

# UNIT 151 – UPSC - Answering A Question

There are a few ways of setting question on this topic:

- (a) a brief history of Indo-Greeks and their impact on Indian civilization.
- (b) History of the foreigners who came in the wake of the fall of the Roman empire and their impact on Indian civilization.
- (c) A question on Kushans or Kanishka.
- (d) Out of the southern kingdoms, the likely thing is the history of Satavahanas and their impact.
- (e) History of the significance of the Sungas and Kanvas.

While attempting questions on the aforesaid topics, candidates have been facing two difficulties - (i) inadequate information because of not memorizing the points, and (ii) and lack of information on special aspects.

The candidates must be able to correct the first failing. Regarding the second, the following are the principal heads.

"Kanishka - hardly belongs to the history of India". The questions requires that first of all, you should show how Kanishka cannot be regarded as a true Indian ruler. In the second part of the answer, you should show that it is unfair to estimate him like that. And in the conclusion, you should maintain that there is a considerable amount of truth in the given statement when you view history from a particular standpoint. Regarding the first part of answer, the following are the points :-

- (i) his capital was located almost on the outer fringes of the Indian sub-continent, i.e.- Peshawar,
- (ii) his primary interest was to conquer areas in central Asia and compete with the Chinese for suzerainty over that area - historical evidence shows that he was smothered to death by his soldiers who were tired of his exploits in Central Asia and his battles with the Chinese;
- (iii) Kanishka did not identify himself with India since he vaguely patronized Buddhism and Buddhism did not stay in India as a religion of any significance;
- (iv) The Gandhara School of art that came into existence during his period remained an exotic tradition but not an Indian one, since it was the tradition of Mathura school that finally became the tradition of India, It is interesting to observe that a statue of Kanishka has been found in Mathura, but its head is missing.

In the second part, mention the following points:--

Kanishka was an eclectic ruler just as Harhsa. Even Akbar's Din-I-Illahi had eclectic traits. Also, it is interesting to note that some of his followers were adherents of Vaishnavism,

(i) to say that Buddhism has no place in the history of India is too narrow a view. The influence of Buddhism was very wide and very varied - the Buddhist monks created Ajanta frescos, the Buddhist stupas and rock-cut chaityas influenced the later-day Hindu architecture, the Sangha and the Bhikkus of Buddhism later appeared as mutts and Sanyasis of Sankaracharya; Buddhist writers enriched Sanskrit literature, and it was Buddhism that compelled Hinduism to set its house in order.

(ii) It is unfair to treat him as a foreign ruler because of Kanishka's capital being located in Peshawar. During the time of Kanishka, new trade routes were opened towards West Asia and Central Asia. Moreover, you should remember that the happenings in Central Asia very often influenced the history of India as remarked by a writer, a good understanding of Indian history required, an understanding of the history of Central Asia.

(iii) Kanishka's patronage of learning was in tune with the Patronage of learning by rulers of India like Samudragupta, Chandragupta II, Amoghavarsha and many others. Even the very establishment of Kanishka's rule forced the Sakas to go south ward which checkmated the ambitions of the Satavahanas.