

UPSC/IAS



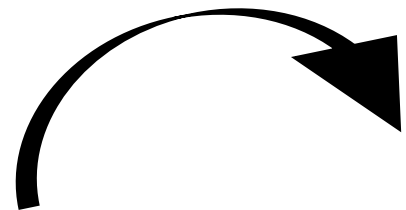
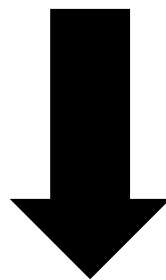
Institute for Civil Services Examination Since 2018

Prelims Test – JMN27_002

Prelims Mock

ANSWER'S EXPLANATION/s

GS Sectional Test: JMN27_002



Ancient India (II) + Current Affairs: (Feb 2026)

- o Indo Greek Invasion o Indo-Greeks o Parthians o Shaka o Kushanas o Indo-Sassanian • Sungas • Kanvas
- Satavahanas • Guptas Age • Sangam Age • Regional Kingdoms • Post Guptas Age • Harshavardhana
- Pallava • Chalukya

1. Answer: (b) 1, 2 and 4 only

The question tests knowledge of the political expansion of the Indo-Greeks, their interaction with Indian religious traditions, and their contributions to Indian numismatics. It also examines whether the candidate can distinguish between historical succession and historical causation.

Statement 1 is correct. The Indo-Greek rulers established their authority in north-western India following the decline of Mauryan power. Beginning with the expansion of the Greco-Bactrian rulers, they controlled parts of present-day Afghanistan, Pakistan, and north-western India, emerging as one of the major post-Mauryan political powers.

Statement 2 is correct. Menander (Milinda) was among the most prominent Indo-Greek rulers. The Buddhist text Milinda Panha records a series of philosophical dialogues between Menander and the Buddhist monk Nagasena. The text is an important source for understanding the interaction between Hellenistic and Indian intellectual traditions.

Statement 3 is incorrect. The Kushana Empire was established by the Yuezhi, a Central Asian tribal confederation that migrated into Bactria and subsequently into north-western India. Although the Kushanas succeeded the Indo-Greeks in several regions, their rise was not a direct consequence of Indo-Greek invasions.

Statement 4 is correct. Indo-Greek coinage marked a significant development in Indian numismatics. Their coins are distinguished by realistic portraiture, refined artistic execution, and bilingual inscriptions in Greek and Kharosthi/Prakrit. These innovations influenced several later coinage traditions in the Indian subcontinent.

(Dhyani IAS Special Feature – Think Like an Examiner)

The examiner deliberately introduces Statement 3 to test whether candidates confuse historical succession with historical causation. In Ancient Indian History, UPSC frequently places two events in chronological sequence and tempts candidates to infer a direct causal relationship between them. While the Indo-Greeks preceded the Kushanas in north-western India, the emergence of the Kushana Empire was a result of the migration and expansion of the Yuezhi tribes from Central Asia, not Indo-Greek invasions.

From K. Sushant Sir:

"A happened before B" does not automatically mean "A caused B." In UPSC, chronology may establish sequence, but only evidence establishes causation.

2. Answer: (c) 1, 2 and 3 only

The question tests knowledge of the historical background of the Indo-Greek Kingdom and the nature of political, diplomatic, and cultural interactions between India and the Hellenistic world. It also examines whether the candidate can distinguish between long-term historical developments and immediate political events.

Statement 1 is correct. The establishment of the Indo-Greek Kingdom was not an isolated event. It was preceded by centuries of interaction between the Indian subcontinent and the Greek world, including the campaigns of Alexander, diplomatic contacts between the Mauryas and the Seleucids, and exchanges of ideas, trade, and culture between India and the Hellenistic kingdoms.

Statement 2 is correct. Following a conflict between Chandragupta Maurya and Seleucus I Nicator, a treaty was concluded around 305 BCE. Under this agreement, Seleucus ceded territories in the north-western region to Chandragupta Maurya and received 500 war elephants. The treaty also strengthened diplomatic relations between the two powers.

Statement 3 is correct. Ashoka's Major Rock Edicts mention several contemporary Hellenistic rulers, including Antiochus. The inscriptions indicate that Ashoka's policy of Dhamma extended beyond India and that emissaries were sent to Hellenistic kingdoms, reflecting early cultural and religious contacts between India and the Mediterranean world.

Statement 4 is incorrect. The Indo-Greek Kingdom was not established immediately after Alexander's death. After Alexander's death in 323 BCE, his empire fragmented among his successors. The Indo-Greek Kingdom emerged much later, around the early second century BCE, when the Greco-Bactrian rulers expanded into north-western India. Therefore, it was not a direct continuation of Alexander's Indian satrapies.

(Dhyani IAS Special Feature – Think Like an Examiner)

The examiner deliberately introduces Statement 4 to test whether candidates confuse historical influence with institutional continuity. Alexander's invasion undoubtedly opened channels of contact between India and the Hellenistic world, but the Indo-Greek Kingdom did not arise as a direct continuation of his administration. Nearly a century separated Alexander's death and the emergence of Indo-Greek rule in India.

From K. Sushant Sir:

"A historical connection does not automatically imply historical continuity. In UPSC, influence may travel across generations, but institutions must be traced through evidence, not assumptions."

3. Answer: (d) 2, 3 and 4 only

The question tests knowledge of the origin, territorial expansion, and political extent of the Indo-Greek Kingdom. It also examines whether the candidate can distinguish between temporary military incursions and permanent political control.

Statement 1 is incorrect. Although Indo-Greek rulers are believed to have launched expeditions into the Gangetic region and may have advanced towards Pataliputra, there is no evidence that they permanently established their authority over the Gangetic plains. Their political control remained largely confined to north-western India and adjoining regions.

Statement 2 is correct. The Indo-Greek Kingdom emerged from the expansion of the Greco-Bactrian rulers, who crossed the Hindu Kush and extended their authority into north-western India during the second century BCE. This expansion laid the foundation of Indo-Greek political power in the Indian subcontinent.

Statement 3 is correct. Menander (Milinda) is generally regarded as the most successful Indo-Greek ruler. Literary, numismatic, and historical evidence suggests that his kingdom attained its greatest territorial extent under his rule, making him the most prominent figure among the Indo-Greek kings.

Statement 4 is correct. Numismatic evidence indicates that Indo-Greek political authority survived in parts of north-western India until the first century CE. Although their power gradually declined due to the rise of the Indo-Scythians and other groups, some Indo-Greek rulers continued to govern limited territories for several decades.

(Dhyani IAS Special Feature – Think Like an Examiner)

The examiner deliberately introduces Statement 1 to test whether candidates confuse military penetration with sustained political control. In Ancient Indian History, UPSC frequently frames statements that convert a temporary invasion, raid, or campaign into permanent territorial authority. Advancing into a region and governing it effectively are two very different historical phenomena. The Indo-Greeks may have reached or threatened parts of the Gangetic plains, but available evidence does not support the conclusion that they permanently ruled the region up to Pataliputra.

From K. Sushant Sir:

"A victorious march is not the same as a stable empire. In UPSC, evidence of conquest must be distinguished from evidence of administration."

4. Answer: (a) 1 and 2 only

The question tests knowledge of the cultural policies of the Indo-Greek rulers and the significance of their coinage as a source of historical evidence. It also examines whether the candidate can distinguish between historical evidence and speculative historical interpretations.

Statement 1 is correct. Most Indo-Greek coins carried Greek legends on one side and Prakrit legends written in the Kharoshthi script on the other. This bilingual format was a distinctive feature of Indo-Greek coinage and reflects the interaction between Hellenistic and Indian traditions.

Statement 2 is correct. The bilingual nature of Indo-Greek coinage indicates a significant degree of cultural accommodation towards local populations. By employing both Greek and local languages and scripts, the Indo-Greek rulers made their authority intelligible to diverse communities within their kingdom and facilitated political legitimacy among their subjects.

Statement 3 is incorrect. Some historians have suggested that Indo-Greek incursions may have been viewed favourably by certain Buddhist groups during periods of political change, but there is no consensus that the primary objective of the Indo-Greek invasions was the protection of Buddhism from alleged Sunga persecution. The invasions were primarily driven by political, strategic, and economic considerations. Moreover, the extent of any systematic persecution of Buddhism by the Sungas remains a matter of historical debate.

(Dhyani IAS Special Feature – Think Like an Examiner)

The examiner deliberately introduces Statement 3 to test whether candidates confuse historical hypotheses with established historical facts. UPSC frequently frames statements based on interpretations advanced by some historians and presents them as universally accepted conclusions. Candidates must distinguish between what is firmly supported by evidence and what remains debated within historiography.

In this case, bilingual coinage is supported by abundant numismatic evidence, whereas the claim that the Indo-Greek invasions were primarily intended to protect Buddhism is an interpretative proposition that lacks universal scholarly acceptance.

From K. Sushant Sir:

"Evidence creates history; interpretation explains it. In UPSC, never treat a debated theory as an established fact."

5. Answer: (b) 2 and 3 only

The question tests knowledge of the religious policies and cultural interactions of the Indo-Greek rulers in India. It also examines whether the candidate can distinguish between religious identity and religious engagement in a multicultural political setting.

Statement 1 is incorrect. Indo-Greek coinage did not depict only Greek deities. While many coins featured Greek gods and goddesses such as Zeus, Athena, and Apollo, evidence also points to interactions with local religious traditions. The Indo-Greeks ruled over culturally diverse populations and their religious symbolism cannot be viewed as exclusively Greek in character.

Statement 2 is correct. Menander I (Milinda) occupies a prominent place in Buddhist tradition. The Buddhist text *Milinda Panha* presents him as a ruler engaged in philosophical discussions with the monk Nagasena. Although historians debate the extent of his personal conversion, Buddhist sources clearly associate him with and portray him as supportive of Buddhism.

Statement 3 is correct. Historical and numismatic evidence suggests that the Indo-Greeks interacted with multiple religious' traditions, including Buddhism, Hindu traditions, and Zoroastrian influences inherited from regions such as Bactria and Iran. Their rule reflects a pattern of cultural adaptation rather than exclusive adherence to a single religious tradition.

(Dhyani IAS Special Feature – Think Like an Examiner)

The examiner deliberately introduces Statement 1 to test whether candidates equate a ruler's cultural origin with the entirety of his religious and cultural policies. UPSC frequently frames statements that assume foreign-origin rulers remained culturally isolated from the societies they governed. In reality, successful rulers often adapted to local traditions to strengthen legitimacy and facilitate governance.

The Indo-Greeks were Greek in origin, but their rule in India was characterized by interaction, accommodation, and cultural exchange with multiple religious communities.

From K. Sushant Sir:

"A ruler's origin explains where he came from; it does not necessarily explain how he ruled. In UPSC, distinguish identity from policy."

6. Answer: (a) 1 only

The question tests knowledge of the artistic legacy of the Indo-Greeks and the evidentiary basis for linking them with later artistic developments in north-western India. It also examines whether the candidate can distinguish between plausible cultural influence and historically established chronology.

Statement 1 is correct. Indo-Greek coinage is widely regarded as one of the finest artistic achievements of the ancient world. The coins display realistic portraiture, refined craftsmanship, and sophisticated iconography. In contrast, very little sculptural material can be definitively attributed to the Indo-Greeks themselves. As a result, numismatic evidence remains the principal source for assessing their artistic accomplishments.

Statement 2 is incorrect. Although scholars have often explored possible links between the Indo-Greeks and the later development of Greco-Buddhist art, the statement is flawed because it rests on an incorrect chronological premise. Indo-Greek political authority largely disappeared by the first century CE. Therefore, the claim that a connection is strengthened by evidence that Indo-Greek rule persisted into the early centuries of the Common Era is not supported by historical evidence. Any influence of the Indo-Greeks on later artistic traditions must be inferred from cultural interaction and transmission, not from prolonged political rule into the early centuries CE.

(Dhyani IAS Special Feature – Think Like an Examiner)

The examiner deliberately frames Statement 2 to test whether candidates accept a conclusion merely because it appears logically attractive. UPSC often inserts a correct historical possibility but supports it with an incorrect reason or premise. Candidates must evaluate not only the conclusion but also the factual foundation on which it rests.

It is reasonable to discuss Indo-Greek influence on the emergence of Greco-Buddhist artistic traditions. However, that influence cannot be justified by claiming that Indo-Greek political rule continued into the early centuries of the Common Era.

From K. Sushant Sir:

"A correct conclusion supported by a wrong fact becomes an incorrect statement. In UPSC, verify both the claim and the reason behind it."

7. Answer: (c) Only one

The question tests knowledge of the sources for reconstructing Indo-Greek history and the limitations of historical evidence. It also examines whether the candidate can distinguish between well-established historical facts and areas that remain subjects of scholarly debate.

Statement 1 is correct. The majority of known Indo-Greek rulers are identified primarily through numismatic evidence. Coins provide crucial information regarding royal names, titles, portraits, territorial distribution, and political authority. Since literary references to many Indo-Greek rulers are scarce, numismatic evidence forms the backbone of Indo-Greek historical reconstruction.

Statement 2 is incorrect. The *Milinda Panha* is primarily a philosophical and religious text that records dialogues between Menander (Milinda) and the Buddhist monk Nagasena. Its significance lies in understanding intellectual and religious interactions rather than military organization or warfare practices. It does not serve as a major source for reconstructing Indo-Greek military history.

Statement 3 is incorrect. The chronology and succession of Indo-Greek rulers remain subjects of scholarly debate. The fragmentary nature of literary sources and the heavy reliance on numismatic evidence have led historians to propose differing reconstructions of royal lineages, territorial divisions, and dates of reign. Therefore, the sequence of Indo-Greek rulers is not conclusively settled.

(Dhyan IAS Special Feature – Think Like an Examiner)

The examiner deliberately introduces Statement 3 to test whether candidates assume that every historical chronology is fully settled. UPSC frequently frames statements using absolute expressions such as "conclusively established," "completely known," "unanimously accepted," or "no longer debated." In Ancient Indian History, where evidence is often fragmentary, such absolute claims are usually suspect.

The history of the Indo-Greeks has been reconstructed largely through coins, inscriptions, and limited literary references. Consequently, several aspects of their chronology and succession continue to be debated among historians.

From K. Sushant Sir:

"Whenever UPSC says 'conclusively', 'always', 'only', or 'no debate remains', pause and verify. History is often reconstructed from evidence, not certainty."

8. Answer: (d) A-2, B-4, C-1, D-3

The question tests knowledge of the economic and commercial dimensions of the Indo-Greek world, including trade networks, monetary systems, and cross-cultural interactions. It also examines the ability to connect historical personalities, places, and institutions with their broader economic significance.

A. Zhang Qian → 2. Indirect testimony regarding trade links between Bactria, India and China.

Zhang Qian was a Chinese envoy of the Han Empire whose accounts provide valuable indirect evidence regarding commercial and cultural exchanges linking Central Asia, Bactria, India, and China. His observations helped reveal the interconnected nature of Eurasian trade networks.

B. Bilingual coinage → 4. Circulation of currency in both Greek and Indian monetary traditions.

The bilingual nature of Indo-Greek coinage, featuring Greek and Kharoshthi legends, reflects the coexistence of Greek and Indian monetary traditions and facilitated economic transactions among diverse populations.

C. Muziris → 1. Evidence of maritime trade through the western coast of India.

Muziris was a major port on the western coast of India and played a significant role in long-distance maritime commerce connecting India with the Mediterranean world and other trading regions.

D. Satavahanas → 3. Adoption of Indo-Greek monetary conventions by neighbouring kingdoms.

Several neighbouring kingdoms, including the Satavahanas, adopted and adapted aspects of Indo-Greek coinage traditions, demonstrating the wider influence of Indo-Greek monetary practices.

(Dhyan IAS Special Feature – Think Like an Examiner)

The examiner tests whether candidates can distinguish between direct economic evidence (coins, ports, trade centres) and indirect evidence (travel accounts and diplomatic reports). UPSC frequently mixes personalities, places, and institutions from different contexts

to assess conceptual clarity.

From K. Sushant Sir:

"Trade leaves many footprints—coins, ports, travellers, and texts. In UPSC, identify what each source actually tells us."

9. Answer: (c) Only three

The question tests knowledge of the political, cultural, and religious characteristics of the Indo-Greek Kingdom. It also examines whether the candidate can distinguish between evidence of military penetration and evidence of sustained political control.

Statement 1 is correct. The political history of the Indo-Greeks is reconstructed primarily through numismatic evidence. Coins provide information about rulers, titles, chronology, and territorial distribution, often compensating for the scarcity of literary sources.

Statement 2 is correct. The bilingual nature of Indo-Greek coinage demonstrates interaction with local linguistic and cultural traditions. The use of Greek and Kharoshthi inscriptions reflects adaptation to a multicultural environment.

Statement 3 is incorrect. Although Indo-Greek rulers may have advanced into parts of the Gangetic plain, there is no convincing evidence of long-term political control over Pataliputra. Temporary military campaigns should not be confused with stable administration.

Statement 4 is correct. Historical and numismatic evidence indicates interaction with multiple religious traditions, including Buddhism, Hindu traditions, and Zoroastrian influences.

(Dhyani IAS Special Feature – Think Like an Examiner)

The examiner deliberately inserts Statement 3 to test whether candidates equate territorial reach with political control. UPSC frequently converts evidence of invasion, campaign, or influence into claims of permanent administration.

The Indo-Greeks may have reached parts of the Gangetic region, but evidence for enduring rule over Pataliputra is lacking.

From K. Sushant Sir:

"An army can enter a region in weeks; building an administration takes years. In UPSC, conquest and governance are not synonymous."

10. Answer: (a) 1, 2 and 3 only

The question tests knowledge of the origin of the Indo-Greek Kingdom and the historical links between India and the Hellenistic world. It also examines whether the candidate can distinguish between political continuity and political succession.

Statement 1 is correct. The emergence of the Indo-Greek Kingdom was preceded by diplomatic and territorial contacts between India and the Hellenistic world. These included Alexander's campaigns, the Seleucid-Mauryan treaty, and subsequent exchanges between the two regions.

Statement 2 is correct. Ashokan inscriptions mention contemporary Hellenistic rulers and provide evidence of interactions between the Mauryan Empire and the Greek world. They illustrate the wider geographical reach of Ashoka's diplomatic and religious initiatives.

Statement 3 is correct. The Indo-Greek Kingdom emerged from the expansion of the Greco-Bactrian rulers and effectively represented a political offshoot of the Greco-Bactrian Kingdom in north-western India.

Statement 4 is incorrect. The Indo-Greeks were not the first foreign power to establish political control in north-western India after Alexander's withdrawal. The region experienced rule by Alexander's successors and later by the Seleucids before the rise of the Indo-Greeks.

(Dhyani IAS Special Feature – Think Like an Examiner)

The examiner deliberately introduces Statement 4 to test whether candidates oversimplify historical transitions. UPSC often presents a well-known political power as the "first" or "only" actor while ignoring intermediate developments.

Between Alexander and the Indo-Greeks, the north-western region witnessed the influence and authority of the Seleucids and other Hellenistic successors. Therefore, the Indo-Greeks cannot be described as the first foreign power in the region after Alexander.

From K. Sushant Sir:

"History rarely moves in straight lines. Whenever UPSC says 'first', 'only', or 'immediately after', look for the missing link in the chain."

11. Answer: (a) 1 and 2 only

The question tests understanding of the administrative and cultural foundations of the Parthian Empire. It also examines whether the candidate can distinguish between political accommodation and political centralization.

Statement 1 is correct. The Parthian Empire governed a vast and culturally diverse territory extending across West and Central Asia. Literacy and multilingualism among Parthian elites would have facilitated diplomacy, administration, and communication across regions inhabited by different linguistic and cultural communities.

Statement 2 is correct. One of the factors behind the longevity of the Parthian Empire was its relatively flexible approach towards local traditions. Rather than imposing complete cultural uniformity, the Parthians generally allowed different peoples to retain their customs, institutions, and religious practices, thereby reducing resistance and promoting stability.

Statement 3 is incorrect. Collaboration with local traditions does not necessarily imply greater political centralization. In fact, such arrangements are often associated with decentralized or federated political structures where local elites retain significant autonomy. Political centralization and cultural uniformity are not synonymous.

(Dhyani IAS Special Feature – Think Like an Examiner)

The examiner deliberately introduces Statement 3 to test whether candidates confuse cultural uniformity with political strength. UPSC often frames statements suggesting that centralized states must impose uniform practices, whereas many durable empires survived precisely because they accommodated local diversity.

The Parthian Empire maintained authority through a combination of royal power, aristocratic influence, and local autonomy rather than rigid centralization.

From K. Sushant Sir:

"A strong empire is not always a centralized empire. In UPSC, accommodation can be as important as control."

12. Answer: (b) Long-distance trade acted as a catalyst for urban growth, occupational diversification, and cultural interaction.

The question tests the ability to draw broader socio-economic inferences from historical evidence. It examines the relationship between trade, urbanization, cultural exchange, and economic specialization within the Parthian Empire.

Statement 1 highlights the interaction between religious traditions and cultural exchange. The prominence of Mithra reflects the blending and interaction of Iranian, Hellenistic, and regional traditions across the Parthian realm.

Statement 2 indicates the economic significance of the Silk Routes. Control over major trade corridors facilitated commercial prosperity, strengthened merchant networks, and encouraged the growth of urban centres.

Statement 3 demonstrates the economic consequences of expanding trade. Rising demand for luxury goods, construction, and elite consumption stimulated specialized occupations such as artisanship, craftsmanship, architecture, and long-distance commerce.

Taken together, these statements point towards an economy characterized by expanding trade networks, urban growth, occupational diversification, and cultural interaction. Therefore, Option (b) is the most appropriate inference.

(Dhyani IAS Special Feature – Think Like an Examiner)

The examiner is testing whether candidates can move beyond individual facts and identify the larger historical process connecting them. UPSC frequently asks inference-based questions where no single statement directly contains the answer.

Trade routes do more than move goods—they connect cities, cultures, professions, technologies, and ideas.

From K. Sushant Sir:

"When several statements point toward trade, urbanization, and specialization, look for the larger economic transformation rather than an isolated fact."

13. Answer: (a) A–2, B–3, C–1, D–4

The question tests knowledge of Parthian political institutions, aristocratic power, and diplomatic relations with Rome. It also examines the role of influential individuals and noble families in Parthian governance.

A. Surena → 2. Powerful noble and victor at the Battle of Carrhae.

Surena was one of the most powerful Parthian nobles and is best known for defeating the Roman forces of Crassus at the Battle of Carrhae (53 BCE), one of the greatest military victories in Parthian history.

B. Phraates III → 3. Parthian ruler killed by his sons after diplomatic setbacks.

Phraates III became involved in regional diplomacy during the Roman civil conflicts and was eventually murdered by his sons, reflecting the succession struggles that often characterized Parthian politics.

C. Pompey → 1. Refused to address the Parthian ruler as "King of Kings".

The Roman leader Pompey maintained a cautious diplomatic relationship with Parthia and reportedly declined to recognize the Parthian ruler with the title "King of Kings," reflecting Roman reluctance to acknowledge imperial equality.

D. Parthian Nobility → 4. Could influence succession and intervene against misrule.

The Parthian aristocracy possessed considerable political influence. Powerful noble families often played decisive roles in royal succession and could challenge rulers perceived as ineffective or tyrannical.

(Dhyani IAS Special Feature – Think Like an Examiner)

The examiner is testing whether candidates understand that Parthian political authority was not concentrated solely in the monarch. UPSC frequently highlights empires where aristocratic elites exercised substantial influence alongside royal authority. The Parthian state functioned through a balance between kingship and aristocratic power, making noble families central actors in governance and succession.

From K. Sushant Sir:

"In many empires, the throne was powerful—but those who decided who sat on the throne could be even more powerful."

14. Answer: (b) 1 and 2 only

The question tests understanding of the political geography, legitimacy, and administrative character of the Indo-Parthian kingdom. It also examines whether the candidate can distinguish between cultural association and direct political subordination.

Statement I is correct. Gondophares founded the Indo-Parthian kingdom and established authority over territories extending from eastern Iran into north-western India. This created a political formation that linked regions of Central Asia and the Indian subcontinent. Statement II is correct. The association of capitals such as Taxila, Kabul, and Peshawar with Indo-Parthian rule suggests a strategic orientation towards major commercial and communication corridors. These centres occupied key positions along routes connecting Central Asia, Iran, and India.

Statement III is incorrect. Although Gondophares belonged to the broader Parthian cultural sphere, there is no evidence that the Indo-Parthian kingdom functioned as a directly administered province of the Parthian Empire. The Indo-Parthians exercised substantial political autonomy and developed into an independent regional power.

Inference 1 is correct because Statement I clearly indicates the emergence of a political entity connecting Central Asia and the Indian subcontinent.

Inference 2 is correct because Statement II highlights the strategic and commercial importance of political centres.

Inference 3 is incorrect because it is derived from the incorrect assumption contained in Statement III.

(Dhyani IAS Special Feature – Think Like an Examiner)

The examiner deliberately introduces Statement III to test whether candidates confuse cultural affiliation with political control. UPSC frequently presents a ruler or dynasty as belonging to a larger cultural sphere and then expects candidates to wrongly infer direct administrative dependence.

Being Parthian in origin does not automatically mean being governed by the Parthian Empire.

From K. Sushant Sir:

"Shared identity does not prove shared sovereignty. In UPSC, cultural connection and political control are two different concepts."

15. Answer: (c) Statement 1 is correct, but Statement 2 is not correct.

The question tests knowledge of Indo-Parthian religious affiliations and the evidentiary limits of archaeological interpretation. It also examines whether the candidate can distinguish between reasonable historical inference and conclusive historical proof.

Statement 1 is correct. Indo-Parthian coinage largely reflects Iranian religious traditions, and there is no clear evidence of sustained royal patronage of Buddhism comparable to that associated with some later rulers. Therefore, historians generally consider it more likely that Indo-Parthian rulers retained Iranian religious affiliations while ruling over a culturally diverse population.

Statement 2 is incorrect. The discovery of Gandharan Buddhist sculptures at Sirkap demonstrates the presence and development of Buddhist artistic traditions in the region. However, it does not conclusively prove that Greco-Buddhist art originated under Indo-Parthian patronage. Artistic traditions evolve through long-term cultural interactions involving multiple political powers, including the Indo-Greeks, Indo-Parthians, and Kushans.

(Dhyani IAS Special Feature – Think Like an Examiner)

The examiner deliberately uses the word "conclusively" in Statement 2. UPSC often inserts absolute expressions such as "conclusively proves," "definitely establishes," or "beyond doubt" in situations where evidence permits only a probable interpretation. Archaeological evidence can support a theory, but it does not always establish exclusive authorship or origin.

From K. Sushant Sir:

"When UPSC says 'conclusively proves,' ask whether the evidence proves the claim—or merely supports it."

16. Answer: (c) 3 only

The question tests understanding of political legitimacy, succession, and imperial decline in the Indo-Parthian kingdom. It also examines whether candidates can distinguish between absorption by an external power and successful integration of that power.

Statement I is correct. The repeated adoption of the title "Gondophares" by later rulers suggests that the founder's prestige continued to serve as a source of political legitimacy. This indicates the enduring symbolic importance of Gondophares I.

Statement II is correct. The fragmentation of the empire after Gondophares I suggests weaknesses in succession mechanisms and central authority. The inability to maintain territorial unity points towards political instability and declining cohesion.

Statement III is incorrect. The absorption of Indo-Parthian territories by the Kushans under Kujula Kadphises demonstrates the expansion of Kushan power, not the successful integration of the Kushans into the Indo-Parthian political structure.

Conclusion 1 is correct because it follows directly from Statement I.

Conclusion 2 is correct because it follows directly from Statement II.

Conclusion 3 is incorrect because it is based on the opposite of what the historical evidence suggests.

(Dhyani IAS Special Feature – Think Like an Examiner)

The examiner deliberately reverses the direction of causation in Statement III. UPSC frequently presents the conquest of one polity by another and then asks candidates to infer successful integration rather than political decline.

If a state loses territory to an expanding power, the evidence usually points towards weakening authority, not successful incorporation.

From K. Sushant Sir:

"When one empire absorbs another, ask who is expanding and who is shrinking. UPSC often hides the answer in the direction of power."

17. Answer: (c) 3 only

The question tests knowledge of political legitimacy, administrative structure, and religious history under the Indo-Parthians. It also examines whether the candidate can distinguish between plausible interpretation and definitive historical certainty.

Statement I is correct. The repeated use of the title "Gondophares" indicates that legitimacy could be derived from association with a respected predecessor. Such practices are common in history and do not necessarily require direct hereditary succession.

Statement II is correct. The *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea* refers to rival Parthian rulers in Sindh, suggesting political fragmentation and indicating that authority was not always centralized across Indo-Parthian territories.

Statement III is incorrect. Although the Jandial temple near Taxila is often identified as a Zoroastrian fire temple, this interpretation remains debated. Even if the identification is accepted, it does not conclusively establish Zoroastrianism as the official state religion of the entire Indo-Parthian kingdom.

Conclusion 1 is correct because it follows directly from Statement I.

Conclusion 2 is correct because it follows directly from Statement II.

Conclusion 3 is incorrect because the available evidence does not establish religious uniformity or official state patronage with certainty.

(Dhyani IAS Special Feature – Think Like an Examiner)

The examiner deliberately introduces Statement III to test whether candidates move from a single archaeological finding to a sweeping conclusion about state religion. UPSC frequently converts limited evidence into universal claims.

One temple, inscription, or monument may reveal religious presence, but it does not automatically establish official state policy across an entire kingdom.

From K. Sushant Sir:

"A piece of evidence can show existence; it cannot always prove exclusivity. In UPSC, avoid turning a clue into a certainty."

18. Answer: (c) Statement 1 is correct, but Statement 2 is incorrect.

The question tests understanding of the migration and political expansion of the Indo-Scythians (Sakas) in the context of post-Hellenistic Eurasia. It also examines whether the candidate can distinguish between peaceful interaction and political conquest.

Statement 1 is correct. The migration of the Sakas into Bactria, Parthia, and north-western India demonstrates how political transformations in Central and South Asia created opportunities for mobile pastoral groups to establish territorial states. The weakening of existing powers enabled new ruling elites to carve out kingdoms across a vast geographical area.

Statement 2 is incorrect. The movement of the Sakas into the Indian subcontinent involved not only trade and cultural exchange but also military expansion, political conquest, and state formation. The establishment of Indo-Scythian kingdoms itself demonstrates that interactions between nomadic and settled societies extended far beyond commercial contact.

(Dhyani IAS Special Feature – Think Like an Examiner)

The examiner deliberately frames Statement 2 to test whether candidates reduce complex historical interactions to a single dimension. UPSC frequently presents trade and cultural exchange as if they exclude warfare and political expansion. In reality, migration, trade, conquest, diplomacy, and cultural exchange often occurred simultaneously.

From K. Sushant Sir:

"History is rarely driven by a single process. When UPSC says 'limited to' or 'only', look for the missing dimensions."

19. Answer: (b) 2 and 3 only

The question tests knowledge of the rise of the Indo-Scythians and the decline of Indo-Greek political authority in north-western India. It also examines the nature of succession and power-sharing among early Saka rulers.

Statement 1 is incorrect. The conquest of Hippostratus by Azes demonstrates the decline rather than the continued dominance of Indo-Greek political power. The success of Indo-Scythian rulers indicates that Hellenistic authority was increasingly being replaced by new Central Asian ruling groups.

Statement 2 is correct. The expansion of Maues into Gandhara and former Indo-Greek territories reflects the weakening of Indo-Greek political authority and the emergence of new Central Asian elites who established control over north-western India.

Statement 3 is correct. The succession from Maues to rulers such as Vonones, Spalagadames, and Azes suggests a political system that involved both dynastic continuity and the sharing of authority among members of elite ruling families.

(Dhyan IAS Special Feature – Think Like an Examiner)

The examiner deliberately introduces Statement 1 to test whether candidates understand the historical significance of conquest. UPSC often describes one ruler defeating another and then expects candidates to mistakenly infer the continued strength of the defeated power.

A successful conquest usually indicates the weakening—not the dominance—of the conquered polity.

From K. Sushant Sir:

"If a kingdom is being conquered, it is usually losing power, not demonstrating strength. Always follow the direction of political change."

20. Answer: (d) 1 and 2 only

The question tests knowledge of the representation of Indo-Scythians in Gandharan art and the cultural interactions reflected in Buddhist artistic traditions. It also examines whether the candidate can distinguish between artistic presence and artistic exclusivity.

Statement 1 is correct. Indo-Scythian soldiers are depicted in several Gandharan Buddhist reliefs and friezes. These representations provide valuable visual evidence regarding costume, weaponry, and military culture.

Statement 2 is correct. Such figures are commonly shown wearing ample tunics and trousers, characteristic of Central Asian dress traditions, and carrying heavy straight swords and other martial equipment associated with steppe warriors.

Statement 3 is incorrect. Indo-Scythian depictions are not confined to royal palace settings. On the contrary, some of the most important representations occur on Buddhist religious monuments and narrative friezes in Gandhara.

(Dhyan IAS Special Feature – Think Like an Examiner)

The examiner deliberately introduces Statement 3 to test whether candidates assume a strict separation between political and religious art. In ancient societies, religious monuments frequently served as repositories of contemporary social, military, and cultural imagery. Buddhist art often depicts not only religious figures but also rulers, soldiers, merchants, and ordinary people.

From K. Sushant Sir:

"Ancient monuments are not just religious records; they are visual archives of society."

21. Answer: (a) 1 only

The question tests understanding of Saka administration, social integration, and historical legacy. It also examines whether the candidate can distinguish between political decline and cultural influence.

Statement I is correct. The appointment of Kshatrapas reflects a decentralized administrative system suited to governing extensive and culturally diverse territories. Provincial governors enabled effective control without excessive centralization.

Statement II is correct as a historical observation. Matrimonial alliances between the Sakas and the Satavahanas demonstrate that political rivalry and social integration could coexist. Conflict did not necessarily prevent interaction and assimilation.

Statement III is incorrect. The disappearance of Saka political authority did not erase their historical influence. The Sakas contributed to administrative traditions, coinage, trade networks, cultural exchange, and social developments that continued beyond their political decline.

Inference 1 is correct because it follows directly from Statement I.

Inference 2 is incorrect because Statement II demonstrates the opposite—that rivalry and integration could coexist.

Inference 3 is incorrect because Statement III rests on a flawed assumption. Cultural and institutional influence often survives long after political authority disappears.

(Dhyani IAS Special Feature – Think Like an Examiner)

The examiner is testing whether candidates confuse political survival with historical impact. UPSC frequently frames questions implying that a community ceases to matter once its political power ends.

Many of history's most enduring influences outlast the states that originally created them.

From K. Sushant Sir:

"Empires may disappear, but institutions, ideas, and cultural influences often survive for centuries."

22. Answer: (d) 1, 2 and 3

The question tests knowledge of Indo-Scythian coinage and the cultural synthesis reflected in their monetary traditions. It also examines continuity between Indo-Greek and Indo-Scythian political cultures.

Statement 1 is correct. Portrait busts of rulers remained a prominent feature of Indo-Scythian coinage, reflecting continuity with the numismatic traditions established by the Indo-Greeks.

Statement 2 is correct. Many Indo-Scythian coins carried Greek legends on the obverse and Kharoshthi legends on the reverse, demonstrating adaptation to multilingual populations and continuation of established monetary conventions.

Statement 3 is correct. Indo-Scythian coinage sometimes incorporated Buddhist symbols alongside Greek divine imagery, reflecting the multicultural environment of north-western India and the interaction of different religious traditions.

(Dhyani IAS Special Feature – Think Like an Examiner)

The examiner tests whether candidates recognize continuity across dynasties. UPSC often presents a new ruling group and expects candidates to assume a complete break from previous traditions.

In reality, successful conquerors frequently adopt existing administrative, artistic, and monetary practices.

From K. Sushant Sir:

"New rulers often inherit old systems. In UPSC, look for continuity as carefully as you look for change."

23. Answer: (c) 1 and 3 only

The question tests knowledge of artistic traditions associated with the Indo-Scythians in Gandhara and the cultural synthesis visible in archaeological remains. It also examines whether the candidate can distinguish between dominant representation and exclusive representation.

Statement 1 is correct. Stone palettes associated with Gandhara exhibit a blend of Greek, Iranian, and local artistic influences, reflecting the multicultural character of north-western India.

Statement 2 is incorrect. Human figures on these palettes are not exclusively shown in Indo-Scythian dress. The artistic repertoire includes a variety of costumes, styles, and cultural influences derived from different traditions.

Statement 3 is correct. One of the famous stone palettes discovered at Sirkap depicts a winged Indo-Scythian horseman riding a winged deer while being attacked by a lion. The scene reflects the imaginative and syncretic artistic traditions of the region.

(Dhyani IAS Special Feature – Think Like an Examiner)

The examiner deliberately inserts the word "exclusively" in Statement 2. UPSC frequently uses absolute terms to transform a broadly correct observation into an incorrect statement.

A cultural influence may be prominent without being exclusive.

From K. Sushant Sir:

"Whenever UPSC says 'only', 'all', or 'exclusively', verify whether the evidence truly leaves no exceptions."

24. Answer: (a) 3 only

The question tests knowledge of the sources for Shaka history, their interaction with Indian religious traditions, and the distinction between political decline and cultural continuity. It also examines whether the candidate can draw valid conclusions from multiple categories of historical evidence.

Statement I is correct. References to the Shakas occur in a wide range of Indian literary traditions, including the Puranas, Manusmriti, Ramayana, Mahabharata, and Patanjali's Mahabhashya. These texts provide valuable literary evidence regarding their presence and perception in ancient India.

Statement II is correct. Archaeological and epigraphic evidence such as the Butkara Stupa findings and the Mathura Lion Capital indicates that some Indo-Scythian rulers were associated with Buddhism and contributed to Buddhist institutions.

Statement III is correct. The decline of Shaka political power began with the successes of Gautamiputra Satakarni against the Western Kshatrapas, while the end of Shaka authority in north-western India became linked to the rise of the Kushanas following the decline of rulers such as Azes II.

Conclusion 1 is incorrect. The statements themselves demonstrate that evidence regarding the Shakas comes from both literary and archaeological/epigraphic sources.

Conclusion 2 is incorrect. The evidence of Buddhist associations and integration into Indian society shows that Shaka interaction was not confined to military conflict alone.

Conclusion 3 is correct. Even after political decline, Shaka cultural, social, and religious influences continued to survive within Indian society.

(Dhyani IAS Special Feature – Think Like an Examiner)

The examiner deliberately contrasts political history with cultural history. UPSC frequently tests whether candidates assume that the disappearance of political power automatically leads to the disappearance of cultural influence.

The Shakas gradually lost political authority, but many of their administrative, artistic, and social influences continued long after their kingdoms declined.

From K. Sushant Sir:

"Political power may fall in a generation; cultural influence can survive for centuries. In UPSC, never equate political decline with historical disappearance."

25. Answer: (c) A-2, B-3, C-4, D-1

The question tests knowledge of major Kushan rulers and their respective contributions to the formation, expansion, and consolidation of the Kushan Empire.

A. Kujula Kadphises → 2. Laid the foundation of the Kushan Empire.

Kujula Kadphises united the Yuezhi tribes and established the foundations of Kushan political authority in Afghanistan and north-western India.

B. Vima Kadphises → 3. First Kushan ruler to introduce gold coinage in India.

Vima Kadphises is credited with issuing extensive gold coinage, reflecting the prosperity generated by long-distance trade networks.

C. Kanishka I → 4. Administered the empire from Purushapura and Mathura.

Kanishka's reign marked the zenith of Kushan power. Purushapura (Peshawar) and Mathura emerged as important centres of administration and culture.

D. Vasudeva I → 1. Last of the "Great Kushans"; his reign coincided with the Sassanid advance.

Vasudeva I is generally regarded as the last major Kushan ruler before the empire began to fragment under increasing external pressures, including the rise of the Sassanids.

(Dhyani IAS Special Feature – Think Like an Examiner)

The examiner tests chronological understanding. UPSC often mixes founders, consolidators, and later rulers to assess whether candidates can place rulers within the correct historical sequence.

From K. Sushant Sir:

"First identify the founder, then the expander, then the consolidator, and finally the ruler associated with decline. Chronology often unlocks the answer."

26. Answer: (d) 1, 2 and 3

The question tests knowledge of religious and cultural developments under the Kushans, particularly the role of Kanishka in the evolution of Buddhism and the emergence of Greco-Buddhist traditions.

Statement 1 is correct. The interaction between Hellenistic artistic traditions and Buddhist religious themes contributed significantly to the development of Greco-Buddhism, especially in the Gandhara region.

Statement 2 is correct. Buddhist tradition associates Kanishka with the convening of a major Buddhist Council in Kashmir, often identified as the Fourth Buddhist Council in the Sarvastivada tradition.

Statement 3 is correct. Kanishka is traditionally credited with supporting Buddhist scholarship, including the promotion of Sanskrit as an important language of Buddhist literature and the translation or redaction of texts previously preserved in regional Prakrit traditions.

(Dhyani IAS Special Feature – Think Like an Examiner)

The examiner combines artistic, religious, and literary developments under a single ruler. UPSC often expects candidates to connect cultural processes rather than study them in isolation.

From K. Sushant Sir:

"Great empires spread not only territory but also ideas, languages, and artistic traditions."

27. Answer: (a) 1 and 3 only

The question tests knowledge of Kushan representation in Gandhara art and the gradual Indianization of artistic traditions.

Statement 1 is correct. Kushan figures in Gandhara art are commonly depicted wearing tunics, belts, trousers, and boots, reflecting their Central Asian origins.

Statement 2 is incorrect. Kushans are represented not only as rulers and warriors but also as devotees, donors, and participants in Buddhist contexts.

Statement 3 is correct. Friezes depicting Kushan devotees often display a more Indianized artistic character compared to earlier, strongly Hellenistic representations associated with Gandharan Buddhism.

(Dhyani IAS Special Feature – Think Like an Examiner)

The examiner deliberately uses the word "only" in Statement 2. UPSC frequently transforms a partially correct observation into an incorrect statement through excessive exclusivity.

From K. Sushant Sir:

"When you see 'only', ask yourself whether history was really that simple."

28. Answer: (c) 1 and 3 only

The question tests knowledge of the rise, administration, and coinage of the Sakas in India.

Statement 1 is correct. Maues is generally regarded as the earliest known Indo-Scythian ruler in India. His expansion into Gandhara and former Indo-Greek territories marked the beginning of Saka political authority in north-western India.

Statement 2 is incorrect. The decline of Saka power did not begin with the Guptas. Significant setbacks had already been inflicted by rulers such as Gautamiputra Satakarni. Furthermore, Saka rule in north-western India ended much earlier with the rise of the Kushanas.

Statement 3 is correct. The Sakas adopted the Kshatrapa system of provincial administration. Their coinage combined Greek and Kharoshthi legends and frequently depicted mounted rulers, reflecting Central Asian traditions.

(Dhyani IAS Special Feature – Think Like an Examiner)

The examiner deliberately stretches chronology in Statement 2. UPSC often combines two correct events separated by centuries to create an incorrect historical sequence.

From K. Sushant Sir:

"Chronology is one of the strongest tools for eliminating wrong options in Ancient History."

29. Answer: (d) None of the above

The question tests understanding of the origins, political identity, and territorial extent of the Kushan Empire. It also examines whether the candidate can distinguish between ethnic origins, political formation, and territorial expansion.

Statement 1 is incorrect. The Kushan Empire was not established by the entire Yuezhi confederation. It emerged from one branch of the Yuezhi—the Kushan clan—which gradually unified the other groups under its leadership.

Statement 2 is incorrect. The Kushan Empire was not an eastern extension of the Parthian Empire. It emerged independently from the Yuezhi migrations and developed into a separate political entity.

Statement 3 is incorrect. The cultural zenith of the Kushan Empire occurred during its greatest territorial expansion under rulers such as Kanishka, when the empire extended well beyond the Indus region into north India and Central Asia.

(Dhyani IAS Special Feature – Think Like an Examiner)

The examiner deliberately uses three different forms of historical distortion:

- Statement 1 exaggerates collective participation ("entire Yuezhi confederation").
- Statement 2 confuses political origin with geographical proximity.
- Statement 3 reverses the relationship between territorial expansion and cultural flourishing.

UPSC frequently constructs incorrect statements by altering one crucial word while keeping the rest of the statement plausible.

From K. Sushant Sir:

"Most UPSC traps are not built on entirely wrong facts—they are built on one wrong word hidden inside an otherwise believable statement."

30. Answer: (a) A-2, B-3, C-1, D-4

The question tests knowledge of the chronology of the Kushano-Sasanian rulers and the succession of authority in the eastern domains of the Sasanian Empire. It also examines the candidate's ability to place rulers within the correct historical sequence.

A. Ardashir I Kushanshah → 2. 230–245 CE

Ardashir I Kushanshah was among the earliest Kushano-Sasanian rulers and governed during the initial phase of Sasanian expansion into former Kushan territories.

B. Hormizd I Kushanshah → 3. 275–300 CE

Hormizd I Kushanshah ruled during the later third century CE and is associated with the consolidation of Kushano-Sasanian authority in eastern Iran and Afghanistan.

C. Hormizd II Kushanshah → 1. 300–303 CE

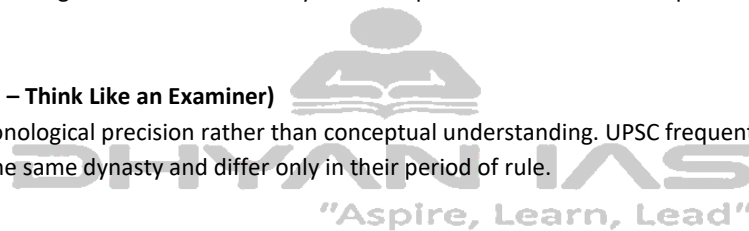
Hormizd II Kushanshah had a brief reign at the beginning of the fourth century CE.

D. Varahran Kushanshah → 4. 330–365 CE

Varahran Kushanshah ruled during the mid-fourth century CE and represents one of the later phases of Kushano-Sasanian political authority.

(Dhyani IAS Special Feature – Think Like an Examiner)

The examiner is testing chronological precision rather than conceptual understanding. UPSC frequently frames matching questions where all rulers belong to the same dynasty and differ only in their period of rule.

**From K. Sushant Sir:**

"When all names look familiar, chronology becomes the key to elimination."

31. Answer: (a) 1 and 2 only

The question tests understanding of religious developments during the Kushano-Sasanian period and the use of coinage as a historical source. It also examines whether the candidate can distinguish between evidence of religious presence and evidence of religious exclusivity.

Statement I is correct. The frequent depiction of fire altars on coins provides important evidence regarding the prominence of Zoroastrian traditions. Coinage is one of the most valuable sources for reconstructing religious symbolism and royal ideology.

Statement II is correct. The continued activity of Buddhist missionaries in Afghanistan and Central Asia suggests that Buddhism remained influential beyond the Indian subcontinent and continued to evolve institutionally and doctrinally.

Statement III is incorrect. The appearance of Shiva and Nandi on coins does not necessarily imply that Shaivism became the exclusive state religion. Coin imagery often reflects political accommodation, cultural interaction, and regional legitimacy rather than exclusive religious commitment.

Inference 1 is correct because Statement I demonstrates how coinage can reveal contemporary religious trends.

Inference 2 is correct because the continued spread of Buddhism points towards ongoing religious development and adaptation.

Inference 3 is incorrect because Statement III itself rests on an unwarranted assumption.

(Dhyani IAS Special Feature – Think Like an Examiner)

The examiner deliberately converts religious symbolism into a claim of religious exclusivity. UPSC frequently expects candidates to recognize that the presence of a deity on coins does not automatically establish an exclusive state religion.

From K. Sushant Sir:

"A symbol on a coin shows recognition; it does not always prove exclusivity."

32. Answer: (d) 1 and 2 only

The question tests understanding of the administrative structure of the Sasanian Empire and the relationship between political and religious authority. It also examines whether candidates can distinguish between hierarchical governance and decentralization. Statement I is correct. The title Shahanshah ("King of Kings") implies a hierarchical political structure in which subordinate rulers acknowledged the supremacy of a higher monarch.

Statement II is correct. The role of the mowbed (high priest) in provincial administration indicates a close institutional relationship between governance and religious authority.

Statement III is incorrect. The existence of Shahrdars governing territories under the supervision of the Shahanshah does not imply complete decentralization. Rather, it reflects delegated authority within a broader imperial framework.

Inference 1 is correct because the title Shahanshah clearly indicates a hierarchy rather than independent kingdoms.

Inference 2 is correct because the administrative role of religious officials demonstrates that religion and governance were interconnected.

Inference 3 is incorrect because Statement III exaggerates the degree of decentralization and understates imperial authority.

(Dhyani IAS Special Feature – Think Like an Examiner)

The examiner deliberately equates local administration with weak central authority. UPSC frequently tests whether candidates understand that delegation of power does not necessarily imply absence of central control.

From K. Sushant Sir:

"A governor exercising authority does not mean the king lacks authority. Delegation and decentralization are not the same thing."

33. Answer: (b) 1, 2 and 3

The question tests understanding of the economic and religious character of the Kushano-Sasanian state through numismatic evidence. It also examines whether the candidate can identify logical relationships among statements.

Statement I is correct. The widespread circulation of copper coinage suggests a vibrant local and regional economy. This weakens the argument that Silk Route commerce alone sustained economic life.

Statement II is incorrect as a historical claim. The depiction of Shiva and Nandi does not necessarily imply abandonment of Zoroastrian traditions. Coinage of the period displays multiple religious motifs.

Statement III is correct. The coexistence of Zoroastrian and Indian religious imagery may indicate attempts by rulers to secure legitimacy among culturally diverse populations.

Relationship 1 is correct because Statement I directly challenges the assumption that long-distance trade was the sole economic foundation.

Relationship 2 is correct because Statement II contradicts the broader numismatic evidence showing coexistence rather than replacement of religious traditions.

Relationship 3 is correct because Statements I and III together suggest adaptation to local economic and cultural realities.

(Dhyani IAS Special Feature – Think Like an Examiner)

The examiner tests whether candidates can evaluate relationships between statements rather than assess statements individually. UPSC increasingly asks candidates to analyze how pieces of evidence support, weaken, or contradict one another.

From K. Sushant Sir:

"Modern UPSC is not only about facts; it is about understanding how facts relate to each other."

34. Answer: (d) 1, 2 and 3

The question tests knowledge of linguistic diversity and script usage during the Kushan and Kushano-Sasanian periods. It also examines whether the candidate can evaluate consistency and contradiction among statements.

Statement I is correct. Middle Persian inscriptions in Pahlavi script on Kushano-Sasanian coins indicate the presence of Iranian administrative traditions and literate elites within the state structure.

Statement II is correct. The use of Kharosthi and Brahmi scripts in Buddhist inscriptions at Termez demonstrates that religious and cultural communication occurred through multiple linguistic traditions.

Statement III is incorrect as a historical claim. The continued use of Kharosthi and Brahmi clearly shows that they were not completely replaced by Pahlavi.

Relationship 1 is correct because coin inscriptions directly support Statement I.

Relationship 2 is correct because Statement III contradicts the implication of Statement II, which demonstrates continued multiscrypt usage.

Relationship 3 is correct because Statements I and II together indicate a multilingual and multiscrypt environment shaped by Iranian, Indian, and Central Asian influences.

(Dhyani IAS Special Feature – Think Like an Examiner)

The examiner deliberately inserts the word "completely" in Statement III. UPSC often transforms a partially correct trend into an incorrect statement by making it absolute.

The presence of a new administrative language does not automatically eliminate older languages and scripts.

From K. Sushant Sir:

"In Ancient History, cultural replacement is usually gradual, not absolute. Beware of words like 'completely', 'entirely', and 'exclusively'."

35. Answer: (d) 1, 2 and 4 only

The question tests knowledge of the architectural and artistic developments of the Kushano-Sasanian period and the extent to which cultural interaction shaped material culture in Central Asia and north-western India. It also examines whether the candidate can distinguish between artistic continuity and artistic isolation.

Statement 1 is correct. Kara-tepe was an important Buddhist monastic complex near Termez. Archaeological excavations have revealed caves, courtyards, monasteries, wall paintings, stucco decorations, terracottas, and inscriptions. These remains reflect the syncretic cultural environment of the Kushano-Sasanian period.

Statement 2 is correct. Excavations at Yavan indicate a planned urban settlement characterized by interconnected residential units arranged along streets. Such evidence points towards organized habitation and urban development.

Statement 3 is incorrect. Buddhist art during the Kushano-Sasanian period did not develop independently of Gandharan traditions. Gandhara remained a major artistic centre, and its stylistic influences continued to shape Buddhist sculpture and iconography throughout the period.

Statement 4 is correct. Non-Buddhist art of the period reflects interaction between local artistic traditions and Sasanian cultural influences. This synthesis is visible in motifs, dress patterns, iconography, and decorative styles.

(Dhyani IAS Special Feature – Think Like an Examiner)

The examiner deliberately uses the word "entirely" in Statement 3. UPSC frequently converts a partially correct observation into a wrong statement by introducing an absolute term.

Buddhist art certainly evolved during the Kushano-Sasanian period, but evolution does not imply complete separation from earlier Gandharan traditions.

From K. Sushant Sir:

"Civilizations rarely create art in isolation. In UPSC, whenever you see words like 'entirely', 'completely', or 'purely', verify them carefully."

36. Answer: (b) 1, 3 and 4 only

The question tests knowledge of the origin, economy, religious symbolism, and linguistic diversity of the Kushano-Sasanian Kingdom. It also examines whether candidates can distinguish between religious representation and religious exclusivity.

Statement 1 is correct. The Kushano-Sasanians emerged after the Sasanian Empire conquered parts of the Kushan territories in Bactria and Gandhara during the third century CE. These regions were subsequently governed by rulers known as Kushanshahs.

Statement 2 is incorrect. The depiction of Shiva and Nandi on coins does not establish that Zoroastrianism had ceased to be influential. Coinage from the period displays both Iranian and Indian religious motifs, indicating coexistence rather than replacement.

Statement 3 is correct. The appearance of Brahmi, Pahlavi, and Bactrian legends on coins reflects a multilingual environment and the coexistence of multiple cultural traditions within the kingdom.

Statement 4 is correct. The widespread use of copper coinage indicates participation in everyday economic transactions and local markets rather than merely elite or long-distance commercial exchange.

(Dhyani IAS Special Feature – Think Like an Examiner)

The examiner intentionally confuses **religious representation** with **religious replacement**. UPSC often expects candidates to recognize that rulers may adopt local symbols without abandoning their own traditions.

From K. Sushant Sir:

"A ruler may display many symbols to gain legitimacy. Coin imagery often reflects political accommodation, not religious exclusivity."

37. Answer: (d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

The question tests knowledge of the emergence of the Sunga Dynasty, its political structure, and the historical sources available for reconstructing its history.

Statement 1 is correct. The establishment of the Sunga Dynasty marked a transition from the highly centralized Mauryan Empire to a more regionalized political order. The territorial extent and administrative reach of the Sungas were comparatively limited.

Statement 2 is correct. Although Pataliputra remained the principal capital, Vidisha emerged as an important political and strategic centre during the Sunga period.

Statement 3 is correct. Both the Heliodorus Pillar and the Hathigumpha Inscription are valuable sources for reconstructing aspects of Sunga history and their interactions with contemporary powers.

Statement 4 is correct. The rise of the Sunga Dynasty followed the weakening of later Mauryan authority. Pushyamitra Shunga, a Mauryan military commander, overthrew the last Mauryan ruler and established a new dynasty.

(Dhyani IAS Special Feature – Think Like an Examiner)

The examiner combines political transition, regional centres, historical sources, and dynastic change in a single question. UPSC often tests whether candidates can connect multiple dimensions of a historical period rather than studying them separately.

From K. Sushant Sir:

"The fall of an empire is rarely a single event; it is usually the culmination of long-term political weakening."

38. Answer: (a) 1, 2, 4 and 5 only

The question tests knowledge of the administrative structure of the Sunga state and the degree of continuity with Mauryan institutions.

Statement 1 is correct. The Sungas retained several Mauryan administrative features, though they governed a smaller and more regionalized kingdom.

Statement 2 is correct. Provincial administration was frequently entrusted to royal princes and members of the ruling family, helping maintain political control over distant regions.

Statement 3 is incorrect. The Sungas did not completely abandon bureaucratic institutions inherited from the Mauryas. There was continuity in governance despite political restructuring.

Statement 4 is correct. The king remained the supreme authority, and Pushyamitra's military background contributed to the significant role of the armed forces in governance.

Statement 5 is correct. Brahmanical ideology strongly influenced the political and cultural orientation of the Sunga state, particularly through the revival of Vedic rituals.

(Dhyani IAS Special Feature – Think Like an Examiner)

The examiner inserts the word "**completely**" in Statement 3. UPSC often tests continuity versus discontinuity by presenting extreme formulations.

From K. Sushant Sir:

"Most dynasties inherit institutions from their predecessors. Political change rarely means administrative replacement overnight."

39. Answer: (b) 1 and 3 only

The question tests understanding of religious and cultural developments during the Sunga period and the relationship between Brahmanical revival and Buddhism.

Statement 1 is correct. The Sunga period witnessed a revival of Brahmanical traditions, including Vedic sacrifices such as the Ashvamedha, particularly under Pushyamitra Shunga.

Statement 2 is incorrect. Buddhism did not disappear during the Sunga period. Important Buddhist centres such as Bharhut and Sanchi continued to flourish, and substantial Buddhist architectural activity occurred during this time.

Statement 3 is correct. The cultural landscape of the Sunga period reflects coexistence and interaction between Brahmanical and Buddhist traditions rather than complete dominance of one over the other.

(Dhyani IAS Special Feature – Think Like an Examiner)

The examiner deliberately employs the word "**entirely**" in Statement 2. UPSC often turns nuanced historical debates into incorrect statements through excessive generalization.

From K. Sushant Sir:

"Revival of one tradition does not automatically imply the extinction of another."

40. Answer: (b) 2 only

The question tests knowledge of Sunga art, architecture, epigraphy, and artistic evolution after the Mauryan period.

Statement 1 is correct. The enlargement of the stupas at Bharhut and Sanchi involved the construction of elaborate stone railings and narrative reliefs depicting Jataka stories and other Buddhist themes.

Statement 2 is incorrect. The Sunga period did not represent a complete continuation of Mauryan artistic traditions. New stylistic developments emerged, particularly in narrative sculpture, decorative motifs, and architectural ornamentation.

Statement 3 is correct. Terracotta art flourished during the Sunga period and provides valuable insights into religious beliefs, social life, dress, and daily activities.

Statement 4 is correct. Brahmi script continued to evolve and became more developed and angular compared to earlier forms. It remained widely used for inscriptions.

Since the question asks for the **incorrect statement(s)**, only Statement 2 is incorrect.

(Dhyani IAS Special Feature – Think Like an Examiner)

The examiner tests whether candidates understand the difference between **continuity** and **innovation**. The Sungas inherited Mauryan traditions but also introduced important artistic developments that shaped later Indian art.

From K. Sushant Sir:

"Historical continuity does not mean historical stagnation. UPSC often hides the correct answer in the difference between 'continuation' and 'complete continuation'."

41. Answer: (b) 2, 3 and 4 only

The question tests knowledge of the economic foundations of the Sunga polity, the continuity of trade after the Mauryan period, and the extent of economic decentralization in post-Mauryan India.

Statement 1 is incorrect. Trade networks were not completely disrupted after the fall of the Mauryan Empire. Although political fragmentation occurred, commercial activities continued through established trade routes and urban centres across northern and central India.

Statement 2 is correct. Agriculture remained the backbone of the Sunga economy. The fertile Gangetic plains supported agricultural production, while land revenue constituted an important source of state income.

Statement 3 is correct. The circulation of regional coinage and local minting authorities reflects a degree of economic decentralization compared to the more centralized Mauryan system.

Statement 4 is correct. Urban centres such as Mathura, Saket, and Vidisha emerged as important commercial hubs that facilitated trade, craft production, and regional exchange.

(Dhyani IAS Special Feature – Think Like an Examiner)

The examiner deliberately inserts the word "**completely**" in Statement 1. UPSC frequently tests whether candidates confuse political fragmentation with economic collapse.

The Mauryan Empire disappeared, but merchants, markets, and trade routes continued to function and adapt under regional powers.

From K. Sushant Sir:

"Political decline may weaken administration, but it does not automatically destroy economic networks. Distinguish between political fragmentation and economic disruption."

42. Answer: (b) 1, 2, 3 and 5 only

The question tests knowledge of important Sunga rulers, their contributions, and the historical sources associated with them. It also examines whether the candidate can accurately identify the last ruler of the dynasty.

Statement 1 is correct. Pushyamitra Shunga is credited with performing Ashvamedha sacrifices and is traditionally associated with resistance against Indo-Greek advances into north-western India.

Statement 2 is correct. Agnimitra is known primarily through Kalidasa's *Malavikagnimitram*. Before becoming ruler, he governed Vidisha, which served as an important political centre.

Statement 3 is correct. Bhagabhadra is associated with the Heliodorus Pillar inscription, which records the visit of Heliodorus, ambassador of the Indo-Greek ruler Antialcidas.

Statement 4 is incorrect. Vasumitra was not the last ruler of the Sunga Dynasty and his death did not mark its end.

Statement 5 is correct. Devabhuti was the final Sunga ruler. His assassination by Vasudeva Kanva led to the establishment of the Kanva Dynasty.

(Dhyan IAS Special Feature – Think Like an Examiner)

The examiner places **Vasumitra** and **Devabhuti** together to test dynastic chronology. UPSC frequently asks questions where confusion between prominent rulers and the last ruler leads to incorrect answers.

From K. Sushant Sir:

"When studying a dynasty, always remember the founder, the most prominent ruler, and the last ruler. These are UPSC favourites."

43. Answer: (b) 2 and 4 only

The question tests knowledge of the foreign relations of the Sunga Dynasty and the nature of its interaction with the Indo-Greek powers.

Statement 1 is correct. Historical traditions associate the Sungas with military resistance against Indo-Greek advances under rulers such as Demetrius and Menander.

Statement 2 is incorrect. Relations between the Sungas and the Indo-Greeks were not uniformly peaceful. Evidence suggests the existence of both military conflict and diplomatic engagement.

Statement 3 is correct. The Heliodorus Pillar inscription provides evidence of diplomatic relations between the Sunga ruler Bhagabhadra and the Indo-Greek king Antialkidas.

Statement 4 is incorrect. The Sungas did not maintain complete control over all frontier regions throughout their rule. Political authority in frontier areas remained contested and subject to change.

(Dhyan IAS Special Feature – Think Like an Examiner)

The examiner contrasts military conflict with diplomatic interaction. UPSC often expects candidates to recognize that ancient states could fight wars and maintain diplomatic relations simultaneously.

From K. Sushant Sir:

"History is rarely a choice between war and diplomacy. Powerful states often practiced both at the same time."

44. Answer: (c) 1, 2, 4 and 5 only

The question tests understanding of the decline of the Sunga Dynasty and the multiple factors responsible for dynastic collapse.

Statement 1 is correct. Weak successors after the early Sunga rulers struggled to maintain effective central authority, contributing to political decline.

Statement 2 is correct. Provincial governors and local rulers increasingly asserted autonomy, leading to fragmentation of political power.

Statement 3 is incorrect. The Sunga Dynasty did not collapse because of a single decisive foreign invasion. Its decline resulted from a combination of internal weaknesses and external pressures.

Statement 4 is correct. Continuous external conflicts and internal instability contributed significantly to the weakening of the dynasty.

Statement 5 is correct. The assassination of Devabhuti by Vasudeva Kanva marked the formal end of the Sunga Dynasty and the beginning of Kanva rule.

(Dhyan IAS Special Feature – Think Like an Examiner)

The examiner deliberately presents a **single-cause explanation** in Statement 3. UPSC generally prefers multi-causal explanations for the decline of kingdoms and empires.

From K. Sushant Sir:

"Most dynasties do not collapse because of one event. They decline when several weaknesses accumulate over time."

45. Answer: (b) 1 and 2 only

The question tests understanding of Brahmanical revival, Buddhist evidence, and Indo-Greek–Sunga relations. It also examines whether the candidate can distinguish between literary claims and archaeological evidence.

Statement I is correct. Pushyamitra Shunga's performance of Ashvamedha sacrifices is widely regarded as evidence of the revival of Brahmanical political traditions in the post-Mauryan period.

Statement II is incorrect. Literary sources such as the *Divyavadana* contain accounts of Buddhist persecution, but they do not constitute unequivocal archaeological proof. Archaeological evidence from Bharhut, Sanchi, and other Buddhist sites indicates continued Buddhist activity and patronage during the Sunga period.

Statement III is correct. The Heliodorus Pillar inscription demonstrates diplomatic and cultural interactions between the Sungas and the Indo-Greeks during the reign of Bhagabhadra.

Relationship 1 is correct. Statement I is consistent with broader textual and inscriptional evidence indicating a resurgence of Brahmanical traditions.

Relationship 2 is correct. Statement II is contradicted by archaeological evidence from Buddhist sites that continued to flourish during the Sunga period.

Relationship 3 is incorrect. Diplomatic interaction does not imply the complete termination of Indo-Greek–Sunga conflicts or the existence of a permanently peaceful frontier.

(Dhyani IAS Special Feature – Think Like an Examiner)

The examiner deliberately contrasts **literary evidence** with **archaeological evidence**. UPSC frequently tests whether candidates can evaluate the strengths and limitations of different categories of historical sources.

A literary narrative may preserve important traditions, but historical conclusions must be supported by corroborative evidence from inscriptions, archaeology, and material remains.

From K. Sushant Sir:

"In Ancient History, a source is evidence—not proof. The strongest historical conclusions emerge when multiple sources support the same interpretation."

46. Answer: (d) 1, 2 and 3

The question tests knowledge of the origin, territorial extent, and historical significance of the Kanva Dynasty. It also examines whether the candidate can distinguish between direct dynastic succession and broader patterns of political fragmentation in post-Mauryan India.

Statement I is correct. Vasudeva Kanva overthrew the last Shunga ruler, Devabhuti, and established the Kanva Dynasty in Magadha. This marks a clear dynastic transition from Shunga to Kanva rule.

Statement II is incorrect. Puranic traditions and other historical evidence generally associate the Kanvas with Magadha and Pataliputra rather than Vidisha as a stable imperial capital throughout their rule.

Statement III is correct. The Kanvas controlled a relatively limited territory corresponding largely to the late Shunga realm. Their rule ended with the rise of the Satavahanas (Andhras), reflecting the continued political fragmentation of post-Mauryan India.

Relationship 1 is correct. Statement I clearly establishes a direct succession link between the Shungas and the Kanvas.

Relationship 2 is correct. Since Statement II is historically inaccurate, it contradicts the broader evidence that places Magadha at the center of Kanva political authority.

Relationship 3 is correct. Statement III aligns with the accepted historical understanding that post-Mauryan India witnessed the emergence of several regional powers rather than a single subcontinental empire.

(Dhyani IAS Special Feature – Think Like an Examiner)

The examiner uses Statement II to test whether candidates confuse **Vidisha's importance under the Shungas** with the political center of the Kanvas. UPSC often shifts a genuine historical center from one dynasty to another to create conceptual traps.

From K. Sushant Sir:

"When a new dynasty succeeds an older one, do not assume that all political institutions and capitals automatically remain unchanged. Verify each dynasty independently."

47. Answer: (b) I, III and IV only

The question tests knowledge of the social background, duration of rule, and historical legacy of the Kanva Dynasty.

Statement I is correct. The Kanvas are traditionally described as Brahmins and are linked in later traditions to the lineage of Sage Saubhari.

Statement II is incorrect. The Kanva Dynasty ruled for only a few decades, not for nearly two centuries. Its political influence was comparatively short-lived.

Statement III is correct. The replacement of the Kanvas by the Satavahanas is generally viewed as a regional political transition rather than a major subcontinental transformation.

Statement IV is correct. After the decline of the Kanvas, Magadha appears to have experienced the influence of regional powers, including the Mitra rulers of Kaushambi, before the rise of later imperial formations.

(Dhyani IAS Special Feature – Think Like an Examiner)

The examiner introduces Statement II to test awareness of dynastic chronology. UPSC frequently exaggerates the duration of short-lived dynasties to see whether candidates possess a realistic sense of historical timelines.

From K. Sushant Sir:

"Always remember not only who ruled, but also for how long they ruled. Duration often determines historical significance."

48. Answer: (a) 1 only

The question tests knowledge of the origin of the Eastern Chalukyas and their political relations with neighboring powers.

Statement 1 is correct. The Vengi region came under Chalukya control during the reign of Pulakeshin II after the defeat of the Vishnukundinas. This laid the foundation for the Eastern Chalukya branch in the eastern Deccan.

Statement 2 is incorrect. The Eastern Chalukyas were not completely independent after the decline of the Badami Chalukyas. They were frequently involved in conflicts and political interactions with the Rashtrakutas and other regional powers.

(Dhyani IAS Special Feature – Think Like an Examiner)

The examiner employs the phrase “**fully independent**” to create an absolute statement. Medieval Indian politics was characterized by shifting alliances, conflicts, and periods of subordination rather than uninterrupted independence.

From K. Sushant Sir:

"In medieval history, absolute political independence was rare. Look carefully at words such as 'fully', 'always', and 'never'."

49. Answer: (c) I and III only

The question tests knowledge of the emergence of the Satavahanas, linguistic patterns in their inscriptions, and the nature of their economy.

Statement I is correct. The Satavahanas emerged in the Deccan after the decline of Mauryan authority, with a noticeable interval before they established themselves as a major regional power.

Statement II is incorrect. The Satavahanas were not the immediate successors of the Mauryas everywhere. Several regional powers emerged in both North India and the Deccan after Mauryan decline.

Statement III is correct. Most Satavahana inscriptions were composed in Prakrit rather than Sanskrit, reflecting prevailing linguistic traditions in the Deccan.

Statement IV is incorrect. The Satavahana economy was not based solely on maritime trade. Inland trade routes, agriculture, craft production, and overland commercial networks also played major roles.

(Dhyani IAS Special Feature – Think Like an Examiner)

The examiner uses Statement IV to test whether candidates overemphasize Roman trade while ignoring the importance of inland commercial networks in the Deccan.

From K. Sushant Sir:

"Whenever a statement says an economy depended 'primarily' or 'solely' on one factor, check whether other important sectors are being ignored."

50. Answer: (d) I, II and IV only

The question tests knowledge of early Satavahana rulers, expansionist policies, and interactions with foreign groups in western India.

Statement I is correct. Simuka is generally regarded as the founder of the Satavahana Dynasty. He appears in the dynastic tradition and is associated with evidence from inscriptions such as Naneghat.

Statement II is correct. Satakarni I is associated with the title *Dakshinapathapati* and is mentioned in relation to the Hathigumpha inscription of Kharavela, reflecting the growing political importance of the early Satavahanas.

Statement III is incorrect. Gautamiputra Satakarni was one of the greatest Satavahana rulers, but contemporary evidence does not support the claim that he exercised uninterrupted sovereignty over the entire Indian subcontinent without setbacks.

Statement IV is correct. Satavahana history reflects repeated interaction and conflict with the Shakas, Pahlavas, and Yavanas, as evidenced by inscriptions and literary traditions.

(Dhyani IAS Special Feature – Think Like an Examiner)

The examiner inserts exaggerated imperial claims in Statement III. UPSC often tests whether candidates can distinguish between historical achievements and unrealistic descriptions of universal conquest.

From K. Sushant Sir:

"A ruler may be great without ruling the entire subcontinent. Historical significance should not be confused with territorial exaggeration."

51. Answer: (c) Both 1 and 2

The question tests knowledge of the decline of the Pallava Dynasty and the rise of Chola power in South India.

Statement 1 is correct. Pallava authority weakened due to repeated conflicts with several regional powers, including the Cholas, Pandyas, Western Gangas, and Rashtrakutas. These struggles gradually eroded Pallava political dominance.

Statement 2 is correct. The Pallava Dynasty effectively ended when the Chola ruler Aditya I defeated Aparajitavarman and incorporated Kanchi into the expanding Chola realm.

(Dhyani IAS Special Feature – Think Like an Examiner)

The examiner links a long-term process of decline with a decisive political event. UPSC frequently expects candidates to distinguish between the factors that weaken a dynasty and the event that formally ends it.

From K. Sushant Sir:

"Most dynasties decline gradually but end suddenly. Always separate the causes of decline from the event of extinction."

52. Answer: (b) 1 and 2 only

The question tests knowledge of the administrative structure of the Satavahana state, the functioning of local administration, and the integration of feudatory elements into the political system.

Statement I is correct. The Satavahana administration was relatively decentralized. The kingdom was divided into territorial units such as *aharas* and *rashtras*, administered by officials including Amatyas, Mahamatras, and Maharashtrikas.

Statement II is correct. At the local level, the Gramika or Gaulmika functioned as an important administrative authority. Literary and inscriptional references suggest that such officials exercised both civil and limited military responsibilities, helping maintain local order.

Statement III is correct. The Satavahana political structure incorporated different categories of subordinate chiefs and feudatories, including Raja, Mahabhoja, and Senapati. This reflects a layered system of political integration rather than a uniformly centralized administration.

Relationship 1 is correct. Statement II illustrates how decentralization operated in practice by showing the role of local officials within the administrative hierarchy.

Relationship 2 is correct. Statement III expands the framework outlined in Statement I by introducing the feudatory layer that connected local and regional authorities to the central state.

Relationship 3 is incorrect. Statement I does not reject feudal or subordinate political arrangements. Rather, it is compatible with the existence of such structures.

(Dhyani IAS Special Feature – Think Like an Examiner)

The examiner attempts to create a false opposition between administrative decentralization and feudatory organization. UPSC often tests whether candidates mistakenly assume that the presence of feudatories automatically eliminates administrative structures.

From K. Sushant Sir:

"Decentralization and feudal integration are not opposites. In ancient India, both often operated simultaneously within the same political system."

53. Answer: (c) A-3, B-2, C-1, D-4

The question tests knowledge of important Satavahana trade centres and their role in inland and maritime commerce.

A. Pratishthana – 3. Major Satavahana trade centre in Deccan

Pratishthana (modern Paithan) served as one of the principal political and commercial centres of the Satavahanas and was closely connected to inland trade routes.

B. Tagara – 2. Important inland trade centre of Satavahanas

Tagara (modern Ter) was a major inland emporium linked to western coastal ports through extensive trade networks.

C. Sopara – 1. Western coastal port mentioned in foreign accounts

Sopara emerged as an important western coastal port and appears in accounts relating to overseas trade.

D. Bharuch – 4. Important import-export trading outpost

Bharuch (Barygaza) functioned as one of the most significant import-export centres connecting India with the Mediterranean world.

(Dhyani IAS Special Feature – Think Like an Examiner)

The examiner mixes inland commercial centres with coastal ports. UPSC frequently tests whether candidates can distinguish between production and distribution centres located in the interior and maritime gateways connected to international trade.

From K. Sushant Sir:

"In trade history, always identify whether a place was a production centre, inland market, administrative capital, or port. UPSC often builds questions around this distinction."

54. Answer: (b) 1 and 2 only

The question tests understanding of Satavahana economic life, trade networks, foreign commercial contacts, and the nature of Satavahana coinage.

Statement I is correct. The Satavahana economy witnessed the growth of merchant guilds, expansion of inland and maritime trade, and the rise of commercial centres such as Pratishthana and Tagara.

Statement II is correct. Foreign sources such as the *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea* and the writings of Ptolemy indicate the importance of Deccan ports in long-distance trade, particularly with the Roman world.

Statement III is incorrect. Satavahana coinage was not primarily aesthetic in purpose, nor was it mostly issued in gold. Satavahana coins were largely struck in lead, copper, and potin and served practical commercial functions within regional and long-distance trade networks.

Relationship 1 is correct. Statement II supports Statement I because both demonstrate the existence of extensive and interconnected trade systems.

Relationship 2 is correct. Statement III misrepresents the composition and economic role of Satavahana coinage, thereby contradicting the broader economic picture presented in Statement I.

Relationship 3 is incorrect. Statement II does not suggest that trade was confined to coastal areas. Instead, it complements evidence for inland commercial activity.

(Dhyani IAS Special Feature – Think Like an Examiner)

The examiner uses Statement III to test whether candidates project the gold coinage tradition of the Kushans onto the Satavahanas. UPSC often checks whether students confuse the economic features of different dynasties.

From K. Sushant Sir:

"Never transfer the characteristics of one dynasty to another. Similar periods may produce very different economic systems."

55. Answer: (b) 1 and 2 only

The question tests knowledge of Satavahana artistic achievements, Buddhist architecture, and cultural interactions between northern and southern India.

Statement I is correct. Satavahana art reflects a synthesis of indigenous Deccan traditions and broader Buddhist artistic influences from northern India. This contributed to the cultural integration of different regions of the subcontinent.

Statement II is correct. The Amaravati School is renowned for its elaborate narrative reliefs depicting Jataka stories and Buddhist themes. Compared to later traditions, greater emphasis was placed on symbolic and narrative representation than on fully developed anthropomorphic images of the Buddha.

Statement III is correct. Satavahana patronage played a significant role in the development of rock-cut chaityas and viharas in western India. These monuments represented the continuation and expansion of earlier Buddhist architectural traditions using durable stone construction.

Relationship 1 is correct. Statement II illustrates the artistic characteristics that emerged from the cultural synthesis described in Statement I.

Relationship 2 is correct. Statement III broadens the discussion from artistic expression to architectural development, thereby extending the cultural framework established in Statement I.

Relationship 3 is incorrect. Statement I does not reject continuity. In fact, it explicitly implies interaction and synthesis, which are fully compatible with architectural continuity.

(Dhyani IAS Special Feature – Think Like an Examiner)

The examiner creates a trap by presenting **synthesis** and **continuity** as if they are mutually exclusive concepts. UPSC frequently expects candidates to recognize that innovation often develops through the adaptation of existing traditions rather than their complete rejection.

From K. Sushant Sir:

"In art history, change rarely means replacement. Most artistic traditions evolve through continuity, adaptation, and synthesis."

56. Answer: (d) 1 only

The question tests knowledge of the religious outlook, social structure, and socio-economic developments of the Satavahana period. It also examines whether the candidate can distinguish between isolated social practices and the overall character of society.

Statement I is correct. The Satavahana rulers were Brahmanas who performed Vedic sacrifices such as Ashvamedha and Vajapeya. At the same time, they patronized multiple religious traditions, including Vaishnavism and Buddhism. Inscriptions indicate grants to Buddhist establishments alongside support for Brahmanical traditions.

Statement II is correct. The expansion of trade, urbanization, and commercial networks led to the growing importance of merchants and artisans. Inscriptions frequently identify merchants by their places of origin, reflecting the increasing significance of urban and commercial identities.

Statement III is incorrect. Although Satavahana inscriptions sometimes emphasize maternal lineage through names such as Gautamiputra and Vasisthiputra, this does not establish a universally matrilineal social order. Satavahana society remained predominantly patriarchal, and inheritance was not generally traced through the female line across all social groups.

Relationship 1 is correct. Statement II complements Statement I by describing the socio-economic environment within which religious patronage, trade, and urban growth occurred.

Relationship 2 is incorrect. The evidence in Statement I does not justify the inference of a universally matrilineal society.

Relationship 3 is incorrect. Statement III does not directly oppose Statement I; rather, it represents an exaggerated and unsupported interpretation of limited evidence.

(Dhyani IAS Special Feature – Think Like an Examiner)

The examiner uses the famous titles **Gautamiputra** and **Vasisthiputra** to tempt candidates into assuming a matrilineal social order. UPSC often tests whether students can distinguish between naming conventions and actual systems of inheritance.

From K. Sushant Sir:

"A mother's name in a royal title does not automatically prove a matrilineal society. Always distinguish symbolic recognition from social structure."

57. Answer: (d) 1, 2 and 3

The question tests understanding of the decline of the Satavahana Empire and the interplay between administrative, territorial, and political factors.

Statement I is correct. After Yajna Satakarni, the empire witnessed weaker rulers who struggled to maintain effective control, contributing to administrative decline and reduced central authority.

Statement II is correct. The vast size of the empire encouraged the emergence of powerful feudatories and regional elites. Over time, this weakened central control and accelerated political fragmentation.

Statement III is incorrect. The decline of the Satavahanas did not create a complete political vacuum. Several successor states, including the Ikshvakus, Abhiras, Chutus, and others, emerged in different parts of the Deccan.

Relationship 1 is correct. Statement II provides a structural explanation for the administrative weaknesses described in Statement I.

Relationship 2 is correct. Statement III contradicts the broader historical pattern because political fragmentation generally produces successor states rather than an absence of political authority.

Relationship 3 is correct. Statements I and II work together to explain the decline of the empire through both leadership weaknesses and structural pressures.

(Dhyani IAS Special Feature – Think Like an Examiner)

The examiner introduces the phrase **"complete political vacuum"** as a trap. UPSC frequently tests whether candidates understand that the decline of one empire often creates opportunities for regional powers rather than political emptiness.

From K. Sushant Sir:

"In history, power rarely disappears—it changes hands. When empires decline, successor states usually emerge."

58. Answer: (d) 1, 2 and 3

The question tests knowledge of the political, economic, and administrative features of the Gupta Age and examines whether candidates can reconcile prosperity with evolving decentralization.

Statement I is correct. The Gupta Age is often described as a Golden Age because of remarkable achievements in literature, science, mathematics, art, and political stability. At the same time, the empire functioned through a relatively decentralized administrative framework compared to the Mauryan model.

Statement II is correct. The Guptas expanded the practice of land grants to Brahmanas and religious institutions. These grants promoted agrarian expansion but also contributed to the growth of intermediary rights and feudal tendencies.

Statement III is incorrect. The Gupta Empire did not maintain a fully centralized bureaucracy with complete control over provincial administration. Local elites, feudatories, and grantees exercised varying degrees of autonomy.

Relationship 1 is correct. Statement II helps explain some of the socio-economic foundations that supported the prosperity associated with Statement I.

Relationship 2 is correct. Statement III directly contradicts the decentralized tendencies reflected in Statements I and II.

Relationship 3 is correct. Statements I and II together provide a coherent picture of Gupta achievements alongside important socio-economic transformations.

(Dhyani IAS Special Feature – Think Like an Examiner)

The examiner deliberately contrasts **Golden Age prosperity** with **administrative decentralization**. UPSC often tests whether candidates incorrectly assume that cultural flourishing requires complete political centralization.

From K. Sushant Sir:

"A strong civilization does not always require a highly centralized state. Cultural achievement and administrative decentralization can coexist."

59. Answer: (b) 1 and 3 only

The question tests knowledge of the historical background of the Gupta Empire, the basis of its Golden Age reputation, and the nature of evidence available for early Gupta history.

Statement I is correct. The rise of the Guptas occurred in a political environment shaped by the decline of earlier powers such as the Mauryas, Kushanas, and Satavahanas. This fragmentation created opportunities for new regional dynasties.

Statement II is correct. Historians often describe the Gupta Age as a Golden Age because of its achievements in literature, science, art, architecture, and political stability across a large territory.

Statement III is incorrect. The early Gupta rulers, particularly Sri Gupta and Ghatotkacha, are not extensively documented through detailed contemporary inscriptions. Information about them is relatively limited compared to later rulers such as Chandragupta I, Samudragupta, and Chandragupta II.

Relationship 1 is correct. Statement I provides the broader historical background that helps explain the emergence of Gupta power and the developments described in Statement II.

Relationship 2 is incorrect. Statement I discusses political conditions, not the cultural achievements that directly justify the Golden Age characterization.

Relationship 3 is correct. Statement III conflicts with the actual evidentiary pattern of early Gupta history, which remains comparatively obscure and sparsely documented.

(Dhyani IAS Special Feature – Think Like an Examiner)

The examiner uses the names **Sri Gupta** and **Ghatotkacha** to test whether candidates confuse later well-documented Gupta rulers with the relatively obscure founders of the dynasty.

From K. Sushant Sir:

"In dynasty questions, UPSC often contrasts obscure founders with famous successors. The less famous the ruler, the more careful you must be about the available evidence."

60. Answer: (a) 1 and 2 only

The question tests understanding of the major Gupta rulers and the relationship between dynastic foundations, imperial expansion, and political consolidation. It also examines whether candidates can identify logical connections among historical developments.

Statement I is correct. Chandragupta I is generally regarded as the first significant independent ruler of the Gupta dynasty. His matrimonial alliance with the Licchavis enhanced the prestige and political influence of the Guptas and laid the foundation for future expansion.

Statement II is correct. The Allahabad Pillar Inscription (Prayaga Prashasti), composed by Harishena, provides a detailed account of Samudragupta's military campaigns and political achievements. It portrays him as a powerful conqueror while also emphasizing royal virtues and legitimacy.

Statement III is correct. Chandragupta II is commonly associated with the Mehrauli Iron Pillar inscription and is credited with defeating the Western Kshatrapas, thereby extending Gupta authority into western India and gaining access to important commercial centres and trade routes.

Relationship 1 is correct. The political foundations laid by Chandragupta I, particularly through the Licchavi alliance, facilitated the large-scale imperial expansion achieved by Samudragupta.

Relationship 2 is correct. Samudragupta's conquests and Chandragupta II's western expansion together represent the period of greatest political strength and cultural prestige of the Gupta Empire.

Relationship 3 is incorrect. Chandragupta I preceded Samudragupta and Chandragupta II in chronological order and therefore does not contradict the historical sequence; rather, he forms its foundation.

(Dhyani IAS Special Feature – Think Like an Examiner)

The examiner uses Relationship 3 to test whether candidates can distinguish between **contradiction** and **chronological succession**. A statement that describes an earlier stage of a dynasty does not contradict later developments merely because it occurred before them.

From K. Sushant Sir:

"In UPSC, a foundational event often explains a later achievement. When two statements fit into a historical sequence, look for continuity before assuming contradiction."

61. Answer: (c) II, IV and V only

The question tests knowledge of Gupta administration, society, economy, and the observations of foreign travellers. It also examines whether candidates can distinguish between relative decentralisation and complete centralisation, as well as between mild and harsh judicial systems.

Statement I is incorrect. Although the Gupta administration displayed decentralising tendencies and granted considerable authority to provincial and local officials, the description of provinces functioning under the "close supervision of the central authority" is somewhat inconsistent with the growing local autonomy characteristic of the period. Historians generally describe Gupta administration as moderately decentralised rather than highly centralised.

Statement II is correct. The Chinese pilgrim Faxian described conditions of peace, prosperity, and relatively effective law and order. He noted that crime was comparatively limited and punishments were generally mild.

Statement III is incorrect. Gupta judicial practices were not known for widespread capital punishment or systematic judicial torture. Contemporary accounts suggest a comparatively lenient legal system.

Statement IV is correct. The Gupta economy benefited from flourishing internal and external trade. Textiles, metals, spices, gemstones, and other commodities formed part of commercial networks linking different regions.

Statement V is correct. The abundant gold coinage of the Gupta rulers, along with silver and copper issues, is generally regarded as evidence of economic prosperity and monetary circulation.

(Dhyani IAS Special Feature – Think Like an Examiner)

The examiner deliberately contrasts Statements II and III. Candidates who remember only that the Gupta Empire was powerful may incorrectly assume that it relied on harsh punishments. UPSC often tests whether candidates can connect traveller accounts with administrative realities.

From K. Sushant Sir:

"A strong state does not necessarily imply a harsh legal system. In history questions, always verify administrative practices through contemporary evidence."

62. Answer: (c) 1 and 3 only

The question tests knowledge of major literary and scientific works of ancient India and their authorship.

Statement 1 is correct. Kalidasa composed the celebrated Sanskrit epics *Raghuvansha* and *Kumarasambhava*, both regarded as masterpieces of classical literature.

Statement 2 is incorrect. Aryabhata authored the *Aryabhatiya*, not the *Surya Siddhanta*. Although the *Surya Siddhanta* is an important astronomical text, its authorship is not attributed to Aryabhata.

Statement 3 is correct. Vishnusharma is traditionally associated with the composition of the *Panchatantra*, one of the most influential collections of fables in world literature.

(Dhyani IAS Special Feature – Think Like an Examiner)

The examiner uses Statement 2 to test confusion between a famous astronomer and a famous astronomical text. Such author-work matching questions are a recurring UPSC pattern.

From K. Sushant Sir:

"Memorising names is not enough. UPSC frequently tests the linkage between a scholar and his work."

63. Answer: (c) I and III only

The question tests knowledge of religious developments during the Gupta Age and the nature of religious patronage under Gupta rulers.

Statement I is correct. Nalanda emerged as an important centre of Buddhist learning during the Gupta period and received royal patronage. It later developed into one of the most renowned universities of the ancient world.

Statement II is incorrect. Jainism did not disappear during the Gupta period. Although Brahmanical traditions gained prominence, Jain communities remained active and continued to receive support in several regions.

Statement III is correct. Most Gupta rulers were followers of Vaishnavism, yet they generally pursued a policy of religious tolerance. Buddhism and Jainism continued to flourish alongside Brahmanical traditions.

(Dhyani IAS Special Feature – Think Like an Examiner)

The examiner employs the word "**completely**" in Statement II. UPSC often uses absolute expressions to test whether candidates recognize the continued coexistence of multiple traditions.

From K. Sushant Sir:

"Words such as 'completely', 'entirely', and 'always' deserve special attention. In history, continuity is usually more common than total disappearance."

64. Answer: (d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

The question tests knowledge of Gupta and post-Gupta artistic, architectural, and cultural achievements and their wider influence.

Statement 1 is correct. The Iron Pillar of Dhar is generally regarded as larger than the more famous Delhi Iron Pillar, although it survives in a fragmented condition.

Statement 2 is correct. Artistic traditions associated with Ajanta, Ellora, Sarnath, Mathura, Anuradhapura, and Sigiriya collectively represent a high point of classical Indian artistic achievement and demonstrate the wide cultural influence of Indian artistic forms.

Statement 3 is correct. The principles of Shilpa Shastra influenced sculpture, architecture, iconography, and aspects of town planning across different regions of the subcontinent.

Statement 4 is correct. The paintings of Ajanta and the frescoes of Bagh are widely regarded as among the finest achievements of Gupta-period painting.

(Dhyani IAS Special Feature – Think Like an Examiner)

The examiner combines developments from different regions to test whether candidates understand the broad cultural influence of classical Indian art rather than viewing Gupta culture in a narrow territorial framework.

From K. Sushant Sir:

"UPSC often tests cultural spheres rather than political boundaries. Artistic influence can extend far beyond the territory of a dynasty."

65. Answer: (b) 2 only

The question tests knowledge of major literary, scientific, and educational developments during the Gupta Age. It also examines whether the candidate can distinguish between firmly attributed works and texts whose authorship is uncertain.

Statement 1 is correct. Kalidasa composed *Raghuvansha* and *Kumarasambhava*, two of the greatest works of classical Sanskrit literature.

Statement 2 is incorrect. Aryabhata authored the *Aryabhatiya*, not the *Surya Siddhanta*. While the *Surya Siddhanta* is an important astronomical text, it is not attributed to Aryabhata.

Statement 3 is correct. Varahamihira wrote the *Brihatsamhita*, an encyclopedic work dealing with astronomy, astrology, geography, architecture, and related subjects.

Statement 4 is correct. Nalanda University is generally associated with the patronage of **Kumaragupta I** and later became one of the most important centres of Buddhist learning in Asia.

(Dhyani IAS Special Feature – Think Like an Examiner)

The examiner introduces Statement 2 to test confusion between a celebrated scientist and a celebrated scientific text. Such author-work traps are among the most common patterns in Ancient Indian History.

From K. Sushant Sir:

"In Ancient History, UPSC often asks one simple question in a complicated way: Who wrote what? Mastering these associations can eliminate many avoidable mistakes."

66. Answer: (b) 4 only

The question tests knowledge of the nature, composition, and historical basis of Sangam literature. It also examines whether candidates can distinguish between literary tradition and firmly established historical evidence.

Statement 1 is correct. According to Tamil literary tradition, Sangam literature was composed and compiled in assemblies (Sangams) of poets that functioned under the patronage of the Pandya rulers, particularly at Madurai.

Statement 2 is correct. The Sangam corpus includes the **Ettuthokai (Eight Anthologies)** and **Pathupattu (Ten Idylls)**, which constitute the core body of classical Sangam literature.

Statement 3 is correct. Sangam literature is one of the most important sources for reconstructing the political, social, economic, and cultural life of early historic South India. It contains valuable references to kingship, trade, warfare, agriculture, and social customs.

Statement 4 is incorrect. The earliest Sangam assemblies are not historically attested through contemporary inscriptions. The tradition of three Sangams is derived primarily from later literary accounts. Historians generally regard the earlier Sangams as part of literary tradition rather than firmly verifiable historical institutions.

(Dhyani IAS Special Feature – Think Like an Examiner)

The examiner introduces Statement 4 to test whether candidates confuse **literary tradition** with **historically verified evidence**. UPSC frequently distinguishes between what a text claims and what can be independently established through inscriptions or archaeology.

From K. Sushant Sir:

"A tradition may be culturally important without being historically proven. In UPSC, always separate literary memory from archaeological evidence."

67. Answer: (b) 1, 3 and 4 only

The question tests understanding of the chronology, meaning, and literary tradition associated with the Sangam Age.

Statement 1 is correct. The Sangam period is generally placed between the 3rd century BCE and the 3rd century CE on the basis of literary, archaeological, epigraphic, and numismatic evidence.

Statement 2 is incorrect. The term *Sangam* means an assembly or association of scholars and poets. It does not literally refer to a political council under the Chera rulers.

Statement 3 is correct. Tamil tradition associates the composition of Sangam literature with assemblies of poets patronised mainly by the Pandya rulers.

Statement 4 is correct. Tamil tradition speaks of three Sangams. However, only the literature associated with the Third Sangam is believed to have substantially survived.

(Dhyani IAS Special Feature – Think Like an Examiner)

The examiner deliberately inserts Statement 2 to test whether candidates know the literal meaning of "Sangam" rather than merely memorising dynasties associated with the period.

From K. Sushant Sir:

"UPSC often asks simple factual concepts in indirect form. Know the meaning of key historical terms, not just the events linked to them."

68. Answer: (b) 1, 3 and 4 only

The question tests knowledge of the major components of Tamil literature and their literary characteristics.

Statement 1 is correct. *Tolkappiyam* is regarded as the earliest extant Tamil grammatical and poetic treatise and is traditionally associated with the Second Sangam.

Statement 2 is incorrect. Sangam literature consists predominantly of poetic compositions rather than prose works. Verse forms formed the core of early Tamil literary tradition.

Statement 3 is correct. The *Pathinenkilkanakku* collection is largely ethical and didactic in character. It includes the celebrated *Tirukkural*, one of the greatest works of Tamil literature.

Statement 4 is correct. The Five Great Epics of Tamil literature are *Silappadikaram*, *Manimekalai*, *Jivaka Chintamani*, *Valayapathi*, and *Kundalakesi*.

(Dhyani IAS Special Feature – Think Like an Examiner)

Statement 2 exploits a common assumption that literature evolves from prose to poetry. In the Tamil context, the earliest surviving corpus is overwhelmingly poetic.

From K. Sushant Sir:

"When UPSC asks about literature, pay attention to literary form—grammar, poetry, prose, epic, or ethical text. The category itself often determines the answer."

69. Answer: (c) A–3, B–1, C–2, D–4

The question tests knowledge of the major Sangam polities and their associated capitals, ports, and political structures.

A. Cheras – 3 (Vanji, Tondi, Musiri)

The Cheras ruled the western region of South India. Vanji served as their capital, while Tondi and Musiri were important ports.

B. Cholas – 1 (Uraiyur and Puhar)

The Cholas controlled the fertile Kaveri basin. Uraiyur was an important inland centre, while Puhar (Kaveripattinam) was a major port city.

C. Pandyas – 2 (Madurai and Korkai)

Madurai was the principal Pandya capital, while Korkai was renowned for pearl fishing and maritime trade.

D. Minor Chieftains – 4 (Regional subordinate but influential local rulers)

Numerous local chiefs, often known as Velirs, exercised considerable influence in regional politics.

(Dhyani IAS Special Feature – Think Like an Examiner)

UPSC frequently combines capitals and ports in matching questions because candidates often remember one but confuse the other.

From K. Sushant Sir:

"When studying ancient kingdoms, always learn capitals, ports, and economic centres together. UPSC rarely asks them separately."

70. Answer: (d) 1, 3 and 5 only

The question tests understanding of Sangam administration, royal symbols, councils, revenue sources, and regional geography.

Statement 1 is correct. Sangam polity was generally monarchical and hereditary. The king was assisted by ministers, priests, military commanders, envoys, and spies.

Statement 2 is incorrect. The royal symbols were not as stated. The **Chera emblem was the bow**, the **Chola emblem was the tiger**, and the **Pandya emblem was the fish (carp)**.

Statement 3 is correct. Literary sources such as *Silappadikaram* refer to institutions like the **Aimperunkulu** and **Enperayam**, which assisted governance.

Statement 4 is incorrect. Land revenue was a major source of income, but foreign trade was not free from customs duties. Customs constituted an important source of state revenue.

Statement 5 is correct. The Cholas dominated the fertile Kaveri basin, the Pandyas controlled southern and coastal regions, and the Cheras ruled the western hilly and coastal areas.

(Dhyani IAS Special Feature – Think Like an Examiner)

The examiner reverses the dynastic emblems in Statement 2 because these symbols are frequently confused by candidates.

From K. Sushant Sir:

"Ancient history often rewards precision. One misplaced emblem can eliminate an otherwise correct option."

71. Answer: (b) 1 and 4 only

The question tests knowledge of the ecological classification (*Tinai*) and social structure described in Sangam literature.

Statement 1 is correct. The **Kurinji** landscape represented mountainous regions associated with hunting and gathering, and its principal deity was **Murugan**.

Statement 2 is incorrect. **Mullai** was associated with pastoralism and cattle herding, and its deity was **Mayon (Vishnu)**. Agriculture and Indra were associated with **Marutam**, not Mullai.

Statement 3 is incorrect. **Palai** represented arid and desert-like regions associated with warfare, raids, and hardship. It was linked with **Korravai**, but not with pastoralism.

Statement 4 is correct. *Tolkappiyam* refers to a fourfold social classification consisting of **Arasar (rulers)**, **Anthanar (priests)**, **Vanigar (traders)**, and **Vellalar (agriculturists)**.

Statement 5 is incorrect. Groups such as **Parathavar**, **Maravar**, **Panar**, and **Pulaiyar** were very much part of Sangam society and are frequently mentioned in Sangam literature.

(Dhyani IAS Special Feature – Think Like an Examiner)

The examiner deliberately mixes up the ecological zones and their associated occupations and deities. This is a classic UPSC technique because candidates often remember the names of the landscapes but confuse their characteristics.

From K. Sushant Sir:

"For Tinai questions, never memorize only the landscape names. Learn each landscape together with its occupation, deity, and way of life as a single unit."

72. Answer: (b) 1 and 3 only

The question tests knowledge of the religious beliefs, social customs, and status of women in Sangam society. It also examines whether the candidate can distinguish between literary evidence and exaggerated generalizations regarding social life in early historic South India.

Statement 1 is correct. Murugan (Seyon) was one of the most prominent deities of the Sangam Age and was especially associated with the Kurinji (hill) region. The practice of erecting hero stones (Nadu Kal) in memory of warriors who died in battle was an important feature of Sangam culture, reflecting the high value placed on martial valour.

Statement 2 is incorrect. Women were not excluded from literary activity. Sangam literature contains compositions by several women poets, the most famous being Avvaiyar. Their contributions demonstrate that women participated in the literary and intellectual life of the period.

Statement 3 is correct. Sangam literature suggests that love marriages were socially recognized in many contexts. At the same time, references indicate the existence of sati and the social marginalization of widows among certain elite sections of society, reflecting the coexistence of diverse social practices.

(Dhyani IAS Special Feature – Think Like an Examiner)

The examiner deliberately introduces Statement 2 to test whether candidates equate ancient patriarchal societies with the complete exclusion of women from public life. UPSC often uses extreme words such as "completely," "entirely," or "no evidence" to create incorrect statements. The existence of women poets like Avvaiyar immediately invalidates such claims.

From K. Sushant Sir:

"In Ancient History, beware of absolute statements. One exception is often enough to make the entire statement wrong."

73. Answer: (a) 1 and 3 only

The question tests knowledge of the fine arts, music, dance, and performance traditions of the Sangam Age. It also evaluates whether candidates can distinguish between court patronage and the broader cultural role of performing communities.

Statement 1 is correct. Sangam literature refers to a variety of musical instruments, including the Yazh (a stringed instrument) and several types of drums. These references indicate a highly developed musical tradition.

Statement 2 is incorrect. Panar and Viraliyar were professional performers associated with music, dance, and oral traditions. Although they often enjoyed royal patronage, they were not merely court poets. Their activities extended beyond royal courts and included public and folk performances.

Statement 3 is correct. Koothu was a popular form of public entertainment that combined dance, music, acting, and storytelling. It played an important role in the cultural life of Sangam society.

(Dhyani IAS Special Feature – Think Like an Examiner)

The examiner inserts Statement 2 to test whether candidates confuse royal patronage with exclusive court affiliation. Many cultural groups received support from rulers while continuing to function as popular performers among the wider population.

From K. Sushant Sir:

"Royal patronage does not mean royal monopoly. Artists could serve courts and society simultaneously."

74. Answer: (b) 1, 3 and 4 only

The question tests knowledge of agriculture, trade, ports, and Indo-Roman commercial relations during the Sangam Age. It also examines whether candidates can distinguish exports from imports and avoid overestimating monetization.

Statement 1 is correct. Agriculture formed the backbone of the Sangam economy. Rice was the principal crop, especially in the fertile river valleys of the Chola and Pandya regions.

Statement 2 is incorrect. Although coins were used, local trade was not based primarily on a fully monetized cash economy. Barter continued to play an important role in many transactions.

Statement 3 is correct. Puhar (Kaveripattinam) emerged as one of the most important ports of the Sangam Age and served as a major centre of overseas trade, including commerce with the Roman world.

Statement 4 is correct. Roman coins of emperors such as Augustus and Nero have been discovered in Tamil Nadu, providing strong archaeological evidence for active Indo-Roman trade.

Statement 5 is incorrect. Horses, wine, and gold were largely imports into South India, whereas exports included spices, pearls, ivory, textiles, and precious stones.

(Dhyani IAS Special Feature – Think Like an Examiner)

The examiner deliberately reverses imports and exports in Statement 5. UPSC frequently tests economic history by interchanging commodities moving in opposite directions.

From K. Sushant Sir:

"Whenever trade is asked, always separate what India exported from what it imported. UPSC often creates traps by simply reversing the flow."

75. Answer: (b) Only three

The question tests knowledge of major Pratihara rulers and their achievements. It also evaluates the ability to distinguish historically verified achievements from incorrect associations.

Statement 1 is correctly matched. Nagabhata I successfully resisted Arab expansion in western India and later the Pratiharas faced Rashtrakuta pressure under rulers such as Dhruva.

Statement 2 is incorrectly matched. Vatsaraja was an important participant in the Tripartite Struggle, but Kannauj was firmly established as the imperial centre under Nagabhata II rather than Vatsaraja.

Statement 3 is incorrectly matched. Nagabhata II expanded Pratihara influence towards eastern India, but he is not credited with rebuilding the Somnath temple.

Statement 4 is correctly matched. Mihir Bhoja adopted the title "Adivaraha" and is widely regarded as the greatest ruler of the Pratihara dynasty.

Statement 5 is correctly matched. Mahendrapala I further extended Pratihara influence into Punjab and maintained the empire at its territorial peak.

Therefore, only Statements **1, 4 and 5** are correctly matched.

(Dhyani IAS Special Feature – Think Like an Examiner)

The examiner tests factual precision by attaching genuine achievements to the wrong rulers. Such questions reward careful association rather than broad historical familiarity.

From K. Sushant Sir:

"In dynasty questions, UPSC rarely changes the event; it usually changes the person associated with it."

76. Answer: (a) 1 only

The question tests understanding of the political character of Harshavardhana's reign and its place in Indian history.

Statement 1 is correct. Harshavardhana ruled from approximately 606–647 CE and emerged as the most powerful ruler of northern India after the Guptas. His reign is often viewed as one of the last major phases of political consolidation before the rise of regional kingdoms in the early medieval period.

Statement 2 is incorrect. Harsha did not recreate the fully centralized imperial structure of the Gupta Empire. His administration exhibited growing regionalization and reliance on subordinate rulers, reflecting broader early medieval trends.

(Dhyani IAS Special Feature – Think Like an Examiner)

The examiner often uses Harsha to test the transition from Ancient to Early Medieval India. Candidates should avoid assuming that every large empire was equally centralized.

From K. Sushant Sir:

"A large empire does not automatically mean a centralized empire. Territorial size and administrative structure are separate concepts."

77. Answer: (c)

The question tests understanding of Harshavardhana's role in the transition from the ancient to the early medieval political order.

Option (a) is correct. Harsha's reign is commonly viewed as a transitional phase between the Gupta imperial tradition and the rise of regional kingdoms.

Option (b) is correct. Even during Harsha's rule, tendencies toward decentralization and regional political assertion continued.

Option (c) is not correct. Harsha did not restore an all-India empire identical to the Gupta Empire. His authority was largely concentrated in northern India, and his administrative structure reflected important early medieval features.

Option (d) is correct. Harsha is generally regarded as one of the last major rulers before a prolonged phase of regional political fragmentation.

(Dhyani IAS Special Feature – Think Like an Examiner)

The examiner uses Option (c) to test whether candidates equate political influence with complete imperial restoration. Historical continuity rarely means exact replication.

From K. Sushant Sir:

"History often repeats patterns, not structures. Similarity does not mean identity."

78. Answer: (a) 1, 2 and 4 only

The question tests knowledge of the political expansion and administrative character of the Pushyabhuti (Vardhana) Empire under Harshavardhana. It also examines whether the candidate can distinguish between direct imperial control and feudatory relationships in early medieval India.

Statement 1 is correct. Harshavardhana ascended the throne of Thaneshwar in 606 CE after the death of his elder brother Rajyavardhana. He assumed power at a relatively young age during a period of political crisis and subsequently consolidated the Vardhana kingdom.

Statement 2 is correct. Harsha's empire was among the largest political formations of seventh-century India. His influence extended from Kamarupa in the east to the Narmada in the south, although the degree of control varied across regions.

Statement 3 is incorrect. The Vardhana Empire was not a completely centralized state. Like many early medieval polities, it consisted of both directly administered territories and subordinate feudatory regions. Political authority was often exercised through alliances and tributary relationships.

Statement 4 is correct. Harsha exercised authority over a combination of directly ruled territories and feudatory states. Regions such as Kamarupa maintained a degree of autonomy while acknowledging Harsha's supremacy.

(Dhyani IAS Special Feature – Think Like an Examiner)

The examiner deliberately introduces Statement 3 to test whether candidates project the highly centralized Mauryan model onto all large empires. In early medieval India, political influence often extended beyond direct administration through networks of feudatories and allies.

From K. Sushant Sir:

"A large empire may have wide influence, but influence and direct administration are not the same thing."

79. Answer: (c) 1, 3 and 5 only

The question tests knowledge of Harsha's administrative system and the nature of governance in post-Gupta India.

Statement 1 is correct. Harsha's administration broadly followed Gupta administrative traditions while adapting to changing political realities. Several Gupta-era institutions continued, though greater importance was given to feudatories and regional chiefs.

Statement 2 is incorrect. Harsha's empire was not a fully centralized bureaucratic state. Feudatories, tributary rulers, and regional chiefs played an important role in governance and military affairs.

Statement 3 is correct. Xuanzang spent several years in Harsha's dominions and left detailed accounts of administration, society, economy, religion, and education. His writings are among the most valuable sources for the period.

Statement 4 is incorrect. Scarcity of coinage is generally viewed as evidence of declining monetization and urban commercial activity compared to the Gupta period, not a strong monetized economy.

Statement 5 is correct. The presence of Mahasamantas indicates the growing significance of feudatory chiefs in administration and military organization, a characteristic feature of early medieval political structures.

(Dhyani IAS Special Feature – Think Like an Examiner)

The examiner often reverses the interpretation of economic evidence. Here, scarcity of coinage is incorrectly linked with economic prosperity, whereas historians generally associate it with reduced monetization.

From K. Sushant Sir:

"In history, evidence must be interpreted carefully. Less coinage usually indicates less monetization, not more."

80. Answer: (c) Both 1 and 2

The question tests knowledge of literary achievements and educational institutions during Harsha's reign.

Statement 1 is correct. Harshavardhana is traditionally credited with composing the Sanskrit plays *Nagananda*, *Ratnavali*, and *Priyadarshika*. These works reflect the flourishing literary culture of his court.

Statement 2 is correct. Nalanda University attained great prominence during Harsha's reign. It attracted students from different parts of Asia and offered instruction in Buddhist philosophy, grammar, logic, medicine, astronomy, and other disciplines.

(Dhyani IAS Special Feature – Think Like an Examiner)

The examiner combines political history with cultural history to test whether candidates remember that several ancient rulers were also patrons and contributors to literature.

From K. Sushant Sir:

"UPSC often asks rulers not only as conquerors but also as patrons of culture, literature, and education."

81. Answer: (b) 1-B, 2-C, 3-A, 4-D

The question tests knowledge of social structure, religious policy, and social conditions during Harsha's reign.

Pair 1 is correctly matched. The varna system remained an important organizing principle of society, which was divided into Brahmanas, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, and Shudras, along with numerous sub-castes.

Pair 2 is correctly matched. The position of women showed signs of decline among higher social groups, with practices such as sati and restrictions on widow remarriage becoming more visible.

Pair 3 is correctly matched. Harsha organized a grand religious assembly at Kanyakubja (Kannauj) to promote Mahayana Buddhism and display religious patronage.

Pair 4 is correctly matched. Although Harsha increasingly supported Mahayana Buddhism, he remained tolerant toward other religious traditions, including Brahmanism and Jainism.

(Dhyani IAS Special Feature – Think Like an Examiner)

Matching questions often test whether candidates confuse social features with religious events. Careful association of concepts is more important than memorizing isolated facts.

From K. Sushant Sir:

"In match-the-following questions, eliminate obviously misplaced pairs before searching for the correct answer."

82. Answer: (b) 1, 2, 3 and 5 only

The question tests knowledge of Pallava political history, major rulers, and contributions to art and architecture.

Statement 1 is correct. The Pallavas ruled large parts of south-eastern India, and Kanchipuram emerged as their principal political and cultural centre.

Statement 2 is correct. Simhavishnu is generally regarded as the founder of the Imperial Pallava line. He defeated the Kalabhras and expanded Pallava influence in Tamil country.

Statement 3 is correct. Mahendravarman I initiated the prolonged Pallava-Chalukya conflict and was also an important patron of art, literature, and rock-cut architecture.

Statement 4 is incorrect. The Shore Temple at Mamallapuram is associated with Narasimhavarman II (Rajasimha), not Narasimhavarman I (Mamalla). Narasimhavarman I is primarily remembered for defeating Pulakeshin II and for the monolithic rathas at Mamallapuram.

Statement 5 is correct. Narasimhavarman II (Rajasimha) is associated with the magnificent Kailasanatha Temple at Kanchipuram and enjoyed a comparatively peaceful reign that facilitated architectural activity.

(Dhyani IAS Special Feature – Think Like an Examiner)

The examiner frequently interchanges monuments between rulers of the same dynasty. Here, the Shore Temple is deliberately attached to Narasimhavarman I instead of Narasimhavarman II.

From K. Sushant Sir:

"UPSC loves monument-ruler traps. Always connect a monument to its patron ruler, not merely to the dynasty."

83. Answer: (b) 2 only

The question tests knowledge of Pallava administration, local governance, revenue system, and religious developments.

Statement 1 is correct. The Pallava state was monarchical, and the king functioned as the supreme authority in administration, justice, and military affairs.

Statement 2 is not correct. Local administration was not entirely centralized. Village assemblies such as the Sabha (Brahmadeya villages) and Ur (ordinary villages) played a significant role in local governance and self-administration.

Statement 3 is correct. Land revenue constituted the principal source of state income, supplemented by taxes on professions, trade, and other economic activities.

Statement 4 is correct. The Bhakti movement gained strength under the influence of the Alvars and Nayanars, contributing significantly to the growth of Vaishnavism and Saivism in South India.

(Dhyani IAS Special Feature – Think Like an Examiner)

The examiner inserts the word "entirely" in Statement 2 to create an incorrect statement. Pallava administration combined royal authority with active local institutions.

From K. Sushant Sir:

"Whenever UPSC uses words like 'entirely', 'completely', or 'fully', verify them carefully. Ancient Indian administration was usually more nuanced than such absolutes suggest."

84. Answer: (b) 1, 2 and 3 only

The question tests knowledge of education, literature, and cultural developments during the Pallava period. It also examines whether the candidate can distinguish between patronage of multiple literary traditions and exclusive state support for a single language.

Statement 1 is correct. Kanchi (Kanchipuram) emerged as one of the foremost centres of learning in South India during the Pallava period. It attracted scholars of religion, philosophy, grammar, and literature and gained recognition as an important intellectual centre.

Statement 2 is correct. *Mattavilasa Prahasana*, a Sanskrit satirical play, was composed by Mahendravarman I. The work provides valuable insights into the religious and social life of the period and reflects the literary accomplishments of the Pallava court.

Statement 3 is correct. The Pallava age witnessed the flourishing of the Bhakti movement in Tamil Nadu. The devotional hymns of the Alvars (Vaishnava saints) and Nayanars (Shaiva saints) played a significant role in the growth of Tamil Bhakti literature and religious culture.

Statement 4 is incorrect. The Pallavas patronized both Sanskrit and Tamil literature. While Tamil devotional literature flourished under their rule, Sanskrit also received substantial royal support, as reflected in inscriptions, literary works, and courtly culture.

(Dhyani IAS Special Feature – Think Like an Examiner)

The examiner introduces Statement 4 to test the tendency to treat cultural revival as linguistic exclusivity. In Ancient and Early Medieval India, the patronage of one language rarely implied the suppression of another. The Pallavas simultaneously supported Sanskrit scholarship and Tamil literary traditions.

From K. Sushant Sir:

"In UPSC, cultural growth is usually additive, not exclusive. Patronage of one language does not automatically mean hostility toward another."

85. Answer: (b) 1, 2 and 4 only

The question tests knowledge of the evolution of the Chalukya dynasty and its various branches. It also examines whether candidates can correctly place the Eastern and Western Chalukyas within the broader political history of South India.

Statement 1 is correct. The Chalukyas ruled large parts of southern and central India through different branches, including the Badami Chalukyas, Eastern Chalukyas of Vengi, and Western Chalukyas of Kalyani, between the sixth and twelfth centuries CE.

Statement 2 is correct. The Badami Chalukyas rose amidst the decline of earlier regional powers such as the Kadambas and attained imperial stature under Pulakesi II, who expanded Chalukya influence across much of the Deccan.

Statement 3 is incorrect. The Eastern Chalukyas did not emerge after the decline of the Rashtrakutas. They were founded in the seventh century CE when Pulakesi II appointed his brother Vishnuvardhana as ruler of Vengi. Their origin therefore predates the Rashtrakutas by several centuries.

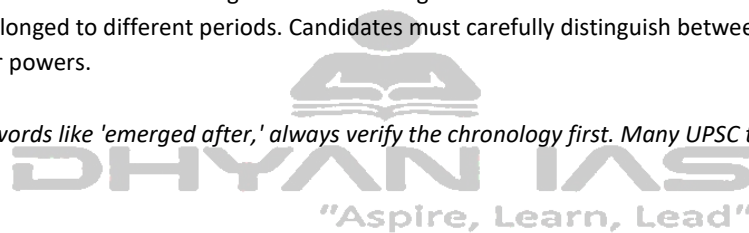
Statement 4 is correct. The Western Chalukyas were revived by Tailapa II in the late tenth century CE after overthrowing the Rashtrakutas. Their capital was established at Basavakalyan (Kalyani).

(Dhyani IAS Special Feature – Think Like an Examiner)

The examiner places Statement 3 to test chronological understanding. UPSC often creates confusion by connecting two historically important dynasties that belonged to different periods. Candidates must carefully distinguish between the origin of a dynasty and its later interactions with other powers.

From K. Sushant Sir:

"When a statement contains words like 'emerged after,' always verify the chronology first. Many UPSC traps collapse once the timeline is clear."



86. Answer: (c) 2 only

The question tests understanding of the historical significance of the Chalukyas and their contribution to state formation, architecture, and literature in South India. It also examines whether candidates can separate regional achievements from exaggerated claims of political unification.

Statement 1 is correct. The rise of the Badami Chalukyas marked the emergence of larger territorial kingdoms in South India, replacing many smaller regional political formations and contributing to greater political integration in the Deccan.

Statement 2 is not correct. The Chalukyas never unified the entire Indian subcontinent under a single political authority. Their influence was extensive in the Deccan and parts of South India, but it did not extend over the whole subcontinent.

Statement 3 is correct. The Vesara style of architecture developed under the Chalukyas and is generally regarded as a synthesis of Nagara (northern) and Dravida (southern) architectural traditions.

Statement 4 is correct. The Chalukyas provided important patronage to Kannada literature. Jain, Brahmanical, and later Veerashaiva traditions contributed significantly to the growth of Kannada literary culture.

(Dhyani IAS Special Feature – Think Like an Examiner)

The examiner uses Statement 2 to test recognition of absolute claims. Words such as "entire," "all," "completely," and "first time" frequently signal overstatements in UPSC questions and therefore deserve careful scrutiny.

From K. Sushant Sir:

"Empires may be powerful without being universal. In UPSC, beware of statements that convert regional dominance into subcontinental control."

87. Answer: (d) 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5

The question tests knowledge of the diverse sources used for reconstructing Chalukyan history, including inscriptions, foreign accounts, and literary works. It also examines the candidate's ability to connect specific sources with particular branches of the Chalukya dynasty.

Statement 1 is correct. Inscriptions from sites such as Badami and Pattadakal are important primary sources for understanding Chalukyan political, religious, and cultural history.

Statement 2 is correct. The Chinese pilgrim Hiuen-Tsang visited the court of Pulakesi II and left a valuable account describing the Chalukya kingdom, its administration, and society.

Statement 3 is correct. The Aihole inscription, composed by Ravikirti during the reign of Pulakesi II, is one of the most important sources for Chalukyan history and records military achievements and political developments.

Statement 4 is correct. *Vikramankadeva Charita*, written by Bilhana, is a major literary source for the history of the Western Chalukyas, especially the reign of Vikramaditya VI.

Statement 5 is correct. The inscription at the Kailasanatha Temple in Kanchi is associated with Vikramaditya II and commemorates Chalukya victories over the Pallavas while also reflecting cultural interactions between the two dynasties.

(Dhyani IAS Special Feature – Think Like an Examiner)

The examiner combines inscriptional, literary, and foreign sources in a single question to test whether candidates understand that historical reconstruction depends upon multiple categories of evidence rather than a single source type.

From K. Sushant Sir:

"A good historian never relies on one source alone. UPSC rewards candidates who can connect inscriptions, literature, and foreign accounts into a coherent historical picture."

88. Answer: (a) 1 and 2 only

The question tests knowledge of major rulers and events associated with the Badami Chalukyas and examines whether candidates can correctly match rulers with their historical achievements.

Pair 1 is incorrectly matched. Pulakesi I established the Chalukya dynasty and made Vatapi (Badami) his capital. Therefore, the description given in Pair 1 does not correspond correctly.

Pair 2 is incorrectly matched. Pulakesi II was the ruler who confronted Harsha and extended Chalukya influence up to the Narmada. Hence the description attached to Pair 2 is not correctly matched.

Pair 3 is correctly matched. Vikramaditya I restored Chalukya power after setbacks inflicted by the Pallavas and re-established Chalukya authority.

Pair 4 is correctly matched. Dantidurga overthrew the last Badami Chalukya ruler and established Rashtrakuta supremacy in the Deccan.

(Dhyani IAS Special Feature – Think Like an Examiner)

The examiner deliberately exchanges the achievements of famous rulers. UPSC often tests whether candidates truly know historical personalities or merely recognize familiar names.

From K. Sushant Sir:

"In matching questions, UPSC frequently swaps achievements among well-known rulers. Always verify both the person and the event before accepting a pair."

89. Answer: (c) 3 only

The question tests knowledge of the origin, achievements, and decline of the Western Chalukyas of Kalyani. It also examines whether candidates can distinguish them from the earlier Badami Chalukyas.

Statement 1 is correct. Tailapa II revived Chalukya power in 973 CE by overthrowing the Rashtrakutas and establishing the Western Chalukya dynasty of Kalyani.

Statement 2 is correct. Vikramaditya VI is widely regarded as the greatest ruler of the dynasty. His reign witnessed political stability, territorial expansion, and significant achievements in Kannada culture and literature.

Statement 3 is not correct. The Kalyani Chalukyas were not founded by Pulakesi II. They were established centuries later by Tailapa II after the fall of the Rashtrakutas.

Statement 4 is correct. The Western Chalukyas gradually declined and were eventually replaced by rising regional powers such as the Hoysalas, Kakatiyas, and Seunas (Yadavas).

(Dhyani IAS Special Feature – Think Like an Examiner)

The examiner uses Statement 3 to test dynastic differentiation. Students often confuse the Badami Chalukyas with the later Western Chalukyas because both belonged to the broader Chalukya tradition.

From K. Sushant Sir:

"A dynasty may share a name across centuries, but that does not mean it is the same political entity. Always separate origin, revival, and continuation."

90. Answer: (c) 1-B, 2-C, 3-A, 4-D

The question tests knowledge of the evolution of Chalukyan architecture and the relationship between architectural styles and dynastic patronage. It also examines whether the candidate can distinguish between the origin of an architectural style and its later refinement.

Pair 1 is correctly matched. The **Vesara style** is generally understood as a synthesis of the North Indian Nagara and South Indian Dravida architectural traditions.

Pair 2 is correctly matched. The **Karnataka Dravida style** represents a more developed and refined architectural tradition associated with Karnataka, displaying stronger Dravidian characteristics while retaining certain Vesara elements.

Pair 3 is correctly matched. The **Badami Chalukyas** are associated with the rock-cut caves of Badami and the structural temples of Aihole and Pattadakal, which mark an important phase in the evolution of early medieval Indian temple architecture.

Pair 4 is correctly matched. The **Kalyani (Western) Chalukyas** developed their monuments primarily in the Tungabhadra–Krishna doab region and played a major role in refining the Vesara style.

(Dhyani IAS Special Feature – Think Like an Examiner)

The examiner tests whether candidates can differentiate between the architectural contributions of the Badami Chalukyas and the Kalyani Chalukyas. UPSC often asks questions where one dynasty initiates a tradition and another perfects it.

From K. Sushant Sir:

"In architecture, identify who pioneered a style and who refined it. UPSC frequently tests this distinction."

91. Answer: (c) 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5

The question tests knowledge of the administrative, military, religious, economic, and social features of the Badami Chalukya state. It also examines whether candidates can identify multiple inaccuracies hidden within apparently factual statements.

Statement 1 is incorrect. The administrative hierarchy is wrongly arranged. Vishayas were not the highest administrative units. Larger territorial divisions such as Rashtras or Maharashtra existed above Vishayas.

Statement 2 is incorrect. The Chalukyas did not exclusively patronize Shaivism. They supported multiple religious traditions, including Vaishnavism, Jainism, and Buddhism.

Statement 3 is incorrect. Chalukya coinage was not limited to a uniform gold standard. Coins of different metals were issued and often carried symbols and inscriptions.

Statement 4 is incorrect. Although the Chalukya military included infantry, cavalry, elephants, and naval elements, the term *Karnatabala* belongs to Rashtrakuta inscriptions and cannot be treated as direct evidence for the Badami Chalukya army.

Statement 5 is incorrect. Women were not completely excluded from public life. Epigraphic evidence indicates that royal women participated in religious endowments and occasionally exercised administrative influence.

(Dhyani IAS Special Feature – Think Like an Examiner)

The examiner deliberately uses words such as "**purely**," "**only**," and "**completely**." In Ancient Indian History, such absolute expressions are frequently indicators of incorrect statements.

From K. Sushant Sir:

"History is usually complex. Whenever UPSC uses words like 'only', 'always', 'entirely', or 'completely', verify them carefully."

92. Answer: (A) 1, 2 and 3 only

The question tests awareness of recent developments in Indian Railways, particularly infrastructure modernization, freight connectivity, and technological advancement.

Statement 1 is correct. The record capital expenditure of Indian Railways is aimed at expanding high-speed rail infrastructure, strengthening freight corridors, increasing capacity, and enhancing safety systems such as Kavach.

Statement 2 is correct. The proposed High-Speed Rail corridors are expected to cover nearly 4,000 kilometres and involve substantial investment for railway modernization.

Statement 3 is correct. A Dankuni–Surat Dedicated Freight Corridor has been proposed to strengthen East–West industrial and trade connectivity.

Statement 4 is incorrect. India has significantly expanded indigenous capabilities in rolling stock, signalling systems, locomotives, trainsets, and related railway technologies. Therefore, it is incorrect to state that the country remains dependent on imports for most advanced railway propulsion systems.

(Dhyani IAS Special Feature – Think Like an Examiner)

The examiner combines factual announcements with a broader technological claim. Candidates often overlook exaggeration in statements related to self-reliance and indigenous capability.

From K. Sushant Sir:

"A statement may become incorrect not because the fact is false, but because it exaggerates the extent of that fact."

93. Answer: (D) 1, 2 and 4 only

The question tests knowledge of India's recent agricultural cooperation initiatives with neighbouring countries and the institutional mechanisms supporting them.

Statement 1 is correct. India has agreed to support Nepal through improved agricultural cooperation, including access to advanced seed varieties aimed at enhancing productivity and food security.

Statement 2 is correct. Agricultural cooperation includes research collaboration through the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), including institutions located at Pusa, New Delhi.

Statement 3 is incorrect. No new bilateral MoU specifically dedicated to livestock disease management between India and Maldives was concluded under the reported cooperation framework.

Statement 4 is correct. Institutional mechanisms, including joint working arrangements and collaborative frameworks, are being used to strengthen India–Nepal agricultural cooperation.

(Dhyani IAS Special Feature – Think Like an Examiner)

The examiner inserts a highly specific claim in Statement 3. UPSC often places a fabricated but plausible-looking detail among otherwise correct statements.

From K. Sushant Sir:

"The most dangerous current-affairs statement is the one that sounds highly specific and highly believable at the same time."

94. Answer: (D) 2, 3 and 4 only

The question tests understanding of India's pharmaceutical self-reliance initiatives and the distinction between different schemes operating in the pharmaceutical sector.

Statement 1 is incorrect. Bulk Drug Parks are implemented through a separate Central Sector Scheme and are not part of the PLI Scheme for Pharmaceuticals.

Statement 2 is correct. Bulk Drug Parks have been approved in Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, and Himachal Pradesh.

Statement 3 is correct. The PLI Scheme for Bulk Drugs provides incentives for manufacturing identified Key Starting Materials (KSMs), Drug Intermediates (DIs), and Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients (APIs), primarily through greenfield projects.

Statement 4 is correct. The Bulk Drug Park Scheme provides Central assistance of up to ₹1,000 crore per approved park for common infrastructure facilities.

(Dhyani IAS Special Feature – Think Like an Examiner)

The examiner tests whether candidates confuse two schemes belonging to the same sector. UPSC frequently frames questions around related schemes with different objectives.

From K. Sushant Sir:

"Whenever two schemes belong to the same sector, first identify their objective, then identify their implementation mechanism."

95. Answer: (E) 1, 2 and 4 only

(The correct combination is not provided among the given options.)

The question tests understanding of responsible AI deployment in governance and the principles necessary for scaling AI systems in public administration.

Statement 1 is correct. Evidence-based evaluation, scientific validation, and impact assessment are essential before deploying AI systems on a large scale in government.

Statement 2 is correct. High-quality and structured datasets improve the accuracy, reliability, and effectiveness of AI systems in banking, finance, and governance.

Statement 3 is incorrect. Phone metadata alone cannot accurately predict short-term vulnerability in public service delivery. Reliable AI systems require multiple datasets, contextual information, and continuous validation.

Statement 4 is correct. Pilot testing, third-party audits, transparency mechanisms, and independent evaluation were highlighted as important safeguards for responsible AI deployment.

(Dhyani IAS Special Feature – Think Like an Examiner)

The examiner introduces Statement 3 to test whether candidates overestimate the predictive power of AI. UPSC increasingly emphasizes responsible technology rather than technological determinism.

From K. Sushant Sir:

"Technology can assist governance, but it cannot replace evidence, context, and human judgment."

96. Answer: (A) 1 and 2 only

The question tests knowledge of the methodology and findings of the TRAI Independent Drive Test (IDT) conducted in Delhi LSA and assesses awareness of telecom service quality indicators.

Statement 1 is correct. The IDT covered both voice and data quality parameters. Voice-related indicators included Call Setup Success Rate (CSSR), Drop Call Rate (DCR), and Mean Opinion Score (MOS), while data-related parameters included latency and throughput measurements.

Statement 2 is correct. Reliance Jio Infocomm Ltd. (RJIL) recorded higher average 5G/4G download speeds than Airtel in the overall data performance assessment conducted during the Delhi LSA drive test.

Statement 3 is incorrect. MTNL was not reported as a provider of operational 4G and 5G services in the Delhi LSA drive test results in the manner suggested by the statement.

Statement 4 is incorrect. Vodafone Idea (VIL) did not record a zero drop-call rate in auto-selection mode across the entire test area.

(Dhyani IAS Special Feature – Think Like an Examiner)

The examiner combines technical telecom indicators with operator-specific performance results. UPSC often tests whether candidates can distinguish between performance parameters and the comparative rankings of service providers.

From K. Sushant Sir:

"In current affairs, remember both the indicator and the performer. UPSC often makes the indicator correct but changes the performer, or vice versa."

97. Answer: (C) 1 and 2 only

The question tests knowledge of the PLI Scheme for Food Processing and its role in employment generation, industrial growth, and the broader development agenda.

Statement 1 is correct. The PLI Scheme for Food Processing has achieved employment generation beyond its initially projected targets, reflecting increasing investments and expansion in food processing activities.

Statement 2 is correct. The approved outlay of the PLI Scheme for Food Processing is ₹10,900 crore.

Statement 3 is incorrect. It is incorrect to state that 100% utilization of released funds has already been achieved. Fund disbursement and utilization continue according to project implementation schedules.

Statement 4 is incorrect. Although the food processing sector contributes to value addition, rural development, and economic transformation, the statement overextends the specific conclusions drawn from ANVESH-2026.

(Dhyani IAS Special Feature – Think Like an Examiner)

The examiner combines a correct numerical fact with an exaggerated implementation claim. UPSC frequently tests whether candidates confuse scheme achievements with complete utilization or completion.

From K. Sushant Sir:

"A scheme may exceed targets and still not achieve full fund utilization. Targets and utilization measure different things."

98. Answer: (B) 1, 2 and 3 only

The question tests knowledge of the PM MITRA Scheme and the progress of the textile mega park being developed at Virudhnagar in Tamil Nadu.

Statement 1 is correct. PM MITRA aims to create integrated textile value-chain infrastructure covering activities from fibre production to finished textile products.

Statement 2 is correct. Approximately **190 acres** have been allotted to investors, with committed investments exceeding ₹2,000 crore.

Statement 3 is correct. The project incorporates environmentally sustainable infrastructure, including **Zero Liquid Discharge (ZLD)** processing facilities.

Statement 4 is incorrect. The project is not expected to be completed by December 2026. The expected completion timeline extends beyond that date.

(Dhyani IAS Special Feature – Think Like an Examiner)

The examiner inserts an incorrect timeline into an otherwise factual set of statements. UPSC often changes years and deadlines while keeping all other details correct.

From K. Sushant Sir:

"When figures, locations and objectives are correct, always verify the timeline separately. UPSC frequently hides the error in the date."

99. Answer: (A) 1 and 2 only

The question tests awareness of recent legislative reforms concerning boilers and the objectives of industrial policy discussions related to the sector.

Statement 1 is correct. The **Boilers Act, 2025** replaced the older **Boilers Act, 1923** after legislative review and re-enactment.

Statement 2 is correct. One objective of the Chintan Shivir on Boilers was to align industrial modernization and regulatory reforms with the broader Vision 2047 framework.

Statement 3 is incorrect. The re-enacted Act did not specifically come into force on **1 May 2025** as stated.

Statement 4 is incorrect. The Chintan Shivir focused on modernization, safety, regulation, and ease of doing business rather than subsidy schemes for boiler manufacturers.

(Dhyani IAS Special Feature – Think Like an Examiner)

The examiner combines legislative facts with administrative implementation details. UPSC frequently inserts an incorrect commencement date into an otherwise correct legal statement.

From K. Sushant Sir:

"Never assume that the date of enactment and the date of enforcement are identical. UPSC often exploits this distinction."

100. Answer: (B) 1, 2 and 4 only

The question tests understanding of the objectives, beneficiaries, and components of the PM E-DRIVE Scheme.

Statement 1 is correct. The scheme provides upfront demand incentives to eligible electric vehicle buyers, which are subsequently reimbursed to Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs).

Statement 2 is correct. The scheme supports deployment of electric buses primarily in major urban centres, particularly cities with populations above four million.

Statement 3 is incorrect. PM E-DRIVE supports EV adoption and charging infrastructure, but it is not designed as a vehicle-manufacturing subsidy programme. Manufacturing incentives are addressed through separate policy mechanisms.

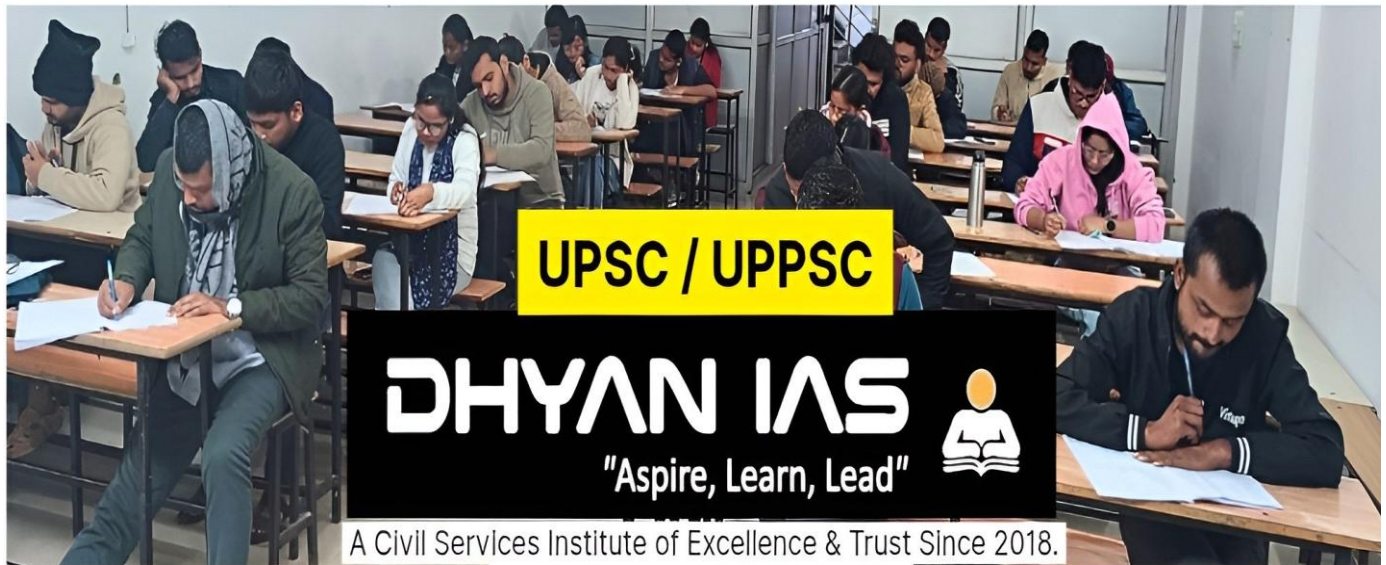
Statement 4 is correct. The scheme provides targeted support for **e-ambulances** and **e-trucks** in addition to electric two-wheelers, three-wheelers, and buses.

(Dhyani IAS Special Feature – Think Like an Examiner)

The examiner tests whether candidates can distinguish between demand-side incentives and production-side incentives. UPSC often mixes features of different EV-related schemes in the same question.

From K. Sushant Sir:

"Whenever a scheme involves incentives, first identify who receives the benefit—consumer, producer, or infrastructure provider. Many UPSC traps are built around this distinction."

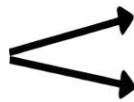


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