

History Part - 7

7] Maurya Empire

MAURYAN EMPIRE NOTES

Mauryan Empire (321 – 184 BC)

- The foundation of the Mauryan Empire opens a new era in the history of India and for the first time, the political unity was achieved in India.
- The history writing has also become clear from this period due to accuracy in chronology and sources. Besides plenty of indigenous and foreign literary sources, a number of epigraphical records are also available to write the history of this period.

RISE OF MAURYAS

- The last of the Nanda rulers, Dhana Nanda was highly unpopular due to his oppressive tax regime.
- Also, post Alexander's invasion of North-Western India, that region faced a lot of unrest from foreign powers.
- They were ruled by Indo-Greek rulers.
- Chandragupta, with the help of an intelligent and politically astute Brahmin, Kautilya usurped the throne by defeating Dhana Nanda in 321 BC.

Approximate Dates of Mourya Dynasty		
Emperor	Reign start	Reign end
Chandragupta Mourya	322 B.C.E.	298 B.C.E.
Bindusara	297 B.C.E.	272 B.C.E.
Asoka The Great	273 B.C.E.	232 B.C.E.
Dasaratha	232 B.C.E.	224 B.C.E.
Samprati	224 B.C.E.	215 B.C.E.
Salisuka	215 B.C.E.	202 B.C.E.
Devavarman	202 B.C.E.	195 B.C.E.
Satadhanvan	195 B.C.E.	187 B.C.E.
Brihadratha	187 B.C.E.	185 B.C.E.

Chandragupta Maurya (322 – 298 B.C.)

- Chandragupta Maurya was the first ruler who unified entire country into one political unit, called the Mauryan Empire.
- He had captured Pataliputra from Dhanananda, who was the last ruler of the Nanda dynasty.
- He didn't do achieve this feat alone, he was assisted by Kautilya, who was also known as Vishnugupta or Chanakya. Some scholars think that Chanakya was the real architect of this empire.
- After establishing his reign in the Gangetic valley, Chandragupta Maurya marched to the northwest and conquered territories upto the Indus. In the north, he occupied the region north of river Narmada.

- In 305 B.C., he defeated Selukas Niketar, who was controlling the northwestern part of India that was under greek control.
- A treaty was concluded, under which, Selukas Niketar ceded the territories of Kabul, Kandhar, Herat, Baluchistan – to the Mauryan Empire. He gave his daughter in marriage to the Mauryan Prince.
- Seleucus sent Megasthenes to the Mauryan court as Greek ambassador.
- Greeks called him Sandrocottas.
- He established a vast empire, extending from Afganistan to Assam and from Kashmir to Karnataka(except Kalinga).
- Later in life, Chandragupta embraced Jainism and stepped down from the throne for his son Bindusara to take over. Thereafterm he went to Sravana Belgola, in Karnataka along with Jain monks who were led by Bhadrabhagu and starved himself to death.

Bindusara (298 – 273 B.C.)

- Bindusara was called by the Greeks as “Amitragatha” meaning slayer of enemies.
- He is said to have conquered the Deccan up to Mysore. Taranatha, the Tibetan monk states that Bindusara conquered 16 states comprising ‘the land between the two seas.

- The Sangam Tamil literature also confirms the Mauryan invasion of the far south. The Mauryan Empire under Bindusara extended up to Mysore
- Bindusara received Deimachus as ambassador from the Syrian king Antiochus I. Bindusara wrote to Antiochus I asking for sweet wine, dried figs and a sophist. The latter sent all but a sophist because the Greek law prohibited sending a sophist.
- Bindusara supported the Ajivikas, a religious sect. Bindusara appointed his son Asoka as the governor of Ujjain.

CHANAKYA

- Teacher of Chandragupta Maurya, who was also his Chief Minister.
- Brahmin by birth, he was a teacher and scholar at Taxila. Other names are Vishnugupta and Chanakya.
- He was also a minister in the court of Bindusara.
- He is credited to be the master strategist behind the usurping of the Nanda throne and the rise of the Mauryan Empire through his student, Chandragupta.
- He wrote Arthashastra which is a treatise on statecraft, economics, and military strategy.

- Arthashastra was rediscovered by R Shamasastri in 1905 after it had disappeared in the 12th century.
- The work contains 15 books and 180 chapters. The main theme is divided into:
 - King, Council of Ministers and Departments of the Government
 - Civil and criminal law
 - Diplomacy of war
- It also contains information on trade and markets, method to screen ministers, spies, duties of a king, ethics, social welfare, agriculture, mining, metallurgy, medicine, forests, etc.
- Chanakya is also called ‘Indian Machiavelli’.

Asoka the Great (273 – 232 B.C.)

- Asoka acted as Governor of Ujjain and also suppressed a revolt in Taxila during his father Bindusara’s reign.
- There was an interval of four years between Asoka’s accession to the throne (273 B.C.) and his actual coronation (269 B.C.). Therefore, it appears from the available evidence that there was a struggle for the throne after Bindusara’s death.

- The Ceylonese Chronicles, Dipavamsa and Mahavamsa state that Asoka captured power after killing his ninety-nine brothers including the his elder brother Susima. The youngest brother Tissa was spared.
- According to Taranatha of Tibet, Asoka killed only six of his brothers.
- Asoka's Edict also refers to his brothers acting as officers in his administration.
- The most important event of Asoka's reign was his victorious war with Kalinga in 261 B.C.
- Although there is no detail about the cause and course of the war, the effects of the war were described by Asoka himself in the Rock edict XIII: "A hundred and fifty thousand were killed and many times that number perished..." After the war he annexed Kalinga to the Mauryan Empire.
- Another most important effect of the Kalinga war was that Asoka embraced Buddhism under the influence of Buddhist monk, Upagupta.

Extent of Asoka's Empire

- **Asoka's inscriptions mention the southernmost kingdoms – Cholas, Pandyas, Satyaputras and Keralaputras as border states. Therefore, these states remained outside the Mauryan Empire.**

- According to Rajatarangini, Kashmir was a part of the Mauryan Empire. Nepal was also within the Mauryan empire. The northwestern frontier was already demarcated by Chandragupta Maurya.

Asoka and Buddhism

- Asoka appointed special officers called Dharma Mahamatras to speed up the progress of Dhamma.
- In 241 B.C., he visited the birth place of Buddha, the Lumbini Garden, near Kapilavastu.
- He also visited other holy places of Buddhism like Sarnath, Sravasti and Kusinagara.
- He sent a mission to Sri Lanka under his son Mahendra and daughter Sangamitra who planted there the branch of the original Bodhi tree.
- Asoka convened the Third Buddhist Council at Pataliputra in 240 B.C. in order to strengthen the Sangha. It was presided over by Moggaliputta Tissa.

Asoka's Dhamma

- Although Asoka embraced Buddhism and took efforts to spread Buddhism, his policy of Dhamma was a still broad concept. It was a way of life, a code of conduct and a set of principles to be adopted and practiced by the people at large.

- His principles of Dhamma were clearly stated in his Edicts.
- The main features of Asoka's Dhamma as mentioned in his various Edicts may be summed as follows:
 - Service to father and mother, practice of ahimsa, love of truth, reverence to teachers and good treatment of relatives.
 - Prohibition of animal sacrifices and festive gatherings and avoiding expensive and meaningless ceremonies and rituals.
 - Efficient organization of administration in the direction of social welfare and maintenance of constant contact with people through the system of Dhammayatras.
 - Humane treatment of servants by masters and prisoners by government officials.
 - Consideration and non-violence to animals and courtesy to relations and liberality to Brahmins.
 - Tolerance among all the religious sects.
 - Conquest through Dhamma instead of through war.
- The concept of non-violence and other similar ideas of Asoka's Dhamma are identical with the teachings of Buddha.

- Asoka did not equate Dhamma with Buddhist teachings.

Mauryan Administration

Central Government

- Monarchy was supported by Kautilya however he did not stand for royal absolutism & advocated king to take advice of his ministry in running the administration
- A council of ministers called mantriparishad assisted the king in administration matters (COM consisted of Purohit, Mahamantri, Senapati & Yuvraj)
- Civil servants known as “amatyas” were appointed to look after day to day administration & their selection method was given by Kautilya

Revenue Department

- “Samharta”, the chief of revenue department was incharge of collection of all revenues of the department
- “Sannidhata”, Chief custodian of state treasury & store house

Commerce & Industry

- Commerce & industry (Custom duties, Foreign affairs, Weight & measure etc) was controlled by officers known as “Adhyakshas”

Judiciary

- Judicial chief justice of Supreme Court at capital in mauryan times was known as “Dharmadhikari”
- Subordinate courts were under Amatyas & jails under appointed officers

Provincial & Local administration

- Mauryan Empire was divided into 4 provinces with capitals at:
 - Taxila
 - Ujjain
 - Suvarnagiri
 - Kalinga
- Provincial governors were appointed from the royal family
- District administration was under the charge of “Rajukas”, who in turn were assisted by “Yuktas” or subordinate officials
- Village administration was in hand of “Gramani “ & his official supervisors called “Gopa” (Head of 10 – 15 villages)

Adhyakshya	High ranking officials next to Tirthas concerned mostly with economic functions and some military duties. They were twenty in number.
Amatyas	High ranking officers who acted as present day secretaries, who functioned in administrative and judicial capacity.
Mahamattas	Higher ranking officials irrespective of the duties assigned of them. These are references to them as a ministerial or advisory council as well. The Arthashastra uses this term in the sense of a minister.
Tirthas	Highest category of officials form the inner council apart form council of ministers. They were eighteen in number.

Art & Architecture

- Use of stone to make monuments started in time of Ashoka
- Highly polished, monolithic, slightly tapering rock pillars & highly polished caves (for monks)
- Sarnath Pillar: 4 lions standing back to back with small lion, elephant, bull & horse in circle
- Barabar hills near Bodh Gaya were presented to Ajivikas by Ashoka & his son Dasratha forms wonderful piece of mauryan architecture
- Introduction of burnt bricks to make structures & ring wells along with use of spoked wheel for the 1st time after Indus valley civilization
- Abundance of pottery NBPW & punch marked coins were found of Mauryan era
- May be art of making steel started & spread by Mauryas

Cause of fall of Mauryan Empire

- Ashoka's pro Buddhist policies along with prohibition of sacrifices & rituals antagonized Brahamanas who brought about a revolution led by Pushyamitra Sunga
- Weak successors, Partition of empire, administrative abuses by Dustamatyas (Heavy taxex) after Ashoka's reign led to the fall of empire
- Widespread use of iron led to formation of new kingdoms & neglection of N-W front by Mauryan also led to their downfall
- Chinese ruler "Shih-Huang-Ti" constructed great wall of China to prevent its border against sythians who were an Iranian equestrian tribe, but Mauryan did not do any such thing
- Pushyamitra sunga (Brahamana) killed last Mauryan emperor Brihadratha publicly & persecuted Buddhists and restarted Vedic rituals & sacrifices.

Later Mauryas

- After Asoka's death in 232 B.C., there were 7 kings within a span of 50 years.
- After him, the Mauryan Empire was divided into two parts – western and eastern.
- The western part was under the rule of Kunala, Samprati and others.
- The eastern part was governed by Dasaratha, Brihadath and others

- Following the invasions by Greeks, the Mauryan king had lost support from both army and its people. The last Mauryan king Brihadratha, was assassinated by Pushyamitra Sunga, his commander-in-chief.

Just after 50 years to the death of Ashoka, the Mauryan empire fell apart. This has been attributed to his weak successors who could not keep the vast empire intact. Partly the blame is put on the pacifist policies of Ashoka which caused a decline in the military powers of the empire. Some scholars argue that, Ashoka's welfare policies must have been very extravagant that caused a downfall of treasury, and hence leading to a weakened economy.

Literary Sources

Kautilya's Arthshashtra

- Written in Sanskrit by Chanakya / Kautilya / Vishnugupta / Indian Machiavelli
- Contains 15 books & 180 chapters; with main theme divided into 3 parts
- King & his council and departments of government
- Civil & criminal law
- Diplomacy of war

Vishakadatta's Mudrarakshasa

- A drama in Sanskrit written during Gupta's period

➤ Describes how Chandragupta maurya with the help of Kautilya overthrew Nandas

➤ Gives socio – economic picture of condition under mauryas

Megasthene's Indica

➤ Megasthene was a Greek ambassador in court of Chandragupta maurya

➤ His book is survived in fragments & provides detail about mauryan administration & military organization, particularly of capital city (Patliputra).

Expected Questions

THE MAURYAN EMPIRE

1) Who is the founder of Mauryan Empire?

(A) Ashoka

(B) Bindusara

(C) Chandragupta Maurya

(D) Danananda

2) Who is considered as the best of the Mauryan rulers?

(A) Ashoka

(B) Bindusara

(C) Chandragupta Maurya

(D) Danananda

3) Who called Chandra Gupta Maurya Bhutra?

(A) Pirugathirathan

(B) Bindusara

(C) Sasangan

(D) Visakadatta

4) Who is known as Amitragatha ?

(A) Sangamithra

(B) Bindusara

(C) Pirugathirathan

(D) Visakadatta

5) Who was the first national king?

(A) Ashoka

(B) Bindusara

(C) Chandragupta Maurya

(D) Danananda

6) Who introduced the king's tourism system?

(A) Ashoka

(B) Bindusara

(C) Chandragupta Maurya

(D) Danananda

7) Most of the asokha's inscriptions were written in which language?

(A) Malayalam

(B) Gujarati

(C) Greek

(D) Prakrit

8) How were the people who had observed the districts in the Mauryan rulers?

- (A) Yuktas
- (B) Pradeshikas**
- (C) Andamahamatra
- (D) Mahamatra

9) Third Buddhist council was convention by

- (A) Ashoka**
- (B) Bindusara
- (C) Chandragupta Maurya
- (D) Danananda

10) Where was the third Buddhist convention held?

- (A) Rajagriha
- (B) Kannosi
- (C) Pataliputra**
- (D) Kashmir

11) Where is Kalinga now?

- (A) Rajasthan
- (B) Kashmir
- (C) Uttarakhand
- (D) Orissa**

12) Who influenced ashoka to follow buddhism ?

- (A) Upagupta**
- (B) Pirugathirathan

- (C) Bhadrabagu
- (D) Megasthenes

13) Who called him the Devanam priya and Priyadarshi raja?

- (A) Ashoka**
- (B) Bindusara
- (C) Chandragupta Maurya
- (D) Danananda

14) Which of the following statements is/are correct ?

- 1) Megasthenese - Indica
- 2) Chanaka - Arthashastra
- 3) Visakadatta - Mudrarakshasa
- 4) Ilavarasan - Yuvaraja

- (A) 1, 2 and 3
- (B) 1, 3 and 4
- (C) 1, 2 and 4
- (D) 1, 2, 3 and 4**

15) Which of the following statements is/are correct ?

- 1) Bindusarar appointed his eldest son, Sumana, to Ujjain and the youngest son of Asoka in Dakshinelaam.
- 2) For Chandragupta and Bindusarar, Chanaka served as prime minister.

- (A) 1 only
- (B) 2 only**
- (C) 1 and 2
- (D) None of these

16) Which of the following statements is/are correct ?

1) In the reign of Ashoka, ministers and officials were appointed without caste and religion.

2) He sent saints to Mesopotamia, Syria, Egypt, Tibet, China and Burma to spread Buddhism.

(A) 1 only

(B) 2 only

(C) 1 and 2

(D) None of these

17) How many high officials were invited in the Mauryan regime?

(A) Yuktas

(B) Pradeshikas

(C) Mahamatra

(D) Andamahamatra

18) Under the rule of Maurya, how was the supervisor of the border guard?

(A) Yuktas

(B) Pradeshikas

(C) Mahamatra

(D) Andamahamatra

19) Match the following

List 1 (part) List 2 (capital)

1) North Side - Dosali

2) West side - Swarnagiri

3) South side - Taxilla

4) East side - Ujjaini

(A) 3 4 1 2

(B) 3 4 2 1

(C) 2 1 4 3

(D) 1 2 3 4

20) How were the people called who were helping for the people's charity?

(A) Dharmathikarin

(B) Pradeshikas

(C) Mahamatra

(D) Andamahamatra

21) Which of the following statements is/are correct ?

1) Chandragupta renounced the royal status and surrendered to the Brahmapagu junior saint near Mysore.

2) Chandragupta died in 298 BC.

(A) 1 only

(B) 2 only

(C) 1 and 2

(D) None of these

22) Who fought against Asoka during the invasion of Kalinga?

(A) Janaka Maharaja

(B) Sasanga

(C) Megasthenese

(D) Bhadrabagu

23) What was the reason for the change of Ashoka's path?

- (A) **Kalinga War**
- (B) Shravanabelagola
- (C) Buddhism
- (D) None of these

24) Which of the following statements is/are related to Ashoka

- 1) Ashoka, who worshiped Lord Shiva, embraced Buddhism after the war.
- 2) Ashoka said that the king's obligations should be to help and moralize citizens.
- 3) Ritual practices were prohibited.
- 4) was the first person who created the People's State in India.
- 5) sent his son Mahendran and daughter's union to promote Buddhism in Sri Lanka.

- (A) 1, 2 and 5
- (B) 2, 3 and 4
- (C) **1, 2, 3, 4 and 5**
- (D) 1, 2, 3 and 4



25) How were the judicial authorities in the villages invited?

- (A) Dharmathikarin
- (B) **Rajukas**
- (C) Mahamatra
- (D) Andamahamatra

26) How was the Mauritian coins been called?

- (A) Culk

(B) Karshapana

(C) Baga

(D) Niska

27) Who was the last king of the Maurya dynasty?

(A) Brihadratha

(B) Bindusara

(C) Ashoka

(D) Visakadatta

28) Conquering and winning a war is called as

(A) Digvijay

(B) Dharmavijay

(C) Ashvamedhayam

(D) Mahavipasa

29) Listen to the following statements:

1) In the inscriptions of Ashoka, it is described that chera people as Keralaparatra.

2) Chandragupta Maurya converted to Jainism and went to South India with Jainism saint Badrabahu to renounce his knowledge.

(A) 1 only

(B) 2 only

(C) 1 and 2

(D) None of these

30) Watch the following phrases

1) The inscriptions on the northwestern border are inscribed with a Greek letter.

2) In Afghanistan, carvings are inscribed in karoshi script.

- (A) 1 only
- (B) 2 only
- (C) 1 and 2
- (D) None of these**

31) According to book Indica written by Megasthenes, how many governments have governed the pataliputra ?

- (A) 10
- (B) 20
- (C) 30**
- (D) 40

32) How many management team were there to supervised warriors ?

- (A) 10
- (B) 20
- (C) 30**
- (D) 40

33) Which is/ are Buddhist literature ?

- (A) Jatakas
- (B) Dipavamsa
- (C) Mahavanmsa
- (D) All of these**

34) Who is known as the Kautilya ?

- (A) Sasanga
- (B) Chanakya**

(C) Megasthenes

(D) H.G. Wells

35) To whose court megasthenes visited?

(A) Ashoka

(B) Bindusara

(C) Chandragupta Maurya

(D) Danananda

36) Which language did people use to translate Ashoka's teachings?

(A) Pali

(B) Greek

(C) Karosti

(D) Prakrit

37) What is the name of the mother of Chandragupta Maurya?

(A) Mura

(B) Sangamithra

(C) Kumaradevi

(D) Trisala

38) Who reunited Kalinga with the Maurya Empire?

(A) Brihadratha

(B) Bindusara

(C) Ashoka

(D) Visakadatta

39) Which of the following statements is / are correct ?

1) Ashoka's Buddhist missionaries are considered equal to the work of the Roman Emperor Constantine in Rome.

2) Ashoka built the stupas and stupas in the memory of Buddha. It was later converted to Buddhist monks.

(A) 1 only

(B) 2 only

(C) **1 and 2**

(D) None of these

40) Who praised the name of Ashoka's name as shining like a luminous star?

(A) Brihadratha

(B) Chanakya

(C) Maitreyi

(D) **H.G.Wells**

