

LALIT NARAYAN MITHILA UNIVERSITY
DARBHANGA

COURSE

B.A (HONS.)

PART-1

SUBJECT

HISTORY

PAPER-I

UNIT-3

RISE AND GROWTH
OF MAURYAN EMPIRE

CHANDRAGUPTA
MAURYA AND
ASHOKA

ROHIT PRAKASH

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR (HISTORY)
BRB COLLEGE, SAMASTIPUR
L.N.M.U, DARBHANGA
E-MAIL- rohitprakash.lnmu@gmail.com

MAURYAN EMPIRE (322 BCE - 185 BCE)



Mauryan Empire

- Nature of the empire

Sources

- *Mudrarakshasa* – Vishakhadatta
- Justin- Foreign Account
- Ashokan Inscription
- Arthshastra- Kautilya
- Indika- Megasthenes
- Devichandraguptam
- Buddhist Text
- Jainism Text

- **Historicity**
- **Chandragupta Maurya**
- **Ashoka -Impact of the Kalinga War, Ashokan Dhamma**
- **Polity, Administration**
- **Provinces**
- **City Administration**
- **Central government/Army**
- **Economy**
- **Slavery**
- **Judicial System**

Historicity

□ The Maurya dynasty was founded by Chandragupta Maurya.

□

Origin

• Brahman Tradition



Shudra/
Moriya Tribe

Buddhist tradition



Kashtriya

- **Geographical Expansion** –

- Eastern Afghanistan, Baluchistan, and the area west of the Indus.
- Bihar and substantial parts of Orissa and Bengal.
- North-western India, and the Deccan.
- Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and parts of north-eastern India,

The Mauryas ruled over virtually the entire subcontinent.

- **The first three Mauryas** were responsible for the unification of a large part of the country under their political hegemony.
- **Chandragupta**
- **Bindusar**
- **Ashoka**

Chandragupta Maurya

- Chandragupta Maurya – The **founder of Maurya dynasty**.
- According to the brahmanical tradition, he was born of Mura, a shudra woman in the court of the Nandas.
- **Indian and Greek Sources-** Both Indian and classical Greek sources states that Chandragupta Maurya overthrew the last Nanda ruler and occupied his capital Patliputra, modern Patna.
- Chandragupta liberated north-western India from the thralldom of Seleucus Nikator, who ruled over the area west of the Indus/ or gained control of the most Asiatic provinces.

- In the war with the **Greek viceroy**, Chandragupta seems to have emerged victorious.
- They signed a treaty and entered into the marriage alliances.

(Eg- Expansion through marriage alliances such as Bimbisar's three marriage)

- Eventually peace was concluded between the two, and in return for 500 elephants, **Seleucus** gave him not only his daughter but also eastern Afghanistan, Baluchistan, and the area west of the Indus. (**Greek princess**)
- **Selucus's ambassador Megasthenes** lived for many years at Patliputra and traveled extensively in the country.

- **Chandragupta Maurya- Santhara/ sanlekhna in Sravanbelgola (Karnataka)**
- **Bindusara** – the son of Chandragupta
- Bindusara- Also known as Amitrokotas (Greek), Amitraghata (Sanskrit)

Ashoka

- Chandragupta Maurya was succeeded by Bindusara, whose reign is important for its continuing links with the Greek princes.
- **Bindusar's son, Ashoka,** is the greatest of the Maurya rulers.
- Ashoka- Devnama Piyadassi(Beloved of the Gods).
- According to Buddhist tradition, he was so cruel in his early life.

- **Ashokan inscriptions** – It help us to understand about the expansion of Mauryans empire.
- Ashokan inscriptions have been found in India, Nepal, Pakistan, and Afghanistan.
- **Language and Script of Ashokan Inscription** – Aramaic, Prakrit language, **Kharoshthi, Brahmi (script)**

Impact of the Kalinga War

- **Kalinga**- An independent feudal kingdom located on the east coast, in the present-day state of Odisha and north of Andhra Pradesh .
- After this war Ashokan policy were changed. – National as well as International.
- The ideology of Buddhism guided Ashoka's state policy at national and international.
- After his accession to the throne, Ashoka fought only one major war called the Kalinga war.
- the king was deeply moved by the massacre in this war. The war caused great suffering to the brahmana priests and Buddhist monks, and this in turn brought upon Ashoka much grief and remorse

Ashokan Dhamma

- Ashoka expounded his policy of Dhamma to **eliminate social tension** and sectarian conflicts.
- To promote a **harmonious relationship** between the diverse element of the vast empire.
- **Emphasis on tolerance**
- Ashoka **denounced all useless ceremonies and sacrifices** held under the influence of superstition.

Polity, Administration

- *The Mauryans maintained the friendly relations with several contemporary powers.*
- *Indika and Arthashastra* ,- It throws valuable light on the administration, society, and economy of Maurya times.
- Espionage and the constant use of agents-provocateurs is recommended on a massive and universal scale by the Arthasastra.
- **The sole purpose of every action was the safety and profit of the state.**

- **Role of King in Administration-** Chandragupta Maurya was evidently an autocrat who concentrated all power in his hands.
- According to **Megasthenes**, the king was assisted by a **council** whose members were noted for wisdom.
- There is nothing to show that their(Council members) advice was binding on king, though the high officers were chosen from among the councillors.

- The supreme head, symbol, and expression of the state was the king.

- **The brahmanical law-books-** It repeatedly stressed that the king should be guided by the laws laid down in the Dharmashastras and by the customs prevalent in India.
- **Kautilya** – Kautilya in Arthshastra advises the king to promulgate dharma when the social order based on the varnas and ashramas (stages in life) collapses.

- Kautilya calls the king *dharmaprayartaka* or promulgator of the social order.
- That the royal orders were superior to other orders was asserted by Ashoka in his inscriptions.
- Ashoka promulgated dharma and appointed officials to inculcate and enforce its essentials throughout India.

Administration

- The administrative mechanism was backed by an elaborate system of espionage.
- Various types of **spies** collected intelligence about foreign enemies and kept an eye on numerous officers.

- Important functionaries were called *tirthas*.
- It appears that most functionaries were paid in cash, the highest among whom, the minister (*mantrin*), high priest (*purohita*), commander-in-chief (*senapati*) and crown prince (*yuvaraja*), were paid generously.
- **Disparity in salaries – The** great disparity in the salaries of employees. Such as highest was

- The highest received as much as 48,000 *panas* (*pana* was a silver coin equal to three-fourths of a *tola*).
- In sharp contrast to them, the lowest officers were given 60 *panas* in consolidated pay although some employees were paid as little as 10 or 20 *panas*.
- Thus there was great disparity in the salaries of employees.

Provinces

- **The empire was divided into a number of provinces**, and each of these was placed under a prince who was a scion of the royal dynasty.
- The **provinces were divided into still smaller units**, and arrangements were made for **both rural and urban administration**.

- **Cities-** Excavations show that a large number of towns relate to Maurya times, eg- **Pataliputra, Kaushambi, Ujjain, and Taxila** were the most important cities.
- Megasthenes states that numerous cities existed in India, but he considered **Pataliputra to be the most important. He calls it Palibothra.**
- **Palibothra-** This Greek term means a city with gates. According to him, Pataliputra was bounded by a deep ditch and a wooden wall crowned with 570 towers, and had 64 gates.

City Administration


- The city was administered by **six committees**, each of which consisted of **five members**.
- Six Committees-
- Five members
- These committees were entrusted with sanitation, care of foreigners, registration of birth and death, regulation of weights and measures, and similar other functions.
- Various types of weights belonging to Maurya times have been found in several places in Bihar.



Sanitation
5- Members



Care of
Foreigners
5-Members



Registration of birth
and death
5-Members



Regulation of
weights and
measures
5-Members

Central government/Army

- According to **Kautilya**, the central government maintained about two dozen departments of state, which controlled social and economic activities at least in the areas that were in proximity to the capital.
- The most striking feature of Chandragupta's administration was its maintenance of a huge army.
- A **Roman writer** called **Pliny** states that Chandragupta maintained 600,000 foot soldiers, 30,000 cavalrymen, and 9000 elephants.

- **Political Supremacy with help of huge army.**

- Anga, Vaishali, Kashi, Koshala, Avanti, Kalinga, etc., one by one were annexed to the Magadhan empire.

- Military control over these areas eventually turned into a coercive control over the lives of the people.

- Magadha had the requisite **power of the sword** to enforce its overall authority.
- In order to **control various spheres of life** the state had to maintain a vast bureaucracy.
- In no other period of ancient history do we hear of as many officers as in Maurya times.

- In addition to these, it appears that the Mauryas also maintained a **navy**
- **Army** - The administration of the armed forces, according to Megasthenes, was carried on by a board of thirty officers divided into six committees, each committee consisting of five members.
- It seems that each of the six wings of the armed forces, **The army, The cavalry, The elephants, The chariots, The navy, and The transport**, was assigned to the care of a separate committee.

Economy

- **Arthshastra**- If we rely on the *Arthashastra* of Kautilya, it would appear that the state appointed twenty-seven superintendents (*adhyakshas*), principally to regulate its economic activities.
- **Role of *Adhyakshas***- They controlled and regulated agriculture, trade and commerce, weights and measures, crafts such as weaving and spinning, mining, and the like

- The Mauryans maintain friendly relations with several contemporary powers.
- Friendly political relationship with foreign rulers promoted commerce and communications with the outside world as well as exchange of ideas.
- **State's role-** State controlled almost all the economic activities in the realm.
- The state brought new land under cultivation with the aid of cultivators and shudra labourers.
- Taxes collected from the peasants varied from one-fourth to one-sixth of the produce.

- The state also provided irrigation facilities and regulated water supply for the benefit of agriculturists.
- **Tax on Irrigation-** Those who were provided with irrigation facilities by the state had to pay for it.
- In addition, in times of emergency, peasants were compelled to raise more crops.

- **The state enjoyed a monopoly in mining, sale of liquor, manufacture of arms, etc.**
- Chandragupta thus established a well organized administrative system and gave it a sound financial base.
- **The Maurya period constitutes a landmark in the system of taxation in ancient India.**

- **The *samaharta*** was the highest officer in charge of assessment and collection.
- **The *sannidhata* – *the sannidhata*** was the chief custodian of the state treasury and storehouse.

Slavery

- Whether or not slavery existed in Maurya India has been a matter of controversy.
- **Megashtnees**- There were no slaves in India.
- Arthashastra- It contains detailed laws about slavery and manumission.
- **According to the *Arthashastra*** of Kautilya, a striking social development of the Maurya period was the employment of slaves in agricultural operations.

Judicial System

- **The Indian legal and judicial system originated in this period.**
- Formerly people were governed by the tribal law, which did not recognize any class distinction.
- However, by now the tribal community had been clearly divided into four orders: brahmanas, kshatriyas, vaishyas, and shudras.

- The Dharmasutras therefore set out the duties of each of the four varnas, and the civil and criminal law came to be based on the varna division.
- The higher the varna, the purer it was, and the higher the level of moral conduct expected of the upper varna by civil and criminal law.

- All forms of disabilities were imposed on the shudras.
- They were **deprived of religious and legal rights** and relegated to the lowest position in society; the *upanayana* or sacred thread could not be conferred on them.
- **Crimes committed by them against the brahmanas and others were severely punished**, but those **committed against the shudras were lightly treated.**

- The lawgivers spread the fiction that the shudras were born from the feet of the creator.
- Therefore, members of the higher varnas, especially the brahmanas, shunned the company of the shudra, avoided the food touched by him, and refused to enter into marriage relations with him.

- A shudra could not be appointed to high posts, and more importantly he was specifically asked to serve the twice-born as slave, artisan, and agricultural labourer.
- Gautama Buddha visited the assemblies of the brahmanas, kshatriyas, and *gahapatis* or householders, but assemblies of the shudras are not mentioned in this context.
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The civil and criminal law

- The civil and criminal law set out in the Dharmashastras was administered by royal agents, who inflicted rough and ready punishments such as scourging, beheading, and tearing out of the tongue.
- In many instances, punishments for criminal offences were governed by the idea of revenge, that is, **a tooth for a tooth and an eye for an eye.**

- Although the brahmanical law-books took into account the social status of the different varnas in framing their laws, they did not ignore the customs of the non-Vedic tribal groups which were gradually absorbed into the brahmanical social order.
- Some of these indigenous tribals were given fictitious social origins and allowed to be governed by their own customs.

The civil Court

- Know as Dharmashthiya
- Member- 3- Dharmashthi/
Vyavharik
3 - Amatya

The Criminal Court

- Know as Kantakshodhan
- Member- 3- Pradesta
3 - Amatya

The civil Court / -

- Head- Dharmashtiya
- Subjects- Defamation, Lynching, Fight

The Criminal Court/

- Head - Pradesta
- Subjects - Theft, Adultery

Types of Court

•1

Central Court-
Patliputra

•2

District Court

•3

Local Court

Dronmukh

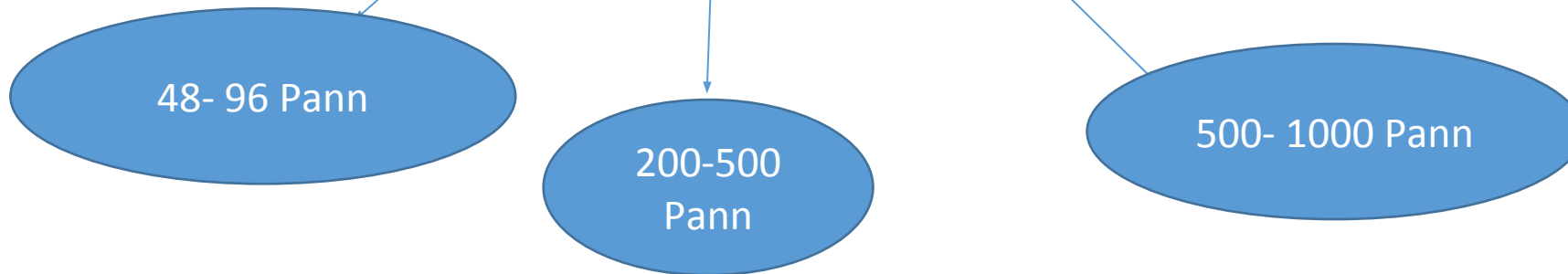
Kharvatik

Sangrhan

Village Court

Other judicial significance

- **Foreigners Legal Matter – Special court**
- **Chief Justice- Vavharik**
- **Punishment mode- very strict – Scourge, Death Penalty,**
- **Fine and penalty**



Causes of the Fall of the Maurya Empire

□ **Brahmanical Reaction-** The brahmanical reaction began as a result of **Ashoka's policy**.---

- ***Edicts in Prakrit and not in Sanskrit,***
- He ***prohibited the killing of birds and animals***
- Ashoka appointed *rajukas* to govern the countryside and introduce ***vyavaharasamata and dandasamata***.
- This meant the ***same civil and criminal law for all varnas***.
- But the Dharmashastra compiled by the brahmanas prescribed varna discrimination.
- Naturally this policy infuriated the brahmanas.

- Some new kingdoms that arose on the ruins of the Maurya empire were ruled by the brahmanas.-- **The Shungas and The Kanvas, The Satavahanas.**
- **Financial Crisis-** The enormous expenditure on the army and payment to the bureaucracy created a financial crisis for the Maurya empire.
- **Ashoka made large donations to the Buddhist monks which left the royal treasury empty.**

- **Oppressive Rule**
- **Extreme Centralized system**
- **The Great Wall of China-** The Scythians were in a state of constant flux. A nomadic people principally reliant on the use of the horse, they posed a serious danger to the settled empires in China and India.
- The Chinese ruler **Shih Huang Ti** (247–10 BC) constructed **the Great Wall of China** in about 220 BC to shield his empire against the attacks of the Scythians, **but Ashoka took no such measures.**

Conclusion

- **Royal Control-** Several reasons suggest that **royal control** was exercised over a very large area, at least in the core of the empire.
- **Strategic Position** This was because of the strategic position of Pataliputra, from where royal agents could sail up and down the Ganges, Son, Punpun, and Gandak rivers.

Army, Economy, Political national and international relations