

## UNIT 132 – UPSC - Indian History - Ashoka

### India History - Ashoka

## 273 BC: Ashoka coronated as Mauryan king

[273 BC - 232 BC]



Ashoka, the most trusted son of Bindusara and the grandson of Chandragupta Maurya, was a brave soldier. He was the most famous of the Mauryan kings and was one of the greatest rulers of India. During his father's reign, he was the governor of Ujjain and Taxila. Having sidelined all claims to the throne from his brothers, Ashoka was coronated as an emperor. Ashoka extended the Maurya Empire to the whole of India except the deep south and the south-east, reaching out even into Central Asia.

## 261 BC: The Kalinga War

Ashoka succeeded in conquering Kalinga after a bloody war in which 100,000 men were killed, 150,000 injured and thousands were captured and retained as slaves. The sight of the slaughter involved in his conquest deeply distressed Ashoka and deeply affected his mind. This was a turning point in his life. He renounced war and sought peace in Buddha's preachings of love and *ahimsa* (non-violence). The war also developed in him a hatred for all kinds of violence. So he gave up hunting and slaughtering of animals. He became a strict vegetarian.



Under his reign Buddhism spread to Syria, Egypt, Macedonia, Central Asia, Burma. For propagation of Buddhism, he started inscribing edicts on rocks and pillars at places where people could easily read them. These pillars and rocks are still found in India, spreading their message of love and peace for the last two thousand years. To his ideas he gave the name *Dharma*. Ashoka died in 232 BC. The capital of Ashoka pillar at Sarnath is adopted by India as its national emblem. The "Dharma Chakra" on the Ashoka Pillar adorns our National Flag.