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MAURYAN EMPIRE

Chandragupta

- In a series of battles Chandragupta defeated Dhana Nanda and laid the foundations of the Maurya Empire in about 321 BC.
- He conspired with Chanakya the minister of Nanda to overthrow the last ruler Dhana Nanda.
- Chanakya (also known as Kautilya) was an Indian statesman and philosopher, chief advisor of the Indian Emperor Chandragupta. He is celebrated as the author of the Arthashastra.
- Chanakya or Kautilya is known as the Machiavelli of India.
- The Arthashastra was a prescriptive text for good administration.
- Megasthenes was the Greek ambassador at Chandragupta's court. Indica is an account of Mauryan India by the Greek writer Megasthenes.
- Pataliputra was the great capital city in the Mauryan Empire.
- His reign lasted from 321 BC to 297 BC.
- The Buddhist literature, the '*Mahavamsa*' and '*Dipavamsa*' give a detail account of Chandragupta Maurya.
- Chandragupta Maurya has been described as a descendant of the Kshatriya clan of the *Moriyas* branch of *Sakyas*. They lived in Pippalivana, in eastern Uttar Pradesh.
- The '*Mudrarakshasa*' is a play written by Vishakhadatta, referred Chandragupta as '*Vrishala*' and '*Kulahina*,' which means a person of humble origin.

Bindusara

- Chandragupta's son Bindusara succeeded him as emperor in 297 BCE.
- Bindusara was known as Amitraghata (Slayer of foes).
- His sons were appointed as viceroys of the different provinces of the empire.
- Bindusara had appointed his son Ashoka as the viceroy of Ujjain, the capital of Avanti.

Ashoka

- Ashoka the Great, was an Indian emperor of the Maurya Dynasty.
- Ashoka ascended the throne in 273 BC and ruled up to 232 BC.
- Buddhist tradition says Ashoka killed 99 of his brothers to capture the throne.
- Ashoka fought the Kalinga War in 261 BC. Kalinga is modern day of Orissa.
- After the battle of Kalinga, Ashoka became Buddhist after being shocked by horrors of the war.
- For the propagation of Buddhism Ashoka started the institution of Dharmamahamatras.
- Ashoka held the third Buddhist council at his capital Pataliputra in 250 BC.
- Ashoka spread Buddhism to Sri Lanka and Nepal.
- He sent his son **Mahendra** and daughter **Sanghamitra** to the Sri Lanka for spread Buddhism. It is believed that they took a branch of the original Bodhi tree to Sri Lanka.
- The edicts of Ashoka constitute the most concrete source of information about the Mauryan

Empire. There are 33 edicts comprising 14 Major Rock Edicts, 2 known as Kalinga edicts, 7 Pillar Edicts, some Minor Rock Edicts and a few Minor Pillar Inscriptions.

- **Brihadratha** was the last ruler of the Maurya Empire killed by **Pushyamitra Shunga** who founded **Sunga dynasty** in 185 BC.

Mauryan Administration

- Kautalya's Arthashastra, Ashoka's inscriptions, and Megasthenese's accounts collectively are the important sources of the information on various aspects of administration, economy, society, and religion of the people.
- Mauryan administration was highly centralized. The emperor was the supreme power and source of all authority.
- The capital region of Pataliputra was directly administered. The rest of the empire was divided into four provinces based at Suvarnagiri (near Kurnool in Andhra Pradesh), Ujjain (Avanti, Malwa), Taxila in the north-west, and Tosali in Odisha in the south-east.
- The provinces were administered by governors who were usually royal princes.
- The king was the head of the state. The king used to issue ordinances known as '*Sasana*.' He possessed the judicial, the legislative, and the executive powers.
- *Sasanas* are available in the form of 'Edicts of Ashoka'.
- The Mauryas king had to follow the law of the country given by law givers and had to govern according to the customs of the land. He could not do whatever he liked.
- The king was assisted in administration by '*Mantriparishad*,' which was a Council of Ministers.
- *Adhyakshas* (superintendent) were officers who performed a special task.
- Kautilya mentioned a large number of *Adhyakshas*, such as *Adhyakshas* of gold, store houses, commerce, agriculture, ships, cows, horses, elephants, chariots, infantry, passports etc.
- *Yukta* was the officer in-charge of the revenues of the king.
- *Rajjukas* were the officers for land measurement and fixing their boundaries. They were also given power to punish the guilty and set free the innocents.
- The Mauryan Empire was divided into provinces. *Pradeshikas* was another officer of the Mauryan administration. He was the provincial governor.
- Bindusara appointed his son Ashoka as Governor of the Avanti region and posted him at Ujjain.
- Asoka's elder brother Susima was posted at Taxila as the Governor of the northwestern provinces.
- The important provinces were directly under *Kumaras* (princes); however, the total number of provinces is not known.
- Junagarh rock inscription of Rudradaman mentions that Saurashtra (Kathiawar) was governed by Vaisya Pushyagupta at the time of Chandragupta Maurya and by Yavana-raia Tushaspa at the time of Ashoka, both were the provincial governors.
- The Mauryan kingdom was divided into different provinces, which were subdivided into the districts and each district was further divided into groups of five to ten villages.

- The village was the smallest unit of an administration.
- The *pradeshika* was the head of district administration. He used to tour the entire district every five years to inspect the administration of areas under his control. A group of officials worked in each district under him.
- *Gramika* was the head of the village. He was assisted in village administration by the "village elders".
- The villages, during this time, enjoyed substantial autonomy. Most of the disputes of the village were settled by *Gramika* with the help of village assembly.
- Mauryan Administration Officers:

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| Samaharta | Revenue collector |
| Sannidata | Treasury head |
| Rajjukas | Officer's in-charge of land measurement and boundary-fixing. |
| Vyabharika | Chief Judge |
| Yukta | Subordinate revenue officer |
| Prashasti | Prison head |
| Dandapala | Head of Police |
| Mantrin | Chief Minister |
| Mantriparishad Adhyaksha | Head of Council of Ministers |
| Purohita | Chief Priest |
| Senapati | Commander-in-chief |
| Yuvaraj | Crown Prince |



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