

UNIT 131 – UPSC - Indian History - Fall of Mauryas

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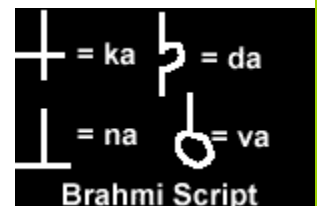
Fall of Mauryas

Emperor Ashoka ruled for 37 years. He died in 232 BC. During his reign he gave up war and preached peace in the kingdom. Seven kings (some say 10) followed Ashoka within a period of 50 years. The Mauryan empire was breaking up. There are different opinions about the fall of the kingdom. Some say that since the later part of Ashoka's reign was devoid of wars, the military were inactive and this weakened them. Others say after Ashoka there were no strong kings to rule such a vast empire.

Life of People in Mauryan Empire

Extract from "A History of India for Children" by Roshan Dalal:

Many people were agriculturists. They grew rice, wheat, barley, pulses, cotton and vegetables. Others were artisans. They specialised in different crafts, as in the earlier period. Textiles, wooden, and ivory objects, perfumes, jewellery from semi-precious stones, items of iron and copper and the shining black pottery described earlier, were among the things they made. Traders and merchants carried goods to far-off places by land and sea. Soldiers defended the kingdom. Ministers and officials helped the king. Philosophers and religious people wandered through the kingdom in search of the truth about life and death, and why life existed.



Sungas Dynasty

The last ruler of the Mauryan dynasty was Brithadratha. He was killed by his own commander-in-chief Pushyamitra Sunga in 185 BC.

With the fall of Mauryas, India lost its political unity. Pushyamitra Sunga became the ruler of the Magadha and neighbouring territories. The north-western regions comprising Rajputana, Malwa and Punjab passed into the hands of the foreign rulers. The kingdom of Pushyamitra was extended upto Narmada in the south, and controlled Jalandhar and Sialkot in the Punjab in the north-western regions.

Pushyamitra died after ruling for 36 years (187-151 BC). He was succeeded by son Agnimitra. This prince is the hero of a famous drama by India's greatest playwright, Kalidasa. Agnimitra used to hold his court in the city of Vidisa, modern Besnagar in

Eastern Malwa. The power of the Sungas gradually weakened. It is said that there were ten Sunga kings.

Kanva Dynasty (75BC - 30BC)

The last ruler of the Sunga dynasty was overthrown by Vasudeva of the Kanva dynasty in 75 BC. The Kanva ruler allowed the kings of the Sunga dynasty to continue to rule in obscurity in a corner of their former dominions. Magadha was ruled by four Kanva rulers. In 30 BC, the southern power swept away both the Kanvas and Sungas and the province of Eastern Malwa was absorbed within the dominions of the conqueror.

