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MAURYAN DYNASTY ANCIENT TIMES OF INDIAN HISTORY

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Abstract

The Mauryan empire, which had a long line of monarchs and made significant contributions to history, was one of India's greatest dynasties. The Mauryan dynasty was founded by Chandragupta Maurya/Chandragupta Maurya with the wise counsel of Chanakya. This time period is well-known for its contribution to education, stupas, and edicts. Even the ancient university Takshashila was supposed to have been founded during the Maurya period. During this period, the Arthashastra/Artaastiram, an ancient Indian book on kingship, politics, and other similar topics, appeared. The architectural work, inscriptions, coins, and other excavations that have been discovered are the primary sources for history or how we learn about past dynasties. These materials are crucial because they allow us to reconstruct the social customs, economics, and lifestyle that existed at the time. This study will concentrate on the Mauryan inscriptions and the knowledge they left behind.

Keywords: Ashokan edicts, Indian subcontinent, stone inscriptions, Buddhism, HYDE

1. Introduction

Asoka's name denotes that he was unique in the framework of ancient Indian history. The world was completely unaware that someone by the name of Asoka existed in the lineages of early Indian history. When James Prinsep succeeded in understanding Asoka's Brahmi decree, it was unclear to him who king they were referring to. This is due to the fact that the majority of them allude to Asoka using variations of the two titles Devanampiya and Piyadasi. The Ashokan inscriptions stand out as one of the most authentic archaeological sources for reconstructing the Mauryan history[1]. The Ashokan inscriptions seem to be the most genuine source for reconstructing the Mauryan dynasty's greatest emperor. For a number of reasons, the edicts of the Mauryan emperor Asoka constitute a distinct branch of Indian epigraphic literature. They provide the earliest records in the Brahmi and Kharoshthi alphabets in several forms of Prakrit speech and shed welcome light on the meagre and dubious information provided by tradition on the career, religious, policy, and administration of a mighty emperor who is one of India's and the world's greatest sons. Asoka was the first king to inscribe messages to his citizens and officials on natural rocks as well as polished pillars. He used the inscriptions to proclaim what he thought was Dhamma[2]. As a result, Asoka's Dhamma is widely regarded as his own religious education. Asoka arrived at Bodhiyagaya in the 11th regnal year and visited the site where Buddha achieved enlightenment. Asoka became acquainted with the Buddhist Samgha and devoted his full focus to Dharma Vijaya, or religious conquest, as opposed to military conquest. The reign of this Buddhist Mauryan monarch was documented by edicts engraved on finely crafted stone pillars built across his domain. These edicts are among India's earliest deciphered original writings. Following his conversion, his concept of conquest included dispatching numerous Buddhist ambassadors all over Asia and appointing approximately of the best masterworks of ancient Indian art.. Following Ashoka's expire, the empire shrunk due to assaults, defections in southern princes, and disputes about accession. Brihadratha, the final monarch, was killed in 185 BCE by his Brahman commander in main, Pushyamitra, he is recognized the Shunga dynasty, which reigned in central India for over a century

[2]. Chandragupta Maurya (324/321 – 297 BCE), the founder of the Mauryan dynasty, received a strong army from the Nandas, which he used to conquer virtually all of north India, the north-west, and a significant section of peninsular India[3]. The origins and caste of the Maurya family are shrouded in mystery. Chandragupta (or Chandragupta Maurya), the originator of the Mauryan dynasty, seized the Punjab area from the south-eastern borders of Alexander's old kingdom. Chandragupta was free to concentrate his military achievements to the east and south. By the conclusion of his control, he required expanded his dominion over northern India. Bindusara, his son, sustained the empire's growth into the Deccan, ending at what is now known as Karnataka[4].

1.1 Major monuments of Mauryan dynasty

1.1.1 Pillars

Ashoka's court art is greatest visible in the white-grey sandstone columns he constructed across his empire to mark a blessed location linked with Buddha's life or to honour a momentous occasion. Many of these pillars have Ashoka's well-known proclamations spreading the Dhamma ([Dharma or rules of the Buddha]) or majestic homilies to his subjects. In their maximum advanced form, pillars is high, narrowing megaliths with modelled capitals, including a sequence of grooved petals in extended form (which fall together to arrangement a bell, is also called Persepolis Bell), overcame by a round abacus decorated with animal and floral themes in release. Proceeding the circle, there is a highest animal sculpture, which is generally a bull, elephant, or Lion, which is portrayed single on the primary assets and gathered on the advanced singles. In its original design, the pillar had a massive stone wheel capping the topmost of the lions. The capital's sharp figure, flawless polish, and excellent level of craftsmanship have won it a status as one of ancient India's finest creative attainments.[5]

1.1.2 Rock-cut Architecture

During Ashoka's supremacy, one of South Asia's most important and distinctive aesthetic traditions—rock-cut architecture—was firmly established. A series of rock-cut sanctuaries in the Barabar and Nagarjuni hills near Gaya in Bihar include inscriptions indicating that they were dedicated for the residence of specific Ajivika ascetics, perhaps Jain followers. Their architectural significance stems from the fact that they are the earliest known instances of the rock-cut technique in India.[5]

1.1.3 The Stupa

Before the reign of Ashoka, the stupa was common throughout India. It began as a modest earthen and brick burial mound built by the Vedic Aryans. There is not indication of relic-mound veneration in the pre-Maurya period. The stupa's core was unburnt brick, while the outside face was burned brick coated in a thick coating of plaster. The stupa was topped by a wooden gate that encircled a route for pradakshina.[5]

1.1.4 Human Figures

Several stone sculptures of human beings displaying Maurya retro features have remained discovered. One of these is an extraordinarily fresh-looking statue of a female chowrie (fly whisk) carrier discovered by locals in Didar Ganj (now in the Patna Museum).surface refinement, high polish and The technique all idea to the Maurya era. From the end of the 4th century until the beginning of the 2nd century, the Mauryan empire ruled over the majority of the Indian subcontinent. The founder of the dynasty, Chandragupta Maurya/Cantirakupta Maurya, conquered the Nanda dynasty, who had governed Magadha (modern-day Bihar) and built their capital at Pataliputra (current day Patna). According to several historical accounts, Chandragupta Maurya/Cantirakupta ma ur riy became emperor under the counsel and direction of Kautilya/Keaily or Chanakya/Caky, a Brahmin adviser who wrote the classic ancient Indian book on military, politics, and economy the Arthashastra/Arttacstiram. Megasthenes, a Seleucid envoy to the Maurya's/Mavuriy, has some survived records.[5]

Chandragupta Maurya/Cantirakupta Maurya

He established the Mauryan dynasty and was one of the first monarchs to be credited with creating a Pan-Indian empire. His adviser, minister Chanakya/Caky/Keaily/Keaily, assisted him. According to sources, he fought with Alexander the Great when the Macedonian monarch attacked the Indian empire in 326 BCE and prevented him from capturing the far bank of the Ganges. From 322 BCE to 298 BCE, he united the Indian subcontinent under an one undivided monarchy. The Mauryan dynasty flourished

under his immediate successor, particularly under prominent rulers like as Chandragupta's son Bindusara and grandson, Emperor Ashoka. He married the daughter of Seleucus in an attempt to strengthen cordial ties and commerce with countries beyond the seas. This proved to be a fruitful partnership because Seleucus ended up ceding a large portion of his land to him. Bindusara, son of Chandragupta Maurya, was the next ruler. Due to lack of evidences, we know very little about his reign. He possibly ruled for about 27 years, beginning 300 – 273 BC[6]. Deimachos, a Greek ambassador, came to his court. Bindusara, the son of Chandragupta Maurya, was the next emperor. We know virtually little about his rule because of a paucity of evidence. He may have reigned for roughly 27 years, from 300 to 273 BC. Deimachos, a Greek ambassador, arrived at his court. Bindusara had a cordial connection with Antiochus, the son and inheritor of Seleucus. Some historians think he brought the southern regions of the Cheras, Cholas, and Satyaputras under the power of the Mauryan Empire. Taranatha describes Bindusara winning sixteen kingdoms or stretching the empire from sea to sea. Initial Buddhist causes don't have much to say about Bindusara. This might be attributed to the king's lack of interest in Buddhism. Bindusara seems to be more interested in the Ajivikas. During his reign, the Mauryan Empire was formalised into five sections. Magadha and a few other mahajanapadas were under his control. The accounts of Megasthenes' Indica and the Arthashastra show a somewhat centralised government in the centre. Under Asoka's reign, there are four provinces: Taxila as its capital, Ujjain in the west, Kalinga in the east, and Kurnool in south. These territories were ruled by Mahamatras[7].

2. Review of literature

2.1 Literary Sources

1. Kautilya/Kelaṭilyā's Arthashastra/Arttacāstiram:

Chandragupta Maurya's Prime Minister was Kautilya/Keaily. With his assistance, Chandragupta established the Mauryan Empire. He was the author of Arthashastra/Arttacstiram. It is the most significant source for writing the Maurya's history and is divided into 15 Adhikarnas (parts) and 180 Prakaranas (subdivisions). It has around 6,000 slokas. Shamasastri found the book in 1909 and expertly translated it. It's a book about statecraft and public administration. Despite the debate surrounding its age and authorship, its significance stems from the fact that it provides a clear and methodical study of the Mauryan period's economic and political situations[8].

2. Mudra Rakshasa

The historical drama in Sanskrit "Signet Ring of the Rakshasa, the chief minister of the last Nanda monarch" by Vishakhadatta (4th century CE) describes the ascension of the king Chandragupta Maurya to power in Northern India with the assistance of Chanakya, his Guru and chief minister[8].

3. Indica

Around 300 B.C., Megasthenes served as Seleucus' ambassador to Chandragupta Maurya's court in Pataliputra for several years. His work Indica, which he composed as a keen observer, has only survived in parts mentioned by Diodorus, Strabo, and, most notably, Arria. Megasthenes' comprehensive account of the Indian society's seven "divisions" is particularly interesting. They show an enthralling and, in fact, the earliest complete account of Indian society as witnessed by a European visitor to India's capital and its environs[8].

4. Buddhist Literature

Buddhist literature such as the Jatakas shed insight on the socioeconomic conditions of the Mauryan period, while Buddhist histories Mahavamsa and Dipavamsa shed light on Ashoka's involvement in introducing Buddhism to Sri Lanka. Divyavadam, a Tibetan Buddhist scripture, tells us about Ashoka's attempts to propagate Buddhism[8].

2.2 King Ashoka and his contributions

Bindusara expired in 272 BCE, and his son, Ashoka the Excessive (304-232 BCE), succeeded him. He was ambitious and forceful as ruler. His defeat of Kalinga (262-261 BCE) demonstrated to be the defining event of his life. The damage and aftermath from conflict harmed hundreds of thousands of people. When he experienced the damage first-hand, he embraced Buddhist teachings and condemned war and violence. He dispatched campaigners to go throughout Asia, spreading Buddhism to new countries. One of Ashoka's most well-known achievements was the construction of his edicts, which were constructed between 269 BCE and 232 BCE. The Ashoka Edicts are inscribed in stone and may be seen throughout the Subcontinent. Ashoka's Chandragupta was an excellent leader and a skilled fighter[9]. Chandragupta's talent and ambitious mentality, along with Chanakya's astute tactics, were sufficient to fight any resistance effectively. During his reign, Chandragupta was involved in several conflicts. He conquered Magadha and battled against the Greeks and the eastern Nanda kingdom. By the age of twenty, his empire had expanded from the Bay of Bengal in the east to the Indus River in the west to the Arabian Sea in the south. Many countries were liberated from barbarous rule and also from the grips of foreign enslavement during Chandragupta Maurya. His political and military achievements were outstanding.' In 320BC, he adopted Jainism and abdicated the kingdom to his son Bindusara edicts outline his policies and accomplishments from as far west as Afghanistan to as far south as Andhra (Nellore District). Ashoka's edicts emphasised his empire's social and cultural qualities, promoting Buddhism but not condemning other religions. From the Mauryan capital of Pataliputra, he successfully maintained a centralised government. Taxation was collected by a huge bureaucracy. Inspectors returned to the emperor with their findings. Agriculture was boosted by irrigation. Excellent highways linking major commercial and political centres were created, as is customary in ancient empires; Ashoka commanded routes have well ,inns and shade trees[3] .

2.2.1 Importance of Ashoka's inscription

So far, ancient history has been constructed mostly on the basis of literary materials from either the local or foreign languages. Coins and inscriptions have played a role, but writings have received greater attention. The records are unquestionably more trustworthy than the mythical adherents. In terms of Ayurveda dissemination, religious people are considered to have had a significant role in spreading Ayurveda in other nations. Ayurveda was spread to notably East Indian countries, Asian countries, Thailand, Singapore, Malasia, Myanmar, Japan, Tibet and Korea. mostly by Buddhist religious people. Buddhism's ideals of nonviolence and love influenced him. He visited major Buddhist locations and constructed commemorative pillars with inscriptions describing their significance.[9]

2.2.2 Chandragupta Maurya

The Mauryan kingdom was initiated by Chandragupta Maurya. Chandragupta set out to extend his kingdom after securely established himself on the throne of Magadha. He conquered all of northern India up to the Indus River. Chandragupta possessed tremendous riches, allowing him to maintain a massive army. He defeated Seleucus Nikator in 305BC, freeing north-western India from Greek rule. Seleucus relinquished Afghanistan and Baluchistan, as well as Helen, his daughter, to Chandragupta. In exchange, Chandragupta gave Seleucus 500 war elephants. Seleucus dispatched Megasthenes as an envoy to Chandragupta's court. He starved himself to death, according to a Jain scripture, in order to achieve nirvana. Bindusara, his son, expanded the kingdom into central and southern India. At the time of his death, only the kingdom of Kalinga remained unconquered. In 273BC, his son, Asoka, succeeded him.[4]

2.2.3 Early Life of Chandragupta Maurya

Though little is known about Chandragupta's early life, inscriptions indicate that he was born around 345BC to a Kshatriya family living between present-day Gorakhpur and the Terai in Nepal. A lot of Indian historians believe that Chandragupta was the illegitimate son of a monarch from the Nanda dynasty of Magadha and a maid named 'Mura.' The dynasty was named after Chandragupta's mother. Chanakya, a professor at Takshasila University, discovered him playing with his buddies, pretending to be their king. The boy's ardent wisdom pleased Chanakya, who was so impressed with his leadership abilities that he decided to

make him a disciple. Chanakya instructed Chandragupta in combat and statecraft. They defeated Magadha and founded a new monarchy in Gandhara.[4]

2.3 Bindusara (297 – 272 B.C.)

Chandragupta reigned for around 25 years before handing up the crown to his son Bindusara. The Greeks referred to Bindusara as "Amitraghata," which means "Slayer of Enemies." According to certain academics, Bindusara conquered the Deccan all the way to Mysore. Taranatha, a Tibetan monk, verified that Bindusara captured 16 kingdoms encompassing "the region between the two oceans." According to Sangam Literature, Maurya conquered all the way to the south. As a result, during Bindusara's reign, the Mauryan dynasty expanded as far as Mysore and so covered virtually the whole India, save a tiny area of unknown tribal and wooded regions around Kalinga (Odisha) and the kingdoms of far south. Bindusara also corresponded with the Seleucid Syrian monarch Antiochus I, who dispatched Deimachus as an ambassador to his (Bindusara's) court. Bindusara requested delicious wine, dried figs, and a sophist from Antiochus I. The later sent everyone but a sophist since it was against Greek law to send a sophist. Bindusara was fascinated by the Ajivikas, a religious group. Bindusara installed his son Ashoka as governor of Ujjain, and he later put down an uprising in Taxila.[9]

2.4 Mauryan Dynasty

Nanda rulers controlled the Magadha dynasty in the 4th century B.C., and this dynasty was the most powerful kingdom in the north. A Brahman minister named Chanakya, also known as Kautilya/Vishnugupta, tutored a young man from the Mauryan family named Chandragupta. In 322 B.C., Chandragupta formed his own army and overthrew the Nanda monarch. As a result, Chandragupta Maurya is thought to be the first king and the founder of the Mauryan dynasty. His mother's name was Mur, therefore he was known as Maurya in Sanskrit, which means "son of Mur," and so his dynasty was known as the Maurya dynasty. Scholars believe he was just 25 years old when he conquered Patliputra from the king of the Nanda Dynasty, Dhana Nanda. First, he consolidated his dominance in the Indo-Gangetic plains before marching northwest. Chandragupta quickly controlled the whole area of Punjab. Seleucus Nicator, Alexander's Greek commander, ruled portions of the country in the far north. As a result, Chandragupta conducted a protracted struggle against him, eventually defeating him about 305 B.C., and a pact was made towards Central India, occupying the territory north of the Narmada River.[8]

2.5 Kalinga war : two views

The Kalinga conflict occurred during King Ashoka's 12th year in power. As a result of their secession from Magadha, Kalinga became an independent zone. It was both a rich and a coastal zone. There are allusions to Kalinga in the Mahabharata. Kalinga, which is mentioned in the Mahabharata, most likely hosted more than one tiny empire. The kingdom is supposed to have arisen from Monarch Vali, who may have been the king of Magadha, along with the initially non-Vedic lineages of Anga, Pundra, Suhma, and Vanga. The major motive that compelled King Ashoka to attack Kalinga was to complete India's political unity. Because Kalinga region served as a land bridge between the north and south, its capture may result in safe passage for the Magadha army to launch an attack in the far south. The presence of a powerful autonomous kingdom on Magadha land posed a direct danger to Mauryan empire.

2.6 Kalinga war an alternate view

According to Daya Dissanayake, a Sri Lankan writer who published the book "Who is Ashoka?" the Kalinga war may not have occurred. He said that the rock edict at Daya River in Odisha makes no reference of the Kalinga War. Instead, the occurrence was mentioned in a rock edict far from Odisha. According to BJP politician Biswa Bhusan Harichandan, the Kalinga war may have been a fabrication. "If one lakh troops were killed in the fight, one lakh were injured, and more than 1.5 lakh were imprisoned, the Kalinga army must have had a strength of more than eight lakh," he said. If you take it into account, the army's strength would have been equivalent to one-third of Kalinga's population. It appears weird. Furthermore, there had to have been a formidable monarch. Some historians suggest that Kalinga was a type of federation during the time, with no single monarch ruling. If that's the case, who was the federation's prime minister or leader? These questions must be addressed." [10]

2.7 Sources of History

- **Literary** Literary sources include all written documents, such as texts, essays, or descriptions, manuscripts, epics, and so on.
- **Epigraphic** The study of detecting graphemes, explaining their meanings, categorizing their usage based on dates and cultural settings, and making inferences about the writing and the writers is known as epigraphy. As a result, these are the evidences identified on inscriptions, clay tablets, and so on.
- **Archaeological sources** Archaeological sources are essentially tangible evidence such as historical structures, coins, inscriptions, and other relics that provide vital and comprehensive information about a certain time.[11]

3. Discussion

Inhabitants mass alone is inadequate to forecast the site of social spectacles, for which choice, plan, or technical competence were syndicate with unique characteristics of local environments. For example, in the situation of the Ashokan living-rock proclamations, extremely discriminating location of writings would have been accomplished by specific persons (professional engravers or stonemasons) who utilised precise standards of scenery appraisal for assignment. These standards have comprised natural indicators such as existence in appropriate pebble, as well as social elements such as the presence of highways and tunnels used by travellers, as well as the placement of inhabitants centres signified by Towns, Buddhist monasteries and cities. In fields such as botany and biology, such 'citizen-science' interfaces already exist (e.g., India's Shared Bird Initiative (Mutual Bird Intensive care of India n.d.)). Images labelled with geo-positions—taken, for example, with mobile phones—might permit researchers to thoroughly admittance 'citizen' sightings, which might formerly complete through track calls by archaeologists and epigraphers; completed period, the quantity of pictures can likewise offer a means of monitoring condition and preservation. The revival of attention in the Indian subcontinent as the birthplace of Buddhism has considerably enhanced both local and overseas engagement in legacy activities.[12]

4. Conclusion

The banished Mauryan emperor, Chandragupta Maurya, successfully toppled the Nanda kingdom, aided by Chanakya/political Caky's astuteness. Almost the whole Indian subcontinent was controlled by Mauryan rulers. The Mauryan period is regarded as the finest since the kingdom developed to be powerful while also excelling in administrative improvements. 'Arthashastra' was printed by Chanakya/Caky, the political counsellor of Chandragupta Maurya/ Cantirakupta maurya. Arthashastra is a Sanskrit discourse on economic policy, military strategy and statecraft, polic. The 'Indica,' written by Greek explorer and historian Megasthenes, paints a comprehensive picture of the Mauryan empire's social, economic, and administrative development. Bindusara, Chandragupta Maurya's/ Cantirakupta maurya's successor, strengthened trade connections with neighbouring countries, formed marriage alliances with other kingdoms, and conquered them. His son, Ashoka, succeeded him and became a prominent proponent of peace and nonviolence. During Ashoka's rule, monasteries and other religious structures were built in addition to edicts and stupas. The South Asian Ashokan inscriptions are one of the most inspiring instances of writing as a transformational ancient political tool. The inscriptions are particularly important for the study of Buddhism, which is now a worldwide spiritual custom was a minor and generally obscure religion prior to Ashoka's imperial backing. The Himalayan foothills near ,the Narmada river, The upper Indus Valley, the Godavari river are identified as regions requiring systematic investigation in the HYDE-derived map of Ashokan edicts. The Maurya Empire is a watershed moment in Indian history because it was the first to create a virtually pan-Indian paramouncy, as well as an effective administrative structure with a centripetal direction. During this time, the goal of chakravarti (universal) rulership was realised. It will be noted for the creation of Dhamma policy to emphasise and accommodate heterogeneity in subcontinent's socioeconomic and social circumstances. The practise of engraving royal orders and documents, as well as usage of pebble as a important standard of sculptural sculpture in India, were two further legacies left by the Maurya dynasty.

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