

NCERT QUESTIONS WITH SOLUTIONS

1. Consider the quotation given below and discuss in several groups. Compare your observations and conclusions on what Kautilya recommends for a kingdom. Is it very different today?

The kingdom shall be protected by fortifying the capital and the towns at the frontiers. The land should not only be capable of sustaining the population but also outsiders in times of calamities. It should be beautiful, being endowed with cultivable land, mines, timber forests, elephant forests, and good pastures rich in cattle. It should not depend [only on] rain for water. It should have good roads and waterways. It should have a productive economy, with a wide variety of commodities....- Kautilya, Arthashastra

Ans. Kautilya's vision in the Arthashastra is impressively forward-thinking and surprisingly relevant even today. When we break down his recommendations, we see a holistic approach to governance, development, and sustainability that could easily apply to a modern state. Let's compare his ideas with today's context:

(i) Fortifying the capital and frontier towns:

Then: Protection through physical defense structures and strategic planning.

Now: We focus on national security, border management, smart cities, and disaster preparedness. Cybersecurity is the modern frontier. The core idea security for stability remains unchanged.

(ii) The land must sustain both the population and outsiders in times of calamity:

Then: Preparedness for famine, war, or displacement.

Now: We talk about food security, refugee support systems, emergency relief funds, and disaster management authorities. The value of resilience still stands strong.

(iii) Natural wealth cultivable land, forests, pastures, mines, water, etc.:

Then: A kingdom's strength came from self-sufficiency and natural resources.

Now: Nations still invest heavily in agriculture, mining, renewable energy, and biodiversity. Climate change and sustainability efforts echo Kautilya's foresight about not depending solely on rain.

(iv) Good roads and waterways:

Then: Infrastructure as a backbone for trade and connectivity.

Now: The same transportation networks, logistics systems, digital infrastructure. Connectivity equals growth.

(v) A productive economy with diverse commodities:

Then: Economic diversification to ensure stability and growth.

Now: Economists still preach this. A country with multiple strong sectors—agriculture, industry, services, tech is more stable and resilient to global shocks. It is not different today. The core principles that Kautilya laid out are still very much in use just adapted to our times with modern tools and language. What stands out is how timeless his ideas are. His emphasis on balance between economy, environment, defense, and social welfare is a model for sustainable development even now.

2. According to the text, how were rulers chosen in early Vedic society?

Ans. In early Vedic society, rulers were not always hereditary kings. In early Vedic society leaders or rulers (often referred to as raja) were likely chosen by the community, particularly among the Kshatriya class. The position of a raja was often based on qualities like bravery, leadership, wisdom, and ability to protect the tribe, rather than just birthright. The sabha and samiti, which were early tribal assemblies, played a role in the selection and support of the ruler. These assemblies represented the collective will of the people. Brahmins (priests) often legitimized the ruler's position through rituals, but they did not necessarily determine who became king. So, early Vedic leadership had a more democratic or merit-based element compared to later periods, where dynastic succession became the norm.

3. Imagine you are a historian studying ancient India. What types of sources (archaeological, literary, etc.) would you

use to learn more about the mahajanapadas? Explain how each source might contribute to your understanding.

Ans. As a historian studying ancient India especially the Mahajanapadas I would rely on a mix of literary, archaeological, numismatic, and epigraphic sources to build a well-rounded understanding.

(i) Literary Sources: These include ancient texts, religious scriptures, and historical accounts. They provide names, values, administrative styles, and sometimes even conflicts between different Mahajanapadas.

(ii) Archaeological Sources: Excavations at ancient sites reveal much about the culture. For example ruins of cities like Rajgir, Ujjain, Taxila give us clues about urban planning, defense (forts), religious buildings, and daily life. Artifacts like pottery, tools, ornaments show levels of craftsmanship, trade links, and domestic life. These sources bring physical evidence of the existence, lifestyle, and technological level of the Mahajanapadas.

(iii) Numismatic Sources (Coins): Coins issued by different Mahajanapadas, especially Punch-marked coins often bear information about the rulers of that period. They reveal economic practices, trade, state authority, and interactions with other regions.

By using all these sources together, we can gather much clearer, multi-dimensional picture of the Mahajanapadas how they functioned, interacted, and shaped the early history of the Indian subcontinent.

4. Why was the development of iron metallurgy so important for the growth of urbanism in the 1st millennium BCE? You may use points from the chapter but also from your knowledge or imagination.

Ans. The development of iron metallurgy during the 1st millennium BCE was a game-changer for early societies in India and it played a key role in the rise of urbanism (the growth of towns and cities). Here's why it was so important:

(i) Stronger Tools and Weapons: Iron tools like ploughs, axes, and sickles were stronger and more durable than their earlier stone or copper counterparts. This led to more efficient agriculture, forestry, and construction. Greater agricultural productivity could support larger populations, which is essential for towns and cities to emerge.

(ii) Craft and Trade Specialization:

Iron tools boosted various crafts like carpentry, masonry, and metalwork. As agriculture stabilized, more people could take up non-farming occupations (blacksmiths, traders, builders). These craftspeople and traders often lived in urban centers, where their goods could be exchanged or sold.

(iii) Growth of Trade and Infrastructure:

Iron was also used to make transport tools (wheels, carts), helping in trade and connectivity. Urban centers often developed along trade routes, benefiting from increased mobility and commerce. Cities grew as commercial and administrative hubs.