

Kalinga War

The war fought between Ashoka, the great Mauryan Emperor, and the ruler of the State of Kalinga is known as Kalinga War.

- By the time Chandragupta Maurya passing, the Mauryan Empire had most of modern-day India with its southern reaches and Kalinga staying independent.
- Kalinga was soundly located, with trade routes leading to southeast Asia. Kalinga had significant ports and a strong navy.
- A kingdom with so much capacity on the fringes of the Mauryan Empire would be problematic as it can disturb the communication lines between the Mauryan capital of Pataliputra and its holdings in the central Indian peninsula.
- Chandragupta Maurya had attempted to capture the state but failed. After his death, his grandson Ashoka continued the conquest of Kalinga after coming to the throne.

Events of Kalinga War

There are not many resources available about the exact events and nature of the Kalinga War. but one thing is certain the level of violence and casualties were high.

- As per the Rock Edicts of Ashoka, almost 1 lakh people were killed in the Kalinga War, lakhs perished, and a lakh and a half were taken as prisoners.
- There is no solid evidence about when the war began, but it ended in the 8th year of Ashoka's reign in 261 BC.
- According to Megasthenes, who was a Greek historian at the court of Chandragupta Maurya, Kalinga's monarch had a big force that had elephants, infantry, and cavalry.

Outcome of Kalinga War

Ashoka was victorious and hence conquered Kalinga. Even though he captured Kalinga, there was not a single individual left to live as a slave. Lakhs of individuals suffering in the Kalinga war. Orphans' children were crying, and there were blood streams everywhere. Ashoka witnessed the dead bodies of elephants, soldiers, and horses.

Ashoka felt great regret for the killings, and he left the policy of aggression. Ashoka follows the policy for the welfare of animals and people. Ashoka sent ambassadors of peace to several countries, including greek kingdoms in west Asia.

Aftermath of Kalinga War

Kalinga War had a very deep impact on Ashoka. It was likely the only war in ancient history where a would-be conqueror gave up his sword.

- After Kalinga War, Ashoka devotes the rest of his life to ahimsa (non-violence) and to dharma-Vijaya (victory through dharma).
- Ashoka also ended his military expansion and focused on the ear of peace, harmony, and prosperity for more than 40 years.

- However, Ashoka's policy brought peace to the land, but in the long run, it destroyed its ability to defend itself from the threats.

Significance of Kalinga War

Conquering Kalinga at the cost of lakhs of lives left Ashoka in great regret and sorrow. Ashoka felt that it is not worth the cost of human life. The death of people, suffering, blood, and tears tormented him constantly; the Kalinga war inspired Ashoka to be a leader who cared about peace and harmony of the people. Ashoka vowed that he would never take up weapons, and he made significant changes in the policies. After the death of the Ashoka Mauryan dynasty and the Mauryan Empire disintegrated in 232 BC.

