

UNIT 134 – UPSC - Indian History - Chandragupta Maurya

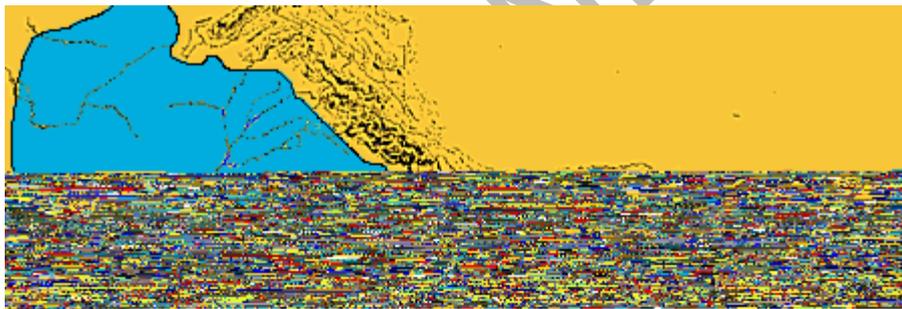
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India History - Chandragupta Maurya

322 BC: Chandragupta Maurya captures Magadha Establishes First Indian Empire

[322-298 BC]

Chandragupta, with the help Chanakya (Kautilya), who is also known as the Indian Machiavelli, destroyed the Nanda rulers of Magadha and established the Mauryan empire. It is said that Chanakya met Chandragupta in the Vindhya forest, after being insulted by the Nanda king.



Alexander's invasion prompted Indians to develop a centralised state. Chandragupta declared war and defeated Selucus Nicator, the Macedonian ruler of the Northwestern territories captured by Alexander the Great.

Along with the the astute advice of Chanakya, Chandragupta also seized Punjab, Kabul, Khandahar, Gandhara and Persia from Seluces. Seluces' daughter was married to Chandragupta.

"Selucus failed and had to conclude a treaty with Chandragupta by which he surrendered a large territory including, in the opinion of certain writers, the satrapies of Paropanisadai (Kabul), Aria (Herat), Arachosia (Qanadahar) and Gedrosia (Baluchistan), in return for 500 elephants. The treaty was probably cemented by a marriage contract. A Greek envoy was accredited to the Court of Pataliputra."

- *An Advanced History of India*
by RC Majumdar, HC Raychaudhri & Kalinkar Datta

The most important result of this treaty was that Chandragupta's fame spread far and wide and his empire was recognised as a great power in the western countries. The kings of Egypt and Syria sent ambassadors to the Mauryan Court.

Chandragupta's birth shrouded in mystery

Chandragupta Maurya's origins were shrouded in mystery. Having been brought up by peacock tamers, he could be of low caste birth. According to other sources, Chandragupta Maurya was the son of a Nanda prince and a dasi called Mura. It is also possible that Chandragupta was of the Maurya tribe of Kshatriyas.

Mauryan Administration

Maurya empire was the first really large and powerful centralised state in India. It was very well governed, with tempered autocracy at the top and democracy at the city and village levels. Megasthenes, the Greek ambassador at the court of Chandragupta Maurya in Pataliputra, had expressed his admiration for the efficient administration of the empire. His book 'Indica' is a collection of comments of other Roman & Greek travelers, and Megasthenes wrote about the prosperity of the Mauryan cities.

He further reported that agriculture was healthy, water abundant and mineral wealth was in plenty. Speaking of the general prosperity, Megasthenes wrote, "the Indians, dressed in bright and rich colors, they liberally used ornaments and gems." He also spoke of the division of society according to occupation and the large number of religious sects and foreigners in the empire.

Chandragupta Maurya's son Bindusara became the new Mauryan Emperor by inheriting an empire including the Hindukush, Narmada, Vindhya, Mysore, Bihar, Bengal, Orissa, Assam, Baluchistan & Afghanistan.