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1. Answer : (b)

Explanation : Chirand which is located in the Saran district of Bihar on the northern bank of the Ganga, is one of the most important Neolithic sites in eastern India. Archaeological excavations at Chirand have revealed a continuous cultural sequence from the Neolithic phase (c. 2500 BCE) through Chalcolithic, Iron Age and up to early historic times. Evidence of early agriculture, animal domestication, bone tools and pottery firmly establishes Chirand as a Neolithic settlement.

- Burzahom is a Neolithic site, not Chalcolithic and is famous for pit dwellings and bone tools in Kashmir.
- Adichanallur is a Megalithic–Iron Age burial site in Tamil Nadu which is known for urn burials.
- Kumrahar is associated with Mauryan Pataliputra, especially known for the 80-pillared hall.

2. Answer : (a)

Explanation : Statement 1 is correct: Palaeolithic phase in India, extending roughly till 8000 B.C., is characterised by the absence of cultivation. Human subsistence during this period depended entirely on hunting, food gathering and scavenging. Chronologically, this phase broadly coincides with the Pleistocene epoch (Ice Age) which is marked by cooler climatic conditions and glacial phases at higher altitudes.

Statement 2 is correct: Archaeological evidence shows regional variation in early habitation practices. In the Belan Valley, rock shelters were used as seasonal camps by Palaeolithic and Mesolithic communities, while Burzahom (a Neolithic site in the Kashmir Valley) provides evidence of pit dwellings, adapted to cold climatic conditions. Burzahom also shows distinctive burial practices, including the burial of domestic dogs with their masters, indicating cultural complexity. Hence, Statement 2 is correct.

Statement 3 is not correct: because the emergence of polished stone tools and settled agriculture did not occur during the Mesolithic phase. The Mesolithic period (c. 8000–4000 B.C.) is primarily characterised by microlithic tools and continued hunting-gathering, sometimes with semi-sedentary settlements. In contrast, the Neolithic phase witnessed the use of polished stone axes, permanent settlements, and the practice of agriculture, including early rice cultivation at sites such as Lahuradewa (Allahabad/Prayagraj region). Hence, Statement 3 is not correct.

3. Answer : (a)

Explanation : Statement 1 is correct: The Neolithic culture of the Kashmir region, represented by sites such as Burzahom, Gufkral and Kanispur, is dated to the late fourth millennium BCE. Archaeological evidence shows that this phase was broadly contemporary with the Mature Harappan Civilization. Although the cultural features were very different—Kashmir Neolithic sites showing pit dwellings, hunting-fishing economy and extensive use of bone tools—their chronological overlap is well established through stratigraphy and radiocarbon dating.

Statement 2 is correct: The Jorwe culture (1400 BCE - 700 BCE) was the most important and widespread Chalcolithic culture of Maharashtra, excluding the Konkan coast and Vidarbha region.

Major sites such as Inamgaon and Daimabad show evidence of planned settlement layouts, storage pits, granaries, agricultural surplus and craft activities. Although essentially rural, these settlements display proto-urban characteristics which indicate a transition towards more complex social organisation.

Statement 3 is correct: The Jhukar culture represents the late or post-urban phase of the Harappan Civilization in Sindh, particularly at sites such as Chanhu-daro. This culture shows a mixture of Harappan traits along with influences from Baluchistan, Iran and Central Asia. The presence of copper and bronze tools of foreign types supports the idea of cultural interaction beyond the Indian subcontinent.

Statement 4 is incorrect: Neolithic age marked the fundamental transition from nomadic hunting-gathering to settled agriculture and animal domestication, leading to permanent village life. The Chalcolithic period built upon these Neolithic foundations by introducing copper technology and regional cultural diversity, but it did not initiate village settlement.

4. Answer : (a)

Explanation : Statement 1 is correct: Early Vedic religion was centred on the worship of forces of nature such as Indra, Agni, Varuna and Soma. These deities were invoked primarily through yajnas which involved fire sacrifices and ritual chanting. There is no evidence of image worship or organised bhakti in the early Vedic phase. The religious focus was ritualistic and transactional, aimed at securing rain, cattle, victory and prosperity rather than personal devotion.

Statement 2 is correct: In early Vedic thought, rita represented the universal cosmic order that regulated nature, gods and the moral universe. Dharma referred to the duties and obligations of individuals and society that upheld this cosmic order. This indicates that moral conduct was not viewed independently but as part of a larger natural and cosmic framework. This integration of ethics with cosmology formed the philosophical foundation of Vedic civilisation.

Statement 3 is correct: The Sindhu (Indus) River is the most frequently mentioned river in the Rigveda and it appears far more often than the Ganga. This reflects the north-western geographical orientation of early Vedic society. Although the Saraswati is praised as naditama (best of rivers), the Ganga occupies a marginal position in early Vedic texts and becomes prominent only in later Vedic and post-Vedic literature.

Statement 4 is incorrect: While Rigvedic Aryans are described as using chariots, armour, helmets and possessing domesticated horses, the statement incorrectly attributes iron technology to the Indus Valley Civilisation. The Harappans used copper and bronze, not iron, and iron technology appeared in India after the decline of the Indus Valley Civilisation, during the later Vedic period.

5. Answer : (a)

Explanation : Statement 1 is correct: Harappan cities such as Harappa, Mohenjo-daro and Dholavira show systematic and large-scale use of burnt bricks in houses, drains and public structures. In contrast, contemporary Egyptian and Mesopotamian civilisations relied predominantly on sun-dried (mud) bricks, using burnt bricks only sparingly. This extensive use of kiln-fired bricks is a distinctive feature of Harappan urban planning.

Statement 2 is correct: Archaeological evidence supports Harappan–Mesopotamian trade contacts. Harappan seals, seal impressions and artefacts have been found at Mesopotamian sites such as Ur and Kish. In Mesopotamian records, the Indus region is referred to as Meluha which indicates sustained commercial interaction.

Statement 3 is correct: Mesopotamian texts refer to Meluha (generally identified with the Indus region), Dilmun (identified with present-day Bahrain in the Persian Gulf), and Magan (associated with Oman). These references demonstrate an interconnected Bronze Age trade network linking the Indus Valley with West Asia.

Statement 4 is incorrect: Harappans sourced raw materials from diverse regions. Copper was obtained from the Khetri mines of Rajasthan, carnelian was procured and processed notably in the Lothal–Gujarat region, and lapis lazuli was imported from the Badakhshan region of Central Asia (Afghanistan).

6. Answer : (a)

Explanation : Pair 1 is incorrect: Dholavira is famous for its elaborate and unique system of water management, including a series of reservoirs, channels and step-like structures designed to harvest rainwater in an arid environment. However, Dholavira is located in the Kachchh region of Gujarat, not in Rajasthan.

Pair 2 is incorrect: Kalibangan provides archaeological evidence of a ploughed agricultural field, marked by criss-cross furrows. This discovery highlights the agrarian foundation of the Harappan economy. Kalibangan is also known for fire altars which reflect ritual practices of Harappan people. However, Kalibangan is located in Rajasthan, along the Ghaggar river system and not in Gujarat. Gujarat is associated with sites such as Dholavira, Lothal and Surkotada.

Pair 3 is incorrect: Hulas, located in western Uttar Pradesh, is a Late Harappan site that shows cultural continuity from the Mature Harappan phase into the post-urban phase. It is important for understanding the eastward spread and transformation of Harappan culture into the Ganga–Yamuna Doab. While rice cultivation is attested in the middle Ganga plains during the Neolithic phase (for example at Lahuradewa), Hulas is better known for Late Harappan pottery and settlement continuity.

Pair 4 is correct: Manda, located in the Jammu region, is regarded as the northernmost known Harappan site. Archaeological evidence from Manda shows adaptation to a hilly and forested environment, including the use of timber in construction, which contrasts with the baked-brick architecture of core Harappan urban centres such as Harappa and Mohenjo-daro.

7. Answer : (a)

Explanation : ● Pallichchandam refers to land grants given specifically to Buddhist monasteries and Jain institutions. These grants provided economic support to monastic establishments for religious activities, education and maintenance. Pallichchandam grants are important evidence of state patronage to heterodox sects in early medieval India and indicate the coexistence of Buddhism, Jainism and Brahmanism within the same political system. Ī% Agrahara denotes a tax-exempt settlement granted to Brahmins, usually through Brahmadeya grants. These villages were centres of Vedic learning, ritual performance, and Brahmanical authority. Agraharas often enjoyed administrative autonomy and exemption from royal taxes, reflecting the increasing influence of Brahmins in landholding and governance during the Pallava and Chola periods.

- Nagaram was an urban institution dominated by merchant guilds, especially in towns and port cities. It functioned as a corporate body managing trade, market regulations, taxation and commercial disputes. It highlights the organised nature of trade and urban economy in South India and are frequently mentioned alongside sabhas and urs in inscriptions.
- Matha was a Hindu monastic institution, closely associated with Shaiva and Vaishnava traditions. Beyond religious instruction, mathas acted as centres of education, land management, charity and ideological propagation.

8. Answer : (a)

Explanation : ● In the 6th century BCE, Persian rulers such as Cyrus the Great and Darius I occupied regions of north-western India including Gandhara, Sindh and parts of Punjab. This is important because Persian rule preceded Alexander and introduced administrative ideas such as satrapies and coinage influences.

- The Greek invasion followed in 327–326 BCE, when Alexander the Great entered north-western India and fought the Battle of Hydaspes against King Porus. After Alexander's withdrawal, Greek political presence continued through the Indo-Greek rulers of Bactria, making Greek influence more prolonged than a single campaign.
- The Sakas (Scythians) entered India later, during the late 2nd century BCE to 1st century BCE. They were Central Asian nomadic groups who gradually displaced Indo-Greek rulers, especially in western India. Their rule is clearly later than the Greeks but earlier than the Kushanas.
- The Kushanas, originating from the Yuezhi tribes of Central Asia, entered India from the 1st century CE onwards. Under rulers like Kanishka, they established a powerful empire in north-western and northern India. Since Kushana power flourished in the early centuries of the Common Era, they must come after the Sakas.
- The Hunas (White Huns) were the last of these invaders, entering India during the 5th–6th centuries CE. Their repeated attacks weakened northern India and played a major role in the decline of the Gupta Empire.

Thus, the correct chronological order is: Persians '! Greeks '! Sakas '! Kushanas '! Hunas

9. Answer : (b)

Explanation : ● Urban Culture: The development of urban culture in India can be traced back to the Indus Valley Civilization (circa 2600-1900 BCE). Cities like Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro exhibited advanced urban planning, with sophisticated drainage systems, granaries, and public baths. However, urban culture also re-emerged during the later Vedic period and the early historic period in the Ganges valley, especially during the 6th century BCE with the rise of Mahajanapadas.

- **Iron Plough:** The introduction of the iron plough is associated with the late Vedic period, around 1000 BCE. This technological innovation allowed for more efficient farming which led to increased agricultural productivity.
- **Punch-Marked Silver Coins:** The use of punch-marked silver coins is associated with the Mahajanapada period, around the 6th century BCE. These coins were made by punching symbols onto pieces of silver and were widely used as currency across the various kingdoms.
- **Gold Coins:** The introduction of gold coins in India is generally attributed to the Kushan Empire during the 1st century CE. The Kushans, under rulers like Kanishka, issued gold coins that were used extensively in trade. This practice continued and was later adopted by the Gupta Empire who were known for its beautifully minted gold coins.

10. Answer : (b)

Explanation : According to Kautilya's Arthashastra (Book II), 'Pankodakasannirodhe' was a monetary penalty prescribed under the Mauryan administrative system. It refers to the offence of slushing or dirtying public roads by allowing muddy or waste water to flow onto them, thereby obstructing public movement. The Mauryan state treated roads, markets, wells and tanks as state-regulated public spaces, and civic nuisances affecting these were punishable.

11. Answer : (b)

Explanation : Statement 1 is correct: The First Buddhist Council (483 BCE) was convened immediately after the Mahaparinirvana of the Buddha. It was held at the Sattapani (Sattaparnaguha) caves at Rajagriha, under the patronage of King Ajatshatru of the Haryanka dynasty. The council was presided over by Mahakassapa. Its primary objective was to preserve the Buddha's teachings by systematising them, especially the Vinaya (discipline) and Sutta (discourses), to maintain the doctrinal purity of the Sangha.

Statement 2 is incorrect: The Second Buddhist Council (383 BCE) was held at Vaishali, about 100 years after the Buddha's death, under the patronage of King Kalasoka of the Sisunaga dynasty, and was presided over by Sabakami. The council dealt mainly with disciplinary disputes (Vinaya issues), particularly the permissibility of certain monastic practices. While it reflected internal disagreements, it did not formally establish a doctrinal schism. Major sectarian divisions such as Theravada and Mahasanghika crystallised gradually over time, not instantaneously at this council.

Statement 3 is correct: The Third Buddhist Council (c. 250 BCE) was held at Pataliputra during the reign of Emperor Ashoka and was presided over by Moggaliputta Tissa. The explicit aim of this council was to purify the Sangha by expelling monks with heretical views and selfish motives. During this council, the Abhidhamma Pitaka was compiled, which provided a systematic philosophical analysis of Buddhist doctrine and contributed to the near-completion of the Pali Tipitaka (Vinaya, Sutta and Abhidhamma).

Statement 4 is correct: The Fourth Buddhist Council was organised under the patronage of King Kanishka of the Kushana dynasty in the 1st century CE (traditionally around 72 CE). It was held at Kundalvana in Kashmir. A key feature of this council was the use of Sanskrit as the language of discussion, marking a shift from earlier Prakrit and Pali traditions. Buddhist philosophical texts, particularly Abhidhamma works, were translated from Prakrit into Sanskrit which facilitated the development and spread of Mahayana Buddhism.

12. Answer : (a)

Explanation : Statement 1 is correct: The First Major Rock Edict contains Ashoka's earliest public declaration against animal sacrifice. It records the restriction of slaughter in the royal kitchen—limited to only two peacocks and one deer—and expresses the king's intention to discontinue even this. This marks the ethical foundation of Ashokan dhamma.

Statement 2 is correct: The Fourth Major Rock Edict explicitly states that Dhamma Ghosha (the call of morality) replaced Bheri Ghosha (the war drum). This edict reflects a conscious ideological transition from coercive power to moral persuasion, signalling a new model of kingship based on ethical governance rather than military glory.

Statement 3 is incorrect: The appointment of Dhamma Mahamattas is mentioned in the Fifth Major Rock Edict, where they are described as officials entrusted with the propagation of dhamma and welfare activities. However, religious tolerance across sects is primarily emphasised in the Seventh and Twelfth Major Rock Edicts, not directly tied to the administrative appointment described in the Fifth Edict. Hence, the linkage in the statement is incorrect.

Statement 4 is correct: The Thirteenth Major Rock Edict uniquely combines two critical themes:

13. Answer : (a)

Explanation : Statement 1 is correct: Bimbisara (c. 558–492 BCE) played a decisive role in transforming Magadha into the strongest Mahajanapada. He is credited with establishing one of the earliest standing armies in ancient India, giving Magadha a permanent military advantage. He strengthened Magadha through matrimonial alliances with: Kosala (marriage to the Kosalan princess), Vaishali (Lichchhavis) and Madra. These alliances reduced hostility with neighbouring states and expanded Magadha's political influence without warfare. Bimbisara also made Rajagriha his capital which was naturally fortified by hills and further strengthened by stone walls.

Statement 2 is incorrect: Ajatashatru (c. 492–460 BCE), the son of Bimbisara, pursued an aggressive expansionist policy. He is known for:

- Conquest of Kosala and prolonged wars with the Lichchhavis of Vaishali,
- Use of advanced war machinery such as the Mahashilakantaka (stone-throwing engine) and Rathamusala (chariot with blades),
- Patronage to Buddhism and organisation of the First Buddhist Council (483 BCE) at Rajagriha.

However, Ajatashatru did not shift the capital. The relocation of the capital from Rajagriha to Pataliputra was carried out by his successor Udayin who recognised the strategic importance of the Ganga–Son river confluence for trade, defence and administration.

- Statement 3 is correct: Mahapadma Nanda (c. 345–329 BCE), the founder of the Nanda dynasty overthrew the last ruler of the Sisunaga dynasty, Kalasoka. Ancient sources describe him as: “Sarva-Kshatriyantaka” – destroyer of all Kshatriyas and “Ekkrat” – the sole sovereign which reflects his systematic elimination of rival ruling houses and the creation of a highly centralised empire. Under him, Magadha expanded into regions such as Kalinga, Kosala and parts of the Deccan and accumulated enormous wealth.
- Statement 4 is incorrect: Sisunaga dynasty (c. 413–345 BCE) emerged after the decline of the Haryankas and primarily focused on restoring political stability in Magadha. Sisunaga rulers subdued internal rebellions and shifted attention back to the Gangetic heartland. Their rule is seen as a transitional phase, not a period of major territorial expansion which occurred mainly under the Nandas and later the Mauryas.

14. Answer : (d)

Explanation : Statement 1 is correct: Jhukar culture is associated with the Late Harappan or post-urban phase which developed after the decline of the Mature Indus Valley Civilisation (after c. 1900 BCE). This phase represents a period of cultural transformation rather than sudden collapse, marked by regionalisation and decline of urban features.

Statement 2 is correct: Jhukar culture is primarily found in the Sindh region of present-day Pakistan. The most important site associated with this culture is Chanhu-daro which earlier flourished during the Mature Harappan phase and later shows Jhukar cultural remains.

Statement 3 is correct: Material remains of the Jhukar culture show a mixture of cultural elements. Along with Harappan traits, certain copper and bronze tools and weapons resemble types found in Iran and Central Asia. This suggests continued cultural and technological contacts with regions west of the Indus, even during the post-urban phase.

15. Answer : (a)

Explanation : Row 1 is Correct: Cholas had their capital at Uraiyur, an inland administrative centre. Puhar (Kaveripattinam) functioned as their major maritime port, crucial for overseas trade with the Roman world. Karikala Chola is the most celebrated Sangam-age Chola ruler who is associated with military expansion and public works like the Kallanai (Grand Anicut) on the Kaveri.

Row 2 is Incorrect: Pandyas had Madurai as their principal capital during the Sangam period, not Vanji. Korkai was the major port of the Pandyas which was famous for pearl fisheries.

Nedunchezhiyan was a prominent Pandya ruler who was mentioned in Sangam literature for military victories. Row 3 is Incorrect: Cheras had Vanji as their capital, not Kudanthai (Kumbakonam).

Musiri was the most important Chera port which found mention in Greco-Roman accounts (Periplus). Senguttuvan (Chenguttuvan) is a famous Chera ruler and he was associated with the cult of Kannagi (Pattini).

16. Answer : (a)

Explanation : Statement 1 is correct: Silappadikaram and Manimekalai mark a clear literary and ideological shift from the heroic and landscape-based Sangam poetry (akam–puram themes) to ethical, religious and philosophical narratives.

- Silappadikaram foregrounds moral justice over royal authority, showing how an unjust king can be morally defeated by an individual.
- Manimekalai, as a sequel, moves further toward religious renunciation and ethical universalism and signals the dominance of heterodox moral philosophies in post-Sangam society.
- Statement 2 is correct: Manimekalai, authored by Chithalai Chathanar, is an explicitly Buddhist epic. The text:
 - Criticises ritualism and sacrificial practices,
 - Questions state-centric justice and kingship,
 - Advocates Buddhist monastic life, compassion, non-violence and renunciation,
 - Emphasises rebirth, karma, and impermanence.
- Statement 3 is incorrect: Kundalakesi is indeed a Buddhist epic and centres on a female protagonist who renounces worldly life after spiritual realisation. Jivaka Chintamani, however, is a Jain epic, composed by Tirutakkatevar, and its protagonist Jivaka is male, not female.

17. Answer : (a)

Explanation : Statement 1 is correct: Mahendravarman I (c. 600–630 CE) faced intense conflict with the Chalukyas of Badami under Pulakeshin II. He was defeated at the Battle of Pullalur (near Kanchi), after which the Chalukyas annexed the northern part of the Pallava kingdom..

Statement 2 is correct: The Mandagappattu inscription is one of the earliest records of rock-cut temple architecture in South India. It praises Mahendravarman as Vichitrachitta and records the construction of a temple for Brahma, Vishnu and Siva without brick, timber, metal or mortar. This inscription signals a transition from structural temples to rock-cut architecture which laid the foundation for later Pallava achievements at Mahabalipuram.

Statement 3 is correct: Mahendravarman assumed multiple titles reflecting his artistic versatility:

- Chitrakarapuli '! mastery in painting
- Chettakari '! builder of temples
- Vichitrachitta '! creative genius
- Mattavilasa '! lover of refined arts

He was not just a patron but also a creator, composing the Sanskrit farce Mattavilasa Prahasana and initiating rock-cut cave temples at places like Mahendravadi, Mandagappattu, Tiruchirappalli, Pallavaram and Dalavanur.

Statement 4 is incorrect: Mahendravarman was initially a Jain, but later converted to Saivism under the influence of the Saiva saint Thirunavukkarasar (Appar). The music inscription at Kudumianmalai is also attributed to Mahendravarman which shows his expertise in music theory.

18. Answer : (a)

Explanation : Statement I is correct: Under Rajendra I (c. 1014–1044 CE), Chola navy reached unprecedented strength. Its dominance over maritime routes became so complete that the Bay of Bengal was described as a “Chola lake.” This phrase indicates naval supremacy, not territorial occupation.

Statement II is correct: The expedition against the Srivijaya Empire (covering Sumatra, Java, Malay Peninsula) was aimed at:

- Removing obstacles to Indian merchants
- Securing trade routes to China
- Asserting Chola commercial interests in Southeast Asia

The Sailendra rulers of Srivijaya, though Buddhists and earlier friendly, controlled key choke points in maritime trade. By neutralising Srivijaya's control, Rajendra ensured free navigation and commercial dominance, which directly led to Chola naval supremacy in the Bay of Bengal.

19. Answer : (a)

Explanation : Statement 1 is correct: Rajendra Chola I (1014–1044 CE) presided over the zenith of Chola imperial power. His northern campaign against the Pala ruler Mahipala culminated in the symbolic acquisition of Ganga water which asserted Chola supremacy over northern India. At the same time, his naval expeditions across the Indian Ocean against the Srivijaya Empire were aimed at securing maritime trade routes and protecting Indian merchants. This combination of symbolic imperialism and commercial–naval strategy makes his reign the most expansive in Chola history, both on land and sea.

Statement 2 is correct: Rajendra Chola II (1054–1063 CE) did not preside over a phase of territorial decline. On the contrary, his reign is noted for the successful maintenance of the vast empire inherited from his predecessors. He is particularly remembered for the Battle of Koppam and for preserving Chola authority without any recorded territorial loss.

20. Answer : (a)

Explanation : Statement 1 is correct: Allahabad Prashasti, composed by Harisena, praises Samudragupta and describes the Gupta Empire as a graded political system. It classifies rulers into exterminated enemies, tribute-paying kings, frontier rulers acknowledging suzerainty and distant allies seeking protection. This shows that Gupta power functioned through military dominance, diplomacy and indirect control, not uniform administration.

Statement 2 is correct: Vishti refers to forced labour demanded by the state or donees. Gupta inscriptions frequently mention Vishti along with land grants. This shows that taxation was not only in cash or produce but also in labour. Vishti became more common due to the rise of land grants to Brahmanas and officials. The donees often received rights over taxes and labour.

Statement 3 is incorrect: Mehrauli Iron Pillar inscription of Chandragupta II does not restrict his campaigns to western India. It records victories over a confederacy of enemies in Bengal and campaigns extending into the Punjab. Although his defeat of the Saka ruler Rudrasimha III was crucial, the inscription clearly indicates multi-directional military expansion.

Statement 4 is correct: After defeating the Western Kshatrapas, Chandragupta II annexed Saurashtra (Kathiawar). This region had access to the Arabian Sea and important ports like Bharuch. Control over Saurashtra strengthened Gupta participation in long-distance trade with West Asia and the Roman world.

21. Answer : (b)

Explanation : Shahbazgarhi which is located in the Mardan district of present-day Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (Pakistan) contains Major Rock Edicts of Emperor Ashoka dating to the 3rd century BCE. These inscriptions are unique because they are written in the Kharosthi script, unlike most Ashokan edicts which are in Brahmi. The use of Kharosthi reflects the influence of Persian administration following earlier Achaemenid control of the northwest.

22. Answer : (a)

Explanation : The Satavahanas or Andhras in the Puranas, ruled large parts of the Deccan from the 3rd century BCE to the 3rd century CE. A distinctive feature of Satavahana polity was the use of metronymics where rulers identified themselves using their mother's name. This is clearly visible in inscriptions and coin legends, most notably in the case of Gautamiputra Satakarni, whose name literally means "son of Gautami." This practice highlights the high social status and political importance of royal women in Satavahana society.

At the same time, the system of succession remained patrilineal. Kingship normally passed from father to son or through the male line, as reflected in genealogies found in inscriptions and Puranic accounts. The use of metronymics did not indicate matrilineal succession but rather served to legitimise rule by associating kings with prestigious or influential royal mothers. Thus, both statements are correct, and the reason accurately explains why metronymics coexisted with patrilineal succession.

23. Answer : (d)

Explanation : Gautamiputra Satakarni was not a Vakataka ruler. He belonged to the Satavahana dynasty, which ruled the Deccan before the Vakatakas. He was the greatest Satavahana ruler and is known for defeating the Sakas and issuing inscriptions describing himself as the destroyer of Kshatriyas.

The Vakataka dynasty (c. 250–500 CE) succeeded the Satavahanas in the Deccan and ruled for nearly two and a half centuries. They were contemporaries of the Guptas and maintained close political and cultural contacts with them. Vakataka kingdom extended from Malwa and Gujarat in the north to the Tungabhadra River in the south, and from the Arabian Sea in the west to Chhattisgarh in the east. The dynasty supported both Brahmanism and Buddhism, which is reflected in inscriptions and art, especially at Ajanta.

- Pravarasena I was one of the most powerful Vakataka rulers. He assumed the imperial title Samrat, expanded the empire into northern India and the Deccan and performed several Vedic rituals, indicating strong Brahmanical leanings. His reign marked the peak of Vakataka political power.
- Rudrasena I was an important ruler associated with the Nandivardhana branch of the Vakatakas. He was a devotee of Mahabhairava (a Shaiva form) and laid the foundations of this branch which later developed close relations with the Gupta dynasty.
- Sarvasena was a Vakataka ruler best known for his cultural contributions rather than military achievements. He was a renowned Prakrit poet and the author of Harivijaya. He assumed the title Dharma-Maharaja, reflecting a combination of political authority and moral kingship.

24. Answer : (a)

Explanation : ● The Dashpur (Mandasor) Inscription, also associated with Yashodharman, was discovered near Mandasaur in Madhya Pradesh and is written in Sanskrit. It provides rare socio-economic information by recording the migration of a silk-weavers' guild from Lata (Gujarat) to Dasapura (Mandasaur). The inscription states that the guild consisted of 500 families, many of whom remained engaged in silk weaving and collectively donated funds for the construction and maintenance of a Surya temple. Because it publicises the quality and continuity of silk production, it is often referred to as the world's earliest known commercial advertisement.

- The Supia Inscription, found in Supia village of Madhya Pradesh, belongs to the Gupta period and is dated to the reign of Skandagupta. It serves as an important epigraphic

source for understanding Gupta administration and territorial control during his reign, which was marked by military challenges and efforts to stabilise the empire after Hun incursions.

- The Eran Inscription, also located in Madhya Pradesh, is closely associated with the Gupta dynasty and provides clear epigraphic evidence of Gupta political authority in central India. Eran is particularly important because multiple inscriptions from this site help historians trace Gupta rulers, religious affiliations and administrative presence in the region.
- The Sohgaura Copper Plate Inscription, discovered at Sohgaura in present-day Uttar Pradesh, is written in Prakrit using the Brahmi script and dates to the Mauryan period. It records administrative measures for grain storage and distribution during famine, mentioning officials and storehouses. This makes it one of the earliest known inscriptions dealing with state welfare and disaster management in ancient India.

25. Answer : (d)

Explanation : The Navaratnas (Nine Gems) were a group of eminent scholars, poets, scientists, and ministers who adorned the court of Chandragupta II (Vikramaditya) during the Gupta period. They were - Kalidasa, Amarasimha, Kshapanaka, Varahamihira, Vararuchi, Dhanvantari, Shanku, Vetala Bhatta and Ghatakarpara.

- Kshapanaka was an ancient astronomer and astrologer and the author of Jyotishashastra and Dvatrishatika.
- Kalidasa was the greatest Sanskrit poet and dramatist of the Gupta age.
- Amarasimha was a renowned lexicographer and the author of Amarakosha.

Aryabhata, although a celebrated mathematician and astronomer of ancient India, was not one of the Navaratnas

26. Answer : (a)

Explanation : During the Gupta period, textile manufacture was one of the most important industries and a major source of wealth and foreign trade. Gujarat was famous for cotton, silk and brocade textiles and exported them through ports like Bharuch and Cambay to West Asia and the Roman world. Bengal was renowned for muslin, a fine cotton fabric, which was exported through Tamralipti to Southeast Asia, China and Rome. The Deccan produced dyed cotton textiles and traded them via ports such as Kalyan and Chaul.

27. Answer : (c)

Explanation : Although intelligence gathering occupies a central place in the Arthashastra, the king himself is not advised to routinely move incognito among the people as part of his daily schedule. Instead, Kautilya emphasises a highly organised spy system, including secret emissaries and informants, to collect information on public sentiment, officials and potential threats. Incognito movement is therefore institutionalised through spies, not personal royal practice.

28. Answer : (c)

Explanation : Hiuen Tsang (Xuanzang) is known as the “Prince of Pilgrims” because of his extensive and detailed travels across India in the 7th century CE during the reign of Harshavardhana. He visited major Buddhist centres such as Nalanda, Bodh Gaya, Sarnath, and Taxila and recorded valuable observations on Indian society, administration, religion, and education. His travel account, Si-Yu-Ki (Great Tang Records on the Western Regions), remains one of the most important sources for early medieval Indian history.

29. Answer : (c)

Explanation : In the administrative system of Harshavardhana, Banu functioned as the keeper of records. The office was responsible for maintaining official documents, registers and administrative records, which was essential for governance in a large empire.

- Avanti was the Minister for Foreign Relations and War, handling diplomacy and military affairs.
- Simhananda served as the Commander-in-Chief of the army.
- Sarvagata headed the secret service or intelligence department, gathering information across the empire.

30. Answer : (a)

Explanation : Statement 1 is correct: The first direct Mongol contact with India occurred during the reign of Iltutmish (1211–1236), when Chengiz Khan reached the banks of the Indus River while pursuing the Khwarezm prince Jalaluddin Mangburni. Iltutmish's refusal to grant asylum to the fugitive prince was a deliberate diplomatic move, aimed at avoiding Mongol wrath. This decision is widely regarded as having saved the Delhi Sultanate from a full-scale Mongol invasion at a time when it was still politically fragile.

Statement 2 is correct: Mongol pressure intensified during the reign of Ala-ud-din Khalji (1296–1316). One Mongol expedition advanced up to Delhi and besieged the city, marking the closest Mongol threat to the Sultanate's capital. These repeated incursions forced Ala-ud-din to adopt extraordinary military measures, including the maintenance of a large standing army, strict frontier defence, and harsh punitive action against captured Mongols. His policies reflect how Mongol invasions directly shaped Delhi Sultanate military organisation.

Statement 3 is incorrect: Although Muhammad bin Tughluq (1325–1351) faced several Mongol incursions, he did not permanently lose any territory to them. Unlike later invasions such as Timur's, Mongol attacks during his reign were repelled through military resistance and counter-measures. The idea of permanent Mongol occupation in north-western India during Muhammad bin Tughluq's rule is therefore historically incorrect.

Statement 4 is incorrect: Vasco da Gama reached the coast of Kerala in 1498, marking the beginning of direct European maritime contact with India. Deva Raya II of the Vijayanagara Empire ruled earlier (1424–1446) and was not a contemporary of Vasco da Gama. At the time of da Gama's arrival, Vijayanagara was ruled by later kings, making this statement a clear chronological mismatch, a common UPSC trap.

31. Answer : (a)

Explanation : Statement 1 is correct: Odantapuri, located in Bihar, was a major Buddhist mahavihara established under Pala ruler Gopala I in the 7th century CE. It functioned on lines similar to Nalanda and later became a model for Tibetan monasteries. Its destruction during the invasion of Bakhtiyâr Khalji in the 12th century symbolises the decline of institutional Buddhism in eastern India.

Statement 2 is correct: Vikramshila was founded by Dharmapala, another powerful Pala ruler, to reinvigorate Buddhist scholarship, particularly Vajrayana and Tantric Buddhism. It deliberately emerged as a counter-institution to Nalanda, with stricter discipline and specialised instruction. Subjects such as philosophy, logic, astronomy, and ritual studies were taught here.

Statement 3 is incorrect: Valabhi, situated in Saurashtra (Gujarat), was a prominent centre of Hinayana Buddhism, not Mahayana or Vajrayana. It was especially known for administration, law, and statecraft, and functioned almost like a training centre for bureaucrats. Associating Valabhi with Tantric Buddhism is therefore incorrect.

Statement 4 is correct: Takshashila existed from at least the 5th century BCE, well before the Gupta period. It was famous for teaching politics, military science, medicine, law, and philosophy. Chanakya (Kautilya) is traditionally associated with Takshashila, and its curriculum reflects an early, broad-based educational tradition rather than monastic instruction alone.

32. Answer : (d)

Explanation : Firuz Shah Tughlaq, who ruled from 1351 to 1388, set up a separate department known as the “Diwan-i-Bandagan” or “Department of Slaves.” Firuz Shah Tughlaq was known for his policy of employing slaves in various government and public service roles. He is said to have maintained a large number of slaves, reportedly up to 180,000, who were trained and employed in different capacities within his administration.

Let’s briefly review the other options:

- Option (a): The Ariz’s department, which was responsible for military affairs, existed before Alauddin Khilji’s reign. While Alauddin Khilji made significant reforms in the military and revenue systems, he did not set up this department.
- Option (b): The branding of horses (dagh) and the preparation of descriptive rolls of soldiers (chehra) were actually introduced by Alauddin Khilji, not Balban. This system was meant to prevent corruption in the military and ensure the proper maintenance of the army.
- Option (c): Muhammad bin Tughlaq was succeeded by his cousin, Firuz Shah Tughlaq, not his uncle, in 1351.

33. Answer : (c)

Explanation : Ibrahim Adil Shah II of Bijapur, who ruled from 1580 to 1627, was a highly cultured and tolerant ruler. He is known for his syncretic approach to religion and his efforts to bring together different religious communities. He was an admirer of Hindu deities, especially Saraswati, the goddess of learning and often invoked Hindu themes in his court and in his poetry. His deep respect for all religions and his efforts to integrate them into the cultural fabric of his kingdom led his subjects to honor him with the title Jagadguru (World Teacher), a title tradition ally reserved for Hindu spiritual leaders.

Let’s briefly review the other options:

- Option (a) is Incorrect: Hussain Shah was a ruler of the Bengal Sultanate during the 15th century. He was known for his patronage of Bengali literature and culture and his relatively tolerant attitude toward Hindu subjects.
- Option (b) is Incorrect: Zain-ul-Abidin was the Sultan of Kashmir and is remembered for his policy of religious tolerance and efforts to bridge the gap between Hindus and Muslims in his kingdom.
- Option (d) is Incorrect: Mahmud II was an Ottoman Sultan known for his administrative and military reforms, particularly in modernizing the Ottoman Empire.

34. Answer : (c)

Explanation : Firoz Shah Tughlaq did not abolish jizya; on the contrary, he imposed jizya as a separate tax on non-Muslims, even on Brahmins, which marked a departure from earlier practices. He also enforced other Islamic taxes such as kharaj, khams, and zakat.

Let’s briefly review the other options:

- Option (a) is correct: Firoz Shah Tughlaq established the Diwan-i-Khairat to provide charity, assistance to the poor and employment opportunities, often described as an early form of an employment bureau. He also created the Diwan-i-Bundagan to manage slaves, many of whom were trained and employed in royal workshops (karkhanas).

- Option (b) is correct: Firoz Shah Tughlaq is rightly known as the “Father of the Irrigation Department”. He constructed four major canals, imposed a water tax known as haq-i-sharb (or sharb) and encouraged agricultural expansion.
- Option (d) is correct: One of the most distinctive features of Firoz Shah Tughlaq’s administration was the extension of heredity to the army, nobility and iqta system. Offices, jagirs and positions became hereditary which reduced administrative efficiency but ensured loyalty and social stability.

35. Answer : (b)

Explanation : Domingo Paes, a Portuguese traveller, visited Vijayanagara during the reign of Krishnadeva Raya (1509–1529) and provided one of the most vivid contemporary descriptions of the empire. He wrote extensively about the capital city, its markets, irrigation facilities, military organisation, temple architecture and royal ceremonies. His account highlights the prosperity, order, and grandeur of Vijayanagara at its peak.

Abdur Razzaq and Nicolo de Conti visited during the reign of Deva Raya II, while Fernao Nuniz visited during Achyuta Deva Raya’s time.

36. Answer : (c)

Explanation : Under Akbar’s revenue reforms, especially within the Zabt system, agricultural land was classified according to how regularly it was cultivated.

- Polaj referred to land cultivated every year.
- Parauti was land left fallow once in two years.
- Chachar was cultivated once in three or four years.
- Banjar remained uncultivated for five years or more.

This classification enabled the Mughal state to assess land revenue more rationally by aligning taxation with agricultural productivity and cultivation patterns.

37. Answer : (a)

Explanation : Vijayanagara rulers consciously linked kingship with divine authority, portraying themselves not as absolute owners of land but as custodians ruling on behalf of a deity. This helped legitimise political power and strengthened loyalty among subjects in a deeply religious society.

Reason is true: Harihara I, the founder of Vijayanagara, believed that the territory south of the Krishna River belonged to Virupaksha (a form of Shiva). The king ruled as the deity’s representative, which is why Vijayanagara rulers were often described as the “servants of Virupaksha.”

Thus, the Reason correctly explains the Assertion.

38. Answer : (a)

Explanation : Krishnadevaraya was also a distinguished scholar and poet. He composed Amuktamalyada in Telugu, a celebrated work that reflects ideas on statecraft, kingship and governance. In addition, he authored Usha Parinayam and Jambavathi Kalyanam in Sanskrit which highlight his mastery over multiple languages and his patronage of literature.

39. Answer : (c)

Explanation : Pulaiyans were not landless agricultural labourers or slaves. They were artisans, particularly associated with rope-making and charpai (cot) production, indicating a skilled occupational group rather than an agrarian labouring class.

Let’s briefly review the other options:

- Arasar referred to the ruling class, including kings and chiefs, who exercised political and military authority in Sangam society.

- Uzhavar were ordinary cultivators or ploughmen who formed the backbone of agrarian production. They were distinct from Vellalars who were rich peasants and landholding elites.
- Enadi denoted military captains or army commanders.

40. Answer : (a)

Explanation : ● The Qutub Minar is the earliest structure among the four. Its construction began in 1193 CE under Qutb-ud-Din Aibak, the founder of the Delhi Sultanate, and was completed by Iltutmish in the early 13th century. It symbolised the establishment of Turkish rule in India and functioned as a victory tower and a minaret for the Quwwat-ul-Islam Mosque.

- Tughlaqabad Fort was constructed in 1321 CE by Ghiyas-ud-Din Tughlaq, marking the beginning of the Tughlaq dynasty. It represents a shift in Delhi Sultanate architecture toward massive fortification, with sloping walls, bastions and a deep moat designed to resist Mongol attacks.
- Firoz Shah Tughlaq died in 1388 CE. His reign is associated with administrative and welfare measures, construction of canals, founding of new towns like Firozabad and Hissar and repair of older monuments including the Qutub Minar.
- Fatehpur Sikri was established much later, in 1571 CE, by Akbar of the Mughal dynasty. It reflects Mughal architectural synthesis of Persian, Central Asian and Indian styles.

Thus, the correct chronological sequence is: Qutub Minar → Tughlaqabad Fort → Death of Firoz Shah Tughlaq → Fatehpur Sikri

41. Answer : (b)

Explanation : The description clearly refers to the Vijaya Vittala Temple at Hampi, the imperial capital of the Vijayanagara Empire. The temple is renowned for its musical pillars housed in the Ranga Mantapa where each pillar produces a distinct musical note when gently tapped.. Another unmistakable identifier is the stone chariot, carved entirely out of granite and dedicated to Garuda, the mount of Vishnu. The temple flourished mainly during the reign of Deva Raya II and later Tuluva rulers.

42. Answer : (b)

Explanation : iroz Shah Tughlaq is known for institutionalising welfare-oriented yet conservative governance. One of his distinctive administrative innovations was the creation of Diwan-i-Bandagan, a separate department for slaves, headed by the Wakil-i-dar. This department managed slaves employed in administration, karkhanas, military and public works.

- The dagh (branding) system was introduced earlier by Alauddin Khalji to prevent corruption in the army.
- Diwan-i-Mustakhraj, meant for recovering revenue arrears, was also an Alauddin Khalji innovation.
- Diwan-i-Arz, the military department, was established by Balban, not by Firoz Shah.

43. Answer : (b)

Explanation : Qutb-ud-din Aibak died in 1210 CE at Lahore after falling from his horse while playing Chaugan (polo)—a Persian aristocratic sport, not during a military campaign . His death was accidental and occurred during leisure, not warfare.

Let's have a look at the other options:

- **Option (a) is correct:** Muhammad bin Tughlaq was succeeded not by a direct heir but by his cousin Firoz Shah Tughlaq which highlights the absence of a fixed law of succession in the Delhi Sultanate. Firoz Shah reversed many of Muhammad bin Tughlaq's radical experiments and focused on administrative consolidation. He created the Diwan-i-Bandagan, a separate department to train slaves as artisans, soldiers and administrators.

- **Option (c) is correct:** Nasir-ud-din Mahmud Shah is treated as the last ruler of the Tughlaq dynasty, though he ruled in name only. Real power had already disintegrated following Timur's invasion in 1398. After his death, the Tughlaq line ended, paving the way for the Sayyid dynasty, whose rulers claimed legitimacy as Timur's deputies.
- **Option (d) is correct:** Zia-ud-Din Barani, argued that Delhi Sultans compromised Islamic governance by framing Zawabit—state laws based on administrative necessity rather than Sharia. In works like Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi, Barani repeatedly criticised rulers for prioritising political expediency over religious law.

44. Answer : (b)

Explanation : Kayalpattinam (Kayal) which is located in present-day Thoothukudi district, Tamil Nadu, was the principal port of the Pandyan kingdom. Arab, Persian and Chinese traders frequented this port and it acted as a major outlet for pearls, textiles and spices. It was also known for the large-scale import of horses, mainly from West Asia. Contemporary accounts suggest that nearly 10,000 horses were imported annually through ports like Kayal. This reflects the India's dependence on foreign horse supply due to unsuitable local breeding conditions. Pandyan monetary circulation was dominated by gold coins—kasu, palankasu, kalancu, kanam and pon—rather than silver, which further facilitated long-distance maritime trade where gold was preferred.

45. Answer : (a)

Explanation : Statement 1 is correct: Mihir Bhoja (c. 836–885 CE) was the most powerful Pratihara ruler. Though initially defeated by the Palas and Rashtrakutas, he later recovered with the support of feudatories like the Chedis and Guhilas. His adoption of the title Adivaraha reflects his Vaishnava orientation and the ideological projection of kingship through divine symbolism.

Statement 2 is incorrect: Karpuramanjari and Kavya Mimansa were authored by Rajashekhar, who adorned the court of Pratihara ruler Mahendrapala, not the ruler himself.

Statement 3 is correct: Rashtrakutas are noted for remarkable religious tolerance. Jainism enjoyed exceptional patronage under Amoghavarsha I who appointed the Jain monk Gunabhadra as tutor to the heir-apparent. Numerous Jain monasteries received royal grants which allowed Jainism to remain a strong rival to Brahmanical traditions in the Deccan.

Statement 4 is incorrect: The Kailashnatha (Kailasa) temple at Ellora was constructed during the reign of Krishna I, not Amoghavarsha I. Amoghavarsha is remembered more for literary patronage and pacifist inclinations than monumental temple construction.

46. Answer : (c)

Explanation : Statement 1 is correct: Cholas developed one of the most scientific land revenue systems in early medieval India. Extensive land surveys were conducted during the reigns of Rajaraja (1001 CE), Kulotunga I (1086 CE) and Kulotunga III (1226 CE). Land was classified according to fertility and nature of cultivation and revenue demand was fixed accordingly. Taxes such as irai, kanikadan, kadamai and kudimai formed the core of the revenue system. Temples and Brahmadeya lands usually enjoyed tax exemptions.

Statement 2 is incorrect: The Chola revenue system was not purely cash-based. Taxes were collected both in cash and in kind. For example, iraikattina-nellu was a tax paid in kind (usually grain).

Statement 3 is incorrect: The Uttaramerur inscriptions (919–920 CE), issued during the reign of Parantaka Chola I, provide detailed information about village committees and their functions—such as tank committees, garden committees, famine committees and gold committees. However, members were selected through the kudavolai system (lottery method), not through elections based on universal adult suffrage.

47. Answer : (c)

Explanation : After his victory over Prithviraj Chauhan in the Second Battle of Tarain (1192 CE), Muhammad Ghori minted coins that carried the image of Goddess Lakshmi on the obverse while the reverse depicted a horseman with the legend “Muhammad bin Sam.” This was a deliberate political strategy to legitimize his rule among the local population by continuing familiar symbols from earlier Hindu coinage traditions, rather than an assertion of religious dominance.

48. Answer : (a)

Explanation : Statement 1 is correct: Both Ramanujacharya and Vallabhacharya placed bhakti at the centre of salvation, but their philosophies differed sharply. Ramanuja’s Vishishtadvaita accepted difference within non-duality, whereas Vallabhacharya’s Shuddhadvaita (Pushti Marg) asserted complete non-duality with grace (pushti) as the means to liberation.

Statement 2 is correct: Kabir (15th century) drew inspiration from nirguna Bhakti, Ramananda’s tradition and Sufi ideas of unity and love. However, Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi (Naqshbandi order) belonged to an orthodox phase of Islamic reform and had not a contemporary or had any influence on Kabir.

Statement 3 is incorrect: The Siddhas (Sittars) of the Tamil region were monotheistic and strongly critical of idol worship and ritualism. They emphasized internal realization and mystical perfection rather than temple-based worship which distinguished them from mainstream Shaiva bhakti.

Statement 4 is correct: The practice of Sama (devotional music) was a defining feature of the Chishti Sufi order, especially under figures like Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti and Nizamuddin Auliya. Music, poetry and collective listening were used to induce spiritual ecstasy and closeness to God.

49. Answer : (b)

Explanation : Hiran Minar was built by Akbar at Fatehpur Sikri to commemorate the birth of his son Prince Salim, who later ascended the throne as Emperor Jahangir. The monument consists of a tall stone tower surmounted by a stone elephant which symbolizes royal celebration and remembrance. This monument should not be confused with the Buland Darwaza, which Akbar constructed to commemorate his victory over Gujarat.

50. Answer : (a)

Explanation : The Mansabdari system, introduced by Akbar, was a rank-based administrative framework that applied to both civil and military officials.

Assertion (A) is true: While the term mansabdar is often associated with military commanders, many high-ranking mansabdars performed purely civil functions. For example, the Diwan, the chief financial officer of the Mughal Empire, held a very high mansab but had no battlefield responsibilities.

Reason (R) is true: In the Mughal system, civil mansabs were fixed according to administrative importance and fiscal responsibility, not military command.

- The Mir Bakhshi was the highest military officer, responsible for army organization, recruitment, and maintaining records of mansabdars.
- Faujdars were middle-ranking officers responsible for law, order, and defense in provinces. Thus, military command and civil administration were functionally separated, even though both categories were integrated into the same mansab hierarchy.

Since mansab rank was not exclusively linked to military duties, civil officers could hold high mansabs based on administrative significance alone. This directly explains why all mansabdars were not military officers. Thus, Reason explains Assertion.