

Ancient History of Bihar Part-2

MAURYAN Dynasty - 321 B.C. to 184 B.C.

Chandragupta Maurya:

- He founded the dynasty with the help of his mentor Chanakya or Kautilya or Vishnugupt.
- He was born as Mura to a Shudra woman in the court of Nanda.
- In Mudra Rakshasa, he is also referred to as Vrishala.
- As per Buddhist tradition, he belonged to the Moriya Kshatriya clan.
- He fought Seleucus Nikator, a general of Alexander in 305 B.C. He later sent Megasthenese to Mauryan court.
- Megasthenes wrote Indica describing Mauryan administration. The empire was divided into four provinces, each under one governor. According to him, Mauryan administration in Patliputra was under a council of 30 members divided into 6 committees of 5 members each.
- Patliputra has been referred to as Palibothra in Megasthenes' Indica.
- Chanakya wrote, "It is considered a treatise on economics, politics, foreign affairs, administration, military, warfare and religion ever produced."

Bindusara:

- He was also called by the name Amitrochates by Greek writers, Mudrasar in Vayu Purana and Seemseri in Jaina text Rajvalli Katha.
- Deimachus - Syrian ambassador sent by king Antiochus
- Dionysius - sent by Ptolemy II of Egypt

Ashoka:

- He came to power after killing 99 of his brothers sparing only one,
- Kalinga War - 261 B.C. - it is mentioned in Major Edict XIII.
- After the Kalinga war, Ashoka embraced Buddhism under influence of monk Upagupta. He came to be known as
- Bhabru inscription - Ashoka is revealed as king of Magadha
- Third Buddhist Council - 250 B.C. - was convened by Ashoka under the presidentship of Tissa in Patliputra.

SUNGA Dynasty

- Pushyamitra Sunga was the Commander-in-Chief of Mauryan armed forces.
- He overthrew the last Mauryan ruler. It led to the persecution of Buddhists and the resurgence of Hinduism.
- Two Ashwamedha Yagyas were held under his reign with Patanjali as the main priest - Ayodhya Inscription of Dhandev
- Agnimitra, son of Pushyamitra was the hero of Kalidasa's drama,

GUPTA Empire

- The most striking difference in the administration of Guptas from Mauryas was that in Mauryas power was centralized while in Guptas power was decentralized.
- Empire was divided into provinces and each province was further divided into districts. Villages were the smallest units.
- Sri Gupta was the founder of the Gupta dynasty.
- Rule of the Guptas is known as Indian Golden Age as rapid strides were made in various fields.
- Aryabhatta stated that the earth moved around the sun and rotates on its own axis. His most famous work is
- Varahamihira composed Pancha Siddhanta and Brihat Samhita.
- Kalidasa wrote famous dramas like Malvikagnimitram, Abhigyanashakuntalam and Kumarasambhava
- Mrichakatika by Sudraka, Panchatantra by Vishnu Sharma and Kamasutra by Vatsyana were also written in this period.

Chandragupta I:

- He was the son of Ghatotkacha (son of Sri Gupta).
- He was the first king to use the title Maharajadhiraja.
- His empire included Bengal, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh
- He married Licchavi princess, Kumaradevi. Gold coins were issued to commemorate this event.

Samudragupta:

- Prayag inscription by Harisen was dedicated to him. It was discovered by A Tryer. It is written in the Sanskrit language.
- He was called Napoleon of India for his conquests by Vincent Smith.
- He gave permission to Sri Lankan ruler Meghavarnan to construct a monastery at Bodh Gaya.

- He was also known as Kaviraj for his patronizing of art.

Chandragupta II - Vikramaditya:

- He killed his brother and married his widow
- He used friendly relations and matrimonial alliances to extend his empire.
- Navaratna present in his court were:

1. Kalidas	2. Shanku	3. Amarasimha
4. Vetalbhatta	5. Vararuchi	6. Panaka
7. Varahamira	8. Dhanwantari	9. Ghatakarpara

- Fa-Hien, a Chinese traveller visited during his reign.

Kumaragupta

- He established Nalanda University which became a centre of learning.
- He was also known as Mahendraditya.

Skandagupta

- Junagarh Inscription - his governor got restoration of Sudarshana Lake. It was originally constructed by the Mauryas.
- He was the last of the great rulers and after him, the empire began to disintegrate.
- Vishnugupta was the last ruler of the dynasty.

PALA Empire

- They were the followers of Mahayana and the tantric school of Buddhism.
- Gopala was the first ruler of the dynasty. He was elected democratically.
- Odantipur (now in Bihar Sharif), a Buddhist Mahavihara was established by Gopala.
- Dharmapala captured Kannauj and took the title of *Uttarapathasvamin* ("Lord of the North").
- Vikramashila University (in Bhagalpur) was established by Dharmapala.
- They also constructed many temples, the most important being Sun Temple at Konark.