Ancient History · GS - I

Analyze the importance of Ashokan inscriptions for reconstructing Mauryan history.

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
2026	GS - I	Ancient History

MARKS	WORD LIMIT
10	~150 words

Answer Hint

Primary source, Ashoka’s Dhamma, administration, Kalinga War, territorial extent, welfare measures, religious tolerance, language and scripts, chronology, limitations

Model Answer

Ashokan inscriptions constitute one of the most authentic primary sources for reconstructing Mauryan history, particularly the reign of Ashoka.

They provide direct information about Ashoka’s administrative system, including officials such as Dhamma-Mahamatras, and indicate the geographical extent of his empire. Rock Edict XIII gives valuable evidence about the Kalinga War and Ashoka’s subsequent emphasis on Dhamma. The inscriptions also illuminate his policy of religious tolerance, non-violence, compassion and social welfare, including provisions for medical treatment, wells and roads.

Their use of Prakrit and regional scripts such as Brahmi and Kharosthi provides insights into the linguistic and cultural diversity of the empire. The identification of Devanampiya Piyadassi with Ashoka also helped establish Mauryan chronology.

However, inscriptions largely represent the official perspective and provide limited information about ordinary people, economic structures and the lives of subjects.

Thus, corroborated with archaeological and literary evidence, Ashokan inscriptions remain indispensable for reconstructing Mauryan political, social and cultural history.