ghaggar river** plain.
- It was **among the five iconic sites** announced by the union finance minister during the 2020 budget speech. (other sites- Hastinapur [uttar pradesh], Sivasagar [Assam], Dholavira, Adichanallur [Tamil Nadu]).

Ropar (Punjab) (Rupar or Rupnagar)

- City was the centre of a well developed Harappan civilisation.
- The town lies on the **Sutlej river**.

- A **new ceramics and ornamental style** has been uncovered.
- Copper implements, terracotta beads and bangles** were discovered.
- There is an indication of **burying a dog beneath the human grave**.

RELATED PYQs

Q1. Which of the following characterizes/characterize the people of the Indus Valley Civilization?

- They possessed great palaces and temples
- They worshipped both male and female deities
- They employed horse-drawn chariots

Select the correct statement/statements using the codes given below:

- 1 and 2 only
- 2 only
- 1, 2 and 3
- None of the statements given above is correct

[2013]

Q2. With reference to the difference between the culture of Rigvedic Aryans and Indus Valley people, which of the following statements is/are correct?

- 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.
- Rigvedic Aryans knew gold, silver and copper whereas Indus Valley people knew only copper and iron.
- 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:

- 1 only
- 2 and 3 only
- 1 and 3 only
- 1, 2 and 3

[2017]

Q3. Which one of the following is not a Harappan site?

- Chanhudaro
- Kot Diji
- Sohgaura
- Desalpur

[2019]

2022-PRELIMS PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTIONS

Type of the questions: Factual

1. With reference to the Indian history, consider the following texts :

- 1) Nettipakarana
- 2) Parishishtaparvan
- 3) Avadanashataka
- 4) Trishashtilakshana Mahapurana

Which of the above are Jaina texts ?

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

Difficulty level: Hard

EXPLANATION

Jainism

- Jainism came to prominence in the **sixth century BC** and it was propagated by **Lord Mahavira**.
- It is rooted in the philosophy that teaches the way to **liberation** and a **path to spiritual purity** and **enlightenment** through **non-violence**.



Jain texts

- **Parishishtaparvana [Sthaviravalichin]:** Written by **Hemachandra** which describes the **Chandraguptas** connection with Jainism.
- **Trishashtilkshana Mahapurana:** It is composed by **Acharya Jinasena** during the rule of **Rashtrakutas**. It consist of two parts they are **Adipurana** and **Uttarapurana**.

Buddhist texts

- **Nettipakarana:** Major theme of the text is **Buddhist Hermeneutics** (an attempt to extract the Buddha's instructions and wisdom for spiritual praxis from a particular text). Its parent collection is **Khuddaka Nikaya of Theravada Buddhism**.
- **Avadanashataka [century of noble deeds]** is an anthology in **sanskrit** of **one hundred buddhist legends** which explains about the **previous lives** and **karma**. The earlier product of Avadana text like **Divyavadana** etc are of **hinayanic** character and later Avadanas like **suvarnavarnavadana** etc are of **mahayanic** character.

2. With reference to Indian history , consider the following pairs :

Historical persons		known as
1) Aryadeva	-	Jaina scholar
2) Dignaga	-	Buddhist scholar
3) Nathamuni	-	Vaishnava scholar

How many pairs given above are correctly matched ?

- a) None of the pairs
- b) Only one pair
- c) Only two pair ✓
- d) All three pairs

Difficulty level: Hard

EXPLANATION

Dignaga:

- Indian **Buddhist scholar** and the **founder of Indian logic**.
- Author of the book **Pramanasamuccaya** [compendium of the means of true knowledge] and associated with **Nalanda Mahavihara**.

Nathamuni: (Sri Rangnathamuni)

- Founder of the **Sri Vaishnavism tradition** in South India.
- A **Vaishnava scholar**, collected and compiled the **Nalayira Divya Prabandham**.

Aryadeva:

- A **Buddhist monk** [Mahayana buddhism] and the **disciple of Nagarjuna**.
- **Madhyamaka Philosopher**.
- Text: '**Catuhstaka**'.

3. According to Kautilya's Arthashastra, which of the following are correct ?

- 1) A person could be a slave as a result of a judicial punishment
- 2) If a female slave bore her master a son , she was legally free
- 3) If a son born to a female slave was fathered by her master, the son was entitled to the legal status of the master's son

Which of the statements given above are correct ?

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

Difficulty level: Moderate

EXPLANATION

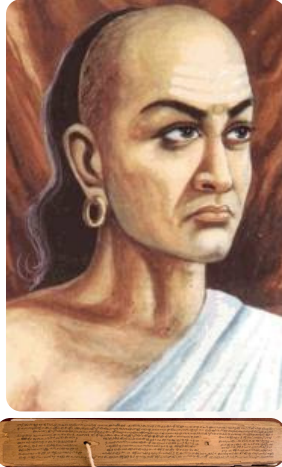
Kautilya and Arthashastra

- Kautilya, also known as the “**Machiavelli of India**,” went by the names **Chanakya or Vishnugupta**.
- He is renowned as the author of the famous book known as the **Arthashastra**.
- Notably, he served as the advisor to **Chandragupta Maurya**.
- Kautilya introduced the concept of “**Yatha Raja, Tatha Praja**” and proposed **four types of policies for effective administration**, which included **Sama, Dama, Danda, and Bheda**.
- The Arthashastra is structured into **three main parts**:

Arthaniti

Dandiniti

Videshnati



Various forms of enslavement outlined in the text

- Method of enslavement involved individuals becoming slaves as a consequence of judicial punishment.
- Interestingly, Arthashastra also provided some **protection for women who were enslaved**. According to its provisions, **if a female slave bore a child for her master, both the child and the mother would gain legal freedom**.
- Furthermore, the Arthashastra stipulated that **if a son born to a female slave was fathered by her master, that son would be entitled to the legal status of the master's own offspring**.

4. Consider the following pairs

Site of Ashoka's major Rock edicts	Location of the state
1) Dhauli	- Odisha
2) Erragudi	- Andhra
3) Jaugada	- Madhya Pradesh
4) Kalsi	- Karnataka

How many pairs given above are correctly matched ?

- a) Only one pair
- b) Only two pair ✓
- c) Only three pair
- d) All four pair

Difficulty level: Moderate

EXPLANATION

King Ashoka

- King Ashoka was the son of the Mauryan emperor **Bindusara** and the grandson of **Chandragupta Maurya**. His capital was situated in **Pataliputra**, with provincial capitals in Taxila and Ujjain.
- He embraced **Buddhism** and established the practice of **Dhamma** as the cornerstone of his benevolent and tolerant administration.
- Ashoka's significant contributions include a **series of major rock edicts and inscriptions** that detail his conversion to Buddhism and his efforts to propagate the religion.
- He is also known by the titles **Devanampiya** and **Devanampriya Priyadarshi**. There exist a total of **14 major rock edicts** attributed to him.



Dhaulti Rock Edict

- Found in **Odisha** and is inscribed in the **Pali language**. This rock edict is located near the historical site of the **Kalinga War**.

Erragudi Rock Edict

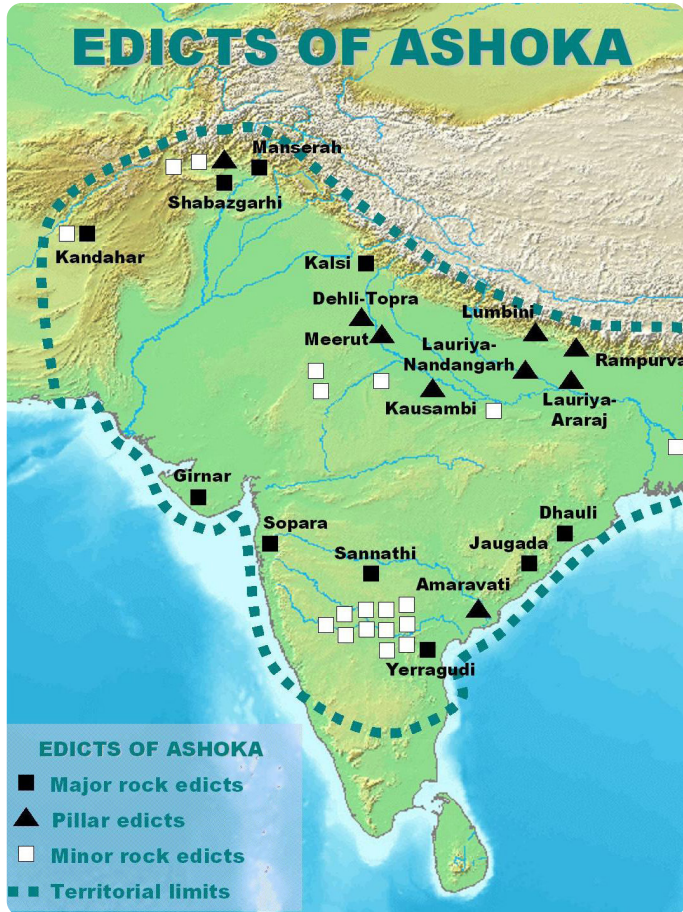
- Situated in the Kurnool district of **Andhra Pradesh** and is among the valuable treasures left by Mauryan King Ashoka, encompassing **both minor and major rock inscriptions**.

Jaugada Rock Edict

- Located in **Odisha** and features inscriptions engraved in the Prakrit language using the **Brahmi script**. It contains information about Ashoka's improved administrative policies rooted in his humanitarian considerations.

Kalsi Rock Edict

- Situated on the banks of the **Yamuna River** in **Uttarakhand**, holds a unique distinction as the **sole location in North India where the Great Mauryan emperor inscribed the set of 14 rock edicts**.



RELATED PYQs

Q1. In which of the following relief sculpture inscriptions is 'Ranyo Ashoka' (King Ashoka) mentioned along with the stone portrait of Ashoka?

- Kanganahalli
- Sanchi
- Shahbazgarh
- Sohgaura

[2019]

Q2. Who among the following rulers advised his subjects through this inscription?

"Whosoever praises his religious sect or blames other sects out of excessive devotion to his own sect, with the view of glorifying his own sect, he rather injures his own sect very severely."

- Ashoka
- Samudragupta
- Harshavardhana
- Krishnadeva Raya

[2020]

5. Which one of the following statements about Sangam literature in ancient South India is correct ?

- Sangam poems are devoid of any reference to material culture.
- The social classification of varna was known to Sangam poets. ✓
- Sangam poems have no reference to warrior ethic.
- Sangam literature refers to magical forces as irrational.

Difficulty level: Moderate

EXPLANATION

- The sangam literature is the name given to the **earliest available tamil literature**. The word "Sangam" literally means "**association**".
- The **three chief Tamil kingdoms** of this period:

The Cheras



The Cholas



The Pandyas



- Based on the **period of composition**, Sangam literature is classified into;

1. Patinenmelkanakku
2. Pathinenkilkanakku

- Based on the **context of interpretation**, Sangam literature is classified into;

1. **Agam**: Focuses on **human aspects like love, and sexual relation**.
2. **Puram**: Focuses on **human experiences like social life, ethics, customs** etc.

- Some famous works in Sangam literature are **Tolkappiyam, Ettutogi, Pattuppattu, Tirukkural**.

- **Avvaiyar** is a renowned **female saint** who contributed to sangam literature.

- Sangam poems provide **insights into material culture** including references to farming, cattle rearing, fishing, and more.

- Sangam poets were **aware of the social classification of varna**, with mentions of **Arashar (kings), Vaishiyar (traders), and Vellalar (farmers)**. However, the **four-fold varna classification had limited relevance in ancient Tamil society**.
- Sangam literature prominently features a warrior ethic, with “Puram” poems focusing on the external aspects of life, particularly war.
- It reflects a **belief in magical forces** known as “**ananku**” inhabiting various objects. Rituals to control these ananku were carried out by groups like the **Pariyans and Velans**.

Type of the questions: Application

1. The Prime Minister inaugurated the new Circuit House near Somnath Temple at Veraval. Which of the following statements are correct regarding Somnath Temple?
 - 1) Somnath Temple is one of the Jyotirlinga shrines.
 - 2) A description of Somnath Temple was given by Al-Biruni
 - 3) Pran pratishtha of Somnath Temple (installation of the present day temple) was done by President S. Radhakrishnan

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

Difficulty level: Moderate

Relevance: Prime Minister inaugurated the new Circuit House near Somnath Temple at Veraval.

EXPLANATION

Somnath Temple

- The Somnath Temple, located in **Gujarat**, is considered as **one of the twelve ‘Jyotirlingas,’** which are **sacred abodes of Lord Shiva**.
- Several other Jyotirlinga temples can be found in India, including the **Nageshvara Jyotirlinga in Gujarat, Mallikarjuna Swamy in Andhra Pradesh, and Omkareshwar in Madhya Pradesh**.
- The present temple follows the **Chalukyan style of temple architecture**.



- Notably, the Somnath Temple was mentioned in the travelogue of **Al-Biruni**. This mention made because of the **Mahmud Ghaznavi’s attack** on the temple.
- **The modern temple was reconstructed thanks to the determination of Sardar Patel, who visited the ruins of the Somnath Temple. The pran pratishtha, or consecration ceremony, at the temple was performed by then-President Dr. Rajendra Prasad.**

2023-PRELIMS PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTIONS

Type of the questions: Factual

1. Which one of the following explains the practice of 'Vattakirutal' as mentioned in Sangam poems?
- Kings employing women bodyguards
 - Learned persons assembling in royal courts to discuss religious and philosophical matters
 - Young girls keeping watch over agricultural fields and driving away birds and animals
 - A king defeated in a battle committing ritual suicide by starving himself to death ✓

Difficulty level: Hard

EXPLANATION

Vattakirutal

- Vatakkirutal (Vadakirutal) is a Tamil ritual during sangam age that translates to **"fasting facing north"**.

Purpose:

Tamil kings practised Vatakkirutal **to save their honour and prestige**, particularly in challenging situations.

The ritual symbolised their **readiness to face death without turning their back** in battle.

The ritual **could be performed by an individual or as a group**, often involving supporters of a captured king.

- Atiyarkkudai:** The practice of kings employing women as bodyguards during the Sangam period.
- Sangam:** It refers to the practice of learned individuals gathering in royal courts to engage in discussions about religious and philosophical topics.
- Kuravai Koothar:** During the Sangam period, young girls keeping watch over agricultural fields and driving away birds and animals.

2. With reference to ancient India, consider the following statements :

- The concept of Stupa is Buddhist in origin.
- Stupa was generally a repository of relics.
- Stupa was a votive and commemorative structure in Buddhist tradition.

How many of the statements given above are correct?

- Only one
- Only two ✓
- All three
- None

Difficulty level: Easy

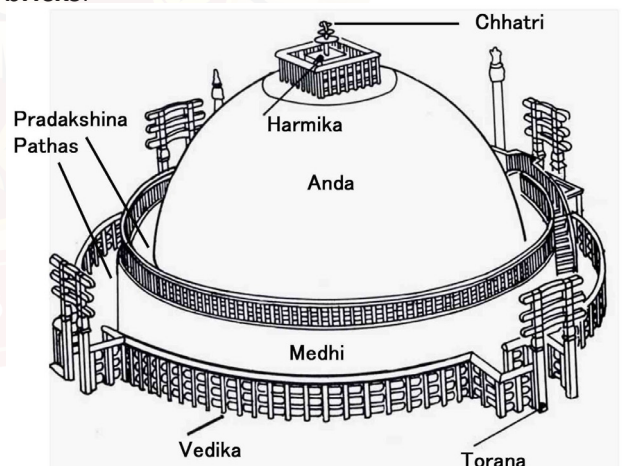
EXPLANATION

Stupa

- Stupas were **burial mounds** prevalent in India from the **Vedic period**. It is a conventional representation of a **funeral cumulus** in which relics and ashes of the dead were kept.
- Although a vedic tradition, stupas were **popularised by the Buddhists**.

Components of stupa

- The **core** of the stupa was made of **unburnt bricks** while the **outer surface** was made by using **burnt bricks**.



- Anda:** **Hemispherical mound** representing the earth, covering Buddha's remains or relics.
- Harmika:** **Square railing** located on the top of Anda.
- Chhatras:** The **central pillar** that supports a triple umbrella like structure on top of a Stupa.
- The **Medhi** and **Toran** were **decorated by wooden sculptures**.

- Devotees walk around the **pradakshina patha** for as a token of worship.

Three type of stupa

1. **Saririka Stupa**: Contains the buried bodily remains of the Buddha.
2. **Paribhogika Stupa**: Contains the buried belongings of the Buddha.
3. **Uddeshika Stupa**: Created as memorials.

3. In which one of the following regions was **Dhanyakataka**, which flourished as a prominent **Buddhist centre** under the **Mahasanghikas**, located?

- a) Andhra ✓
- b) Gandhara
- c) Kalinga
- d) Magadha

Difficulty level: Hard

EXPLANATION

Dhanyakataka

- Dhanyakataka, also known as **Dharanikota** or **Amaravati**, is an ancient historical site located in present-day **Andhra Pradesh**.
- The **Satavahanas** ruled over this region from around the 2nd century BCE to the 3rd century CE.
- Dhanyakataka was an **important hub for trade, culture, and Buddhism** during their reign.

Mahasanghikas (Great Congregation)

- Mahasanghika is an early Buddhist school which is thought to have formed after the **Second Buddhist Council in 383 BCE**.
- Mahasanghikas are **separated from the Sthaviravada** school due to differences in monastic practices (Sthaviravada school has more rigorous rules of conduct for monks).
- Mahasanghikas: **First to attribute divinity to Buddha** and **represent him in human form**.
- **Mahayana Buddhism** is thought to have been **influenced by the Mahasanghika tradition**.
- Major sects under Mahasanghikas:

1. Lokattarvada sect

2. Kukkutik sect

3. Caitika sect

Gandhara

- Gandhara refers to an ancient region situated in the **northwestern part of the Indian subcontinent**.
- It was a **major center for Buddhist learning and art** during the time of the Mauryan and Kushan empires.
- Gandhara was **influenced by Greek culture** due to the **conquests of Alexander the Great** in the 4th century BCE. This influence is evident in the art and architecture of the region.

Kalinga

- Kalinga was an ancient kingdom located in the **eastern part of the Indian subcontinent** (present day- Odisha).
- This place is famous for the **Kalinga War**, led by **Ashoka**, in 261 BCE.
- **Ashoka's rock edicts and inscriptions** promoting Buddhist principles can be found in various parts of the region.

Magadha

- Magadha was an ancient kingdom located in the **northeastern part of the Indian subcontinent (present day - Bihar)**.
- Magadha's history dates back to the 6th century BCE, and it was ruled by several early dynasties, including the **Haryanka and Shishunaga dynasties**. **Bimbisara**, the king of Magadha, was a **contemporary of Gautama Buddha** and a supporter of his teachings.
- **Chandragupta Maurya founded the Mauryan empire in Magadha** in the 4th century BCE.
- Buddha attained enlightenment at Bodh Gaya in the Magadha region.

RELATED PYQs

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 codes given below:

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

[2014], [2015]

Q2. With reference to the religious history of India, consider the following statements:

1. Sthaviravadins belong to Mahayana Buddhism
2. Lokottaravadin sect was an offshoot of the Mahasanghika sect of Buddhism
3. The deification of Buddha by Mahasanghikas fostered Mahayana Buddhism

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

[2020]

4. With reference to ancient Indian History consider the following pairs:

Literary work	Author
1) Devichandragupta	Bilhana
2) Hammira-Mahakavya	Nayachandra Suri
3) Milinda-panha	Nagarjuna
4) Nitivakyamrita	Somadeva Suri

How many of the above pairs are correctly matched?

- a) Only one
- b) Only two ✓
- c) Only three
- d) All four

Difficulty level: Moderate

EXPLANATION

Devichandraguptam (Devi-Chandragupta)

- Devi-Chandragupta is a **Sanskrit** historical drama written by **Vishakhadatta**.
- The play explores **Chandragupta Maurya's life and his relationship with Queen Devi**.
- **Mudrarakshasa** is also written by Vishakhadatta.

Hammira Mahakavya

- Hammira Mahakavya is a Sanskrit epic poem composed by **Nayachandra Suri** (14th-century).
- It is a historical epic that focuses on the life and reign of **King Hammira**.
- Hammira was a **Chahamana king who ruled the kingdom of Ranthambore** during the **13th century**.
- Central narrative: **Hammira's resistance against the expansionist Delhi Sultanate**.

Milinda-panha (Questions of Milinda)

- It is a **Buddhist Pali text** in which **Nagasena engages in a philosophical dialogue with King Milinda**.
- **King Milinda, (Menander I)**, ruled the **Indo-Greek kingdom** in the **2nd century BCE**.
- The Milinda Panha holds significance in the **Theravada Buddhist** tradition.

Nitivakyamrita (The Nectar of Ethical Sayings)

- Nitivakyamrita is an important ancient text, attributed to the **Jaina author Somadeva Suri** (10th century AD).
- The primary purpose of Nitivakyamrita is to provide **guidance on ethical conduct and governance principles**.

Bilhana (Bilhana Trivikrama)

- He was a **Sanskrit poet** and scholar, lived in India during the **11th century**.
- His notable work is the **Vikramankadevacharita**, an epic poem that tells the story of **Chalukya king Vikramaditya VI**.
- Bilhana also wrote '**Chaurapanchasika (fifty verses of the thief)**', the story of a thief's secret love for a Princess.

Nagarjuna (Acharya Nagarjuna):

- He lived around **150- 250 AD** and was the **founder of the Madhyamaka school** of **Mahayana Buddhism**.
- He Composed the **Sutra Samuccaya** (Compendium of Sutras) anthology and author of several important texts, including the **Mulamadhyamakakarika** (Fundamental Verses on the Middle Way), which is a central text in Madhyamaka philosophy.

5. "Souls are not only the property of animal and plant life, but also of rocks, running water and many other natural objects not looked on as living by other religious sects."

The above statement reflects one of the core beliefs of which one of the following religious sects of ancient India?

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

Difficulty level: Easy

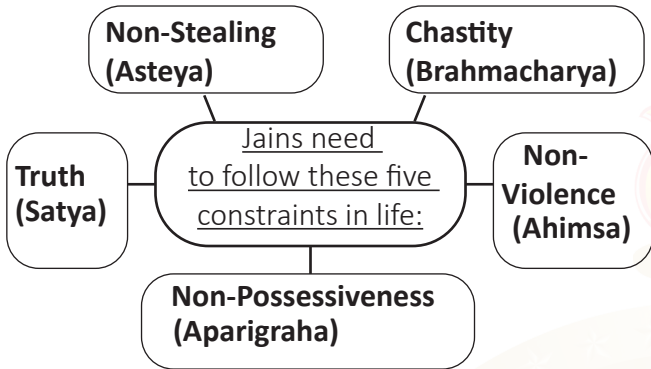
EXPLANATION

Core beliefs of Jainism

- They believe that through three-jewel (fold path): **right belief (Samyak-darshana)**, **right knowledge (Samyak-gyana)** and **right conduct (Samyak-charitra)**, one can get rid of bad karma and achieve salvation. These three jewels or gems of Jainism are called **Ratnatraya**.

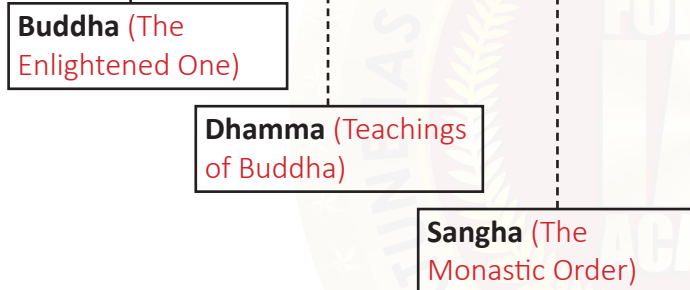


परस्परोग्रहो जीवनाम्



Core beliefs of Buddhism

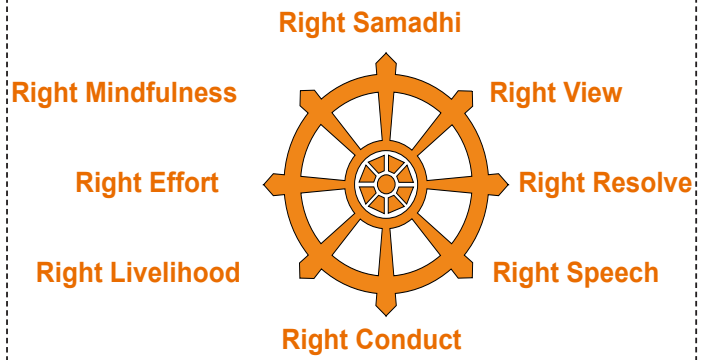
The three Jewels (triratna) embraced under Buddhism are :



The basic tenets of Buddhism are explained through the **four major Noble truths**. They are:

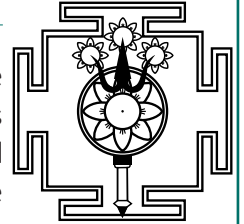
- The truth of suffering (**Dukkha**)
 - The truth of the origin of suffering (**Samudaya**)
 - The truth of the cessation of suffering (**Nirodha**)
 - The truth of the path to the cessation of suffering (**Marga**)
- Belief in rebirth (**reincarnation**) based on one's actions (**karma**) in previous lives.
 - The goal is to break the cycle of rebirth by achieving enlightenment (**nirvana**).
 - If one gets rid of desires and needs, then one can be free and at peace. This can be attained through following the '**Noble Eightfold Path**'.

Noble Eightfold Path



Shaivism

- Shaivism considers **Shiva** as the Supreme Lord. Shaivism traces its **origin before Vaishnavism in 2nd millennium BC** in the form of the Vedic deity Rudra.

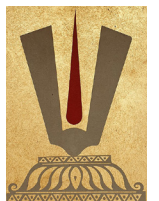


Features

- Lingam Symbol:** Lord Shiva is symbolized by the Lingam, representing **divine energy and the formless aspect of Shiva**, signifying both creation and destruction.
- Shakti:** Recognizes the **divine feminine energy**, often personified as **Parvati**, Shiva's consort.
- Yogic Practices:** Give importance to **yogic and meditative practices** for spiritual growth.
- Ultimate Goal:** Aims for **spiritual liberation (moksha)** and union with the divine, where the individual soul realizes oneness with Lord Shiva.

Vaishnavism

- Followers consider **Vishnu** as the Supreme Lord. The tradition has traceable **roots to the 1st millennium BC**, as **Bhagavatism**, also called **Krishnaism**.



Features

- Bhakti Devotion:** Emphasis on intense devotion (bhakti) to Lord Vishnu as the primary means **to attain spiritual realization and salvation**.
- Cycle of Birth and Rebirth:** Belief in the cycle of birth, death, and rebirth (**samsara**), with the goal of breaking free from this cycle to attain **moksha** (liberation).
- Devotional Singing and Chanting:** Singing devotional songs (**bhajans**) and **chanting the names** of Lord Vishnu are common practices.

RELATED PYQs

Q1. With reference to the cultural history of India, consider the following pairs:

1. Parivrajaka — Renunciant and Wanderer
2. Shramana — Priest with a high status
3. Upasaka — Lay follower of Buddhism

Which of the pairs given above are correctly matched?

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

[2013]

Q2. Which one of the following describes best the concept of Nirvana in Buddhism?

- a) The extinction of the flame of desire
- b) The complete annihilation of self
- c) A state of bliss and rest
- d) A mental stage beyond all comprehension

[2013]

Q3. Which of the following statements is/are applicable to Jain doctrine?

1. The surest way of annihilating Karma is to practise penance.
2. Every object, even the smallest particle has a soul.
3. Karma is the bane of the soul and must be ended.

Select the correct answer using the codes given below:

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

[2013]

Q4. With reference to the religious history of India, consider the following statements :

1. The concept of Bodhisattva is central to the 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

[2016]

Q5. With reference to the religious practices in India, the "Sthanakvasi" sect belongs to

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

[2018]

Q6. 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

[2019]

Q7. With reference to the religious history of India, consider the following statements:

- 1) Sthaviravadins belong to Mahayana Buddhism
- 2) Lokottaravadin sect was an offshoot of the Mahasanghika sect of Buddhism
- 3) The deification of Buddha by Mahasanghikas fostered the Mahayana Buddhism

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

[2020]

6. Consider the following pairs :

Site	Well known for
1) Besnagar	Shaivite cave shrine
2) Bhaja	Buddhist cave shrine
3) Sittanavasal	Jain cave shrine

How many of the above pairs are correctly matched?

- a) Only one
- b) Only two ✓
- c) All three
- d) None

Difficulty level: Hard

EXPLANATION

Besnagar (vidisha)

- Ancient town in present day **Madhya Pradesh**.
- This town is situated near the banks of the **Betwa River**.
- It has archaeological remains that trace its history to the **Maurya and Gupta periods**.
- It is famous for **Vasudeva temple**.
- **Udayagiri caves**, in nearby region of Besnagar, has the most prominent and celebrated sculpture of **Lord Vishnu**, which depicts his incarnation as **Varaha or boar**.

Bhaja

- Bhaja Caves are a group of ancient **Buddhist rock-cut caves** located in the state of Maharashtra.
- These caves date back to the 2nd century BCE and 2nd century CE, making them over 2,000 years old.
- The Bhaja Caves are situated in the hills of the Western Ghats.

Sittanavasal (Sittanavasal Cave)

- It is an archaeological site located in present day Tamil Nadu.
- It is famous for its ancient **Jain rock-cut cave temple**.
- It gives information about **Jainism during the Pallava dynasty**.

RELATED PYQs

Q1. With reference to the history of Indian rock-cut architecture, consider the following statements:

1. The caves at Badami are the oldest surviving rock-cut caves in India
2. The Barabar rock-cut caves were originally made for Ajivikas by Emperor Chandra Gupta Maurya
3. At Ellora, caves were made for different faiths

Which of the given statements is/are correct?

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

[2013]

Type of the questions: Application

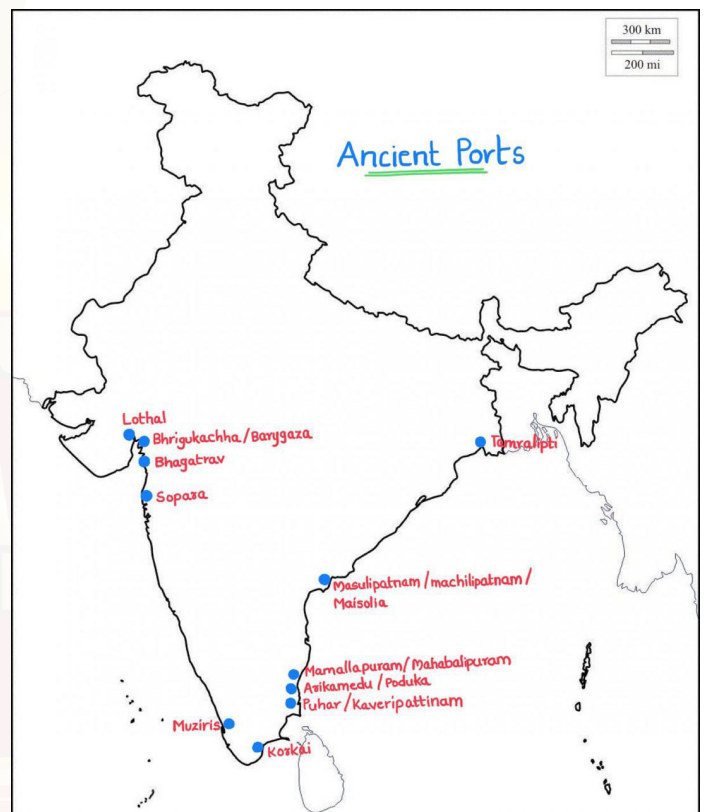
1. With reference to ancient South India, Korkai, Poompuhar and Muchiri well-known as
 - a) capital cities
 - b) ports ✓
 - c) centres of iron-and-steel-making
 - d) shrines of Jain Tirthankaras

Difficulty level: Easy

Relevance: Recent excavation at ancient port city of Korkai.

EXPLANATION

ANCIENT PORT TOWNS



Korkai

- Korkai is an ancient port town located in the **Tamil Nadu region**.
- It was part of the **Pandyan Kingdom** in southern India.
- It was important for **pearl fisheries**.
- Korkai is situated about 3 km away from **Thamirabarani river (only perennial river in Tamil Nadu, originates in the Pothigai Hills of the Western Ghats in Tirunelveli district)**.

Poompuhar (Kaveripoompattinam)

- Poompuhar is an ancient port city located on the **eastern coast of Tamil Nadu**.
- It was one of the major port cities of the **Chola dynasty**.
- It was located near **Kaveri river**.

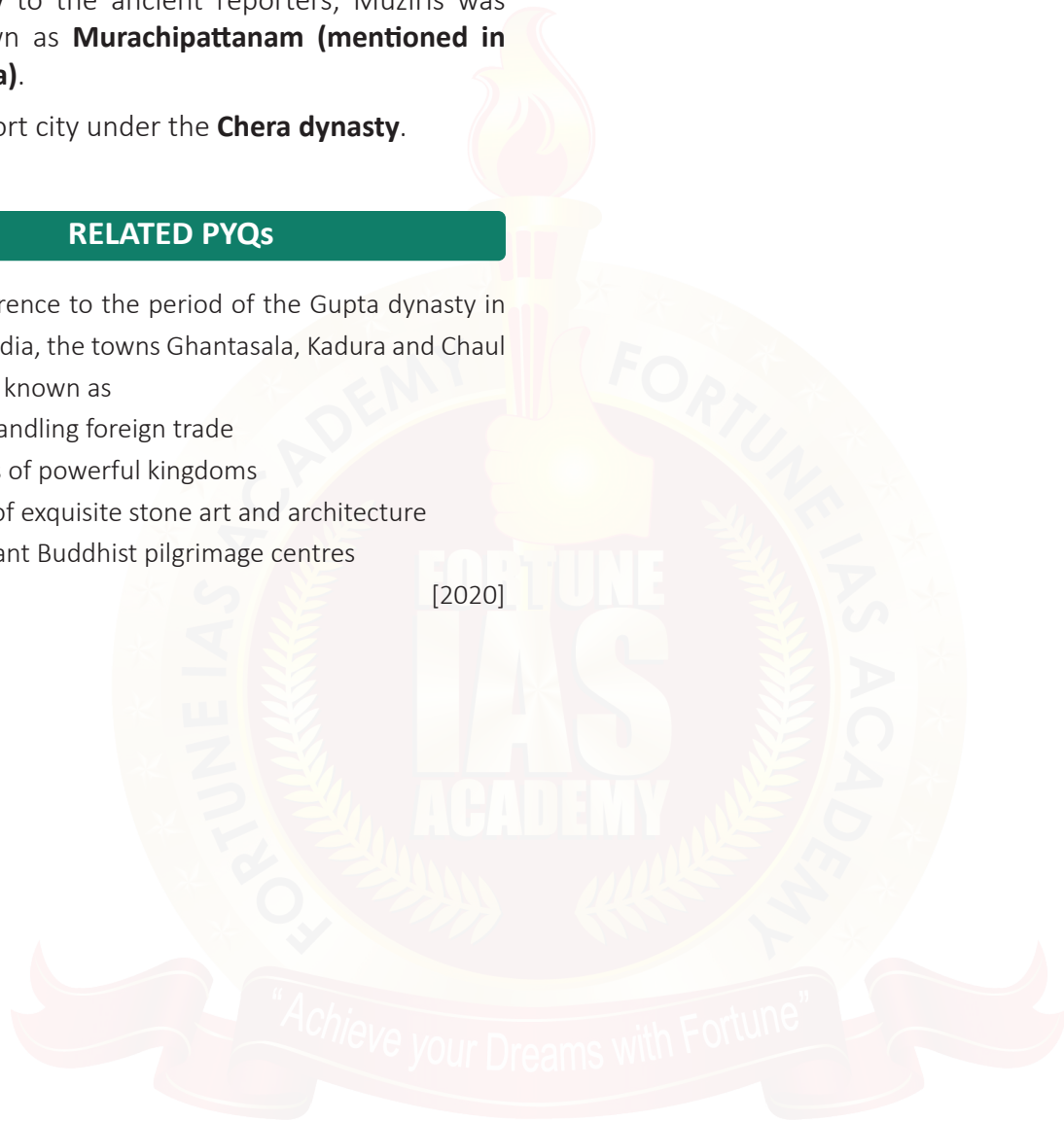
Muchiri (Muziris)

- Muchiri is an ancient port city located in the **Kerala region**, in Malabar coast.
- **Spice City** to the ancient reporters, Muziris was also known as **Murachipattanam (mentioned in Ramayana)**.
- It was a port city under the **Chera dynasty**.

RELATED PYQs

- Q1. With reference to the period of the Gupta dynasty in ancient India, the towns Ghantasala, Kadura and Chaul were well known as
- a. ports handling foreign trade
 - b. capitals of powerful kingdoms
 - c. places of exquisite stone art and architecture
 - d. important Buddhist pilgrimage centres

[2020]



SUMMARY

Analyzing the trends in previous years' UPSC Prelims questions from 2021 to 2023 provides valuable insights into the distribution of questions across syllabus topics, the varying levels of question difficulty, and the extent to which current affairs play a significant role in the examination.

SUBJECT EMPHASIS

- Major prehistoric sites.
 - » Eg: Burzahom
- IVC
- Early Vedic and later Vedic age
- 16 Mahajanapadas and their locations
- Buddhism, Jainism
- Mauryan period: Arthashastra, Ashokan edict and architecture
- Kushana: Cultural contributions
- Kanishka and contemporaries
- Satavahanas and their cultural contributions (Saptamatrika cult evidence)
- Sangam age (kingdom, polity, administration and literature)
 - » Eg: Keeladi excavations
- Gupta dynasty (Polity, Administration, Art and Architecture)
- Period of Harshavardhana
- Pala dynasty and cultural contributions
- Chola (Polity, Administration, Art and Architecture)

CURRENT AFFAIRS FOCUS:

- Greater attention should be directed towards topics that have remained in the news for an extended period and are closely related to both the syllabus and the foundational aspects of ancient history.
 - For example: Recent excavations of ASI like Keeladi excavations.

SUMMARY

TREND ANALYSIS:

- Certain topics are gaining relevance due to their current significance, and there is a possibility that these topics might be repeated in the forthcoming exams.
 - Eg:
 - » IVC
 - » Shramanic religions (Buddhism, Jainism)
 - » Cave Architecture
 - » Mauryan Architecture like Stupa and Pillars
 - » Sangam Age
 - » Bhakti Movement (Shaivism, Vaishnavism)

Prelims preparation acts as the initial gateway to our aspirations of a career in civil services. As the saying goes, the first step is often the most challenging. To reach our desired destination, it's crucial to make the right, and most importantly, smart choices. At **Fortune IAS Academy**, we aim to simplify this challenging exam stage through our test series program, leading you along the correct path to achieve your goals.

