

# History Notes Mauryan Empire (PDF)

## GK History Notes: Origin of Mauryan Empire

The Mauryan Empire started from Magadha and was founded in 321 BC by **Chandragupta Maurya**. Mudrarakshasha written by Vishakadatta beautifully summarizes the rise of Chandragupta Maurya with the help of Chanakya. Chandragupta Maurya patronized Jainism. Pataliputra, modern-day Patna was the capital city of the Mauryan Empire.

## Important Rulers of the Mauryan Empire

In the table below we have provided the Important Rulers of the Mauryan Empire:

Mauryan Empires – Rulers	
Chandragupta Maurya	(324/321- 297 B.C.)
Bindusara	(297 – 272 B.C.)
Asoka	(268 – 232 B.C.)

## Rise of the Mauryan Empire

- Dhana Nanda, the last of the Nanda rulers, was widely despised for his oppressive tax system.
- Furthermore, following Alexander's invasion of North-Western India, that region confronted a great deal of unrest from foreign powers.
- Some of these areas were ruled by the Seleucid Dynasty, which was established by Seleucus Nicator I. He was one of Alexander the Great's generals.
- In 321 BC, Chandragupta, assisted by an intelligent and strategically astute Brahmin, usurped the throne by defeating Dhana Nanda.

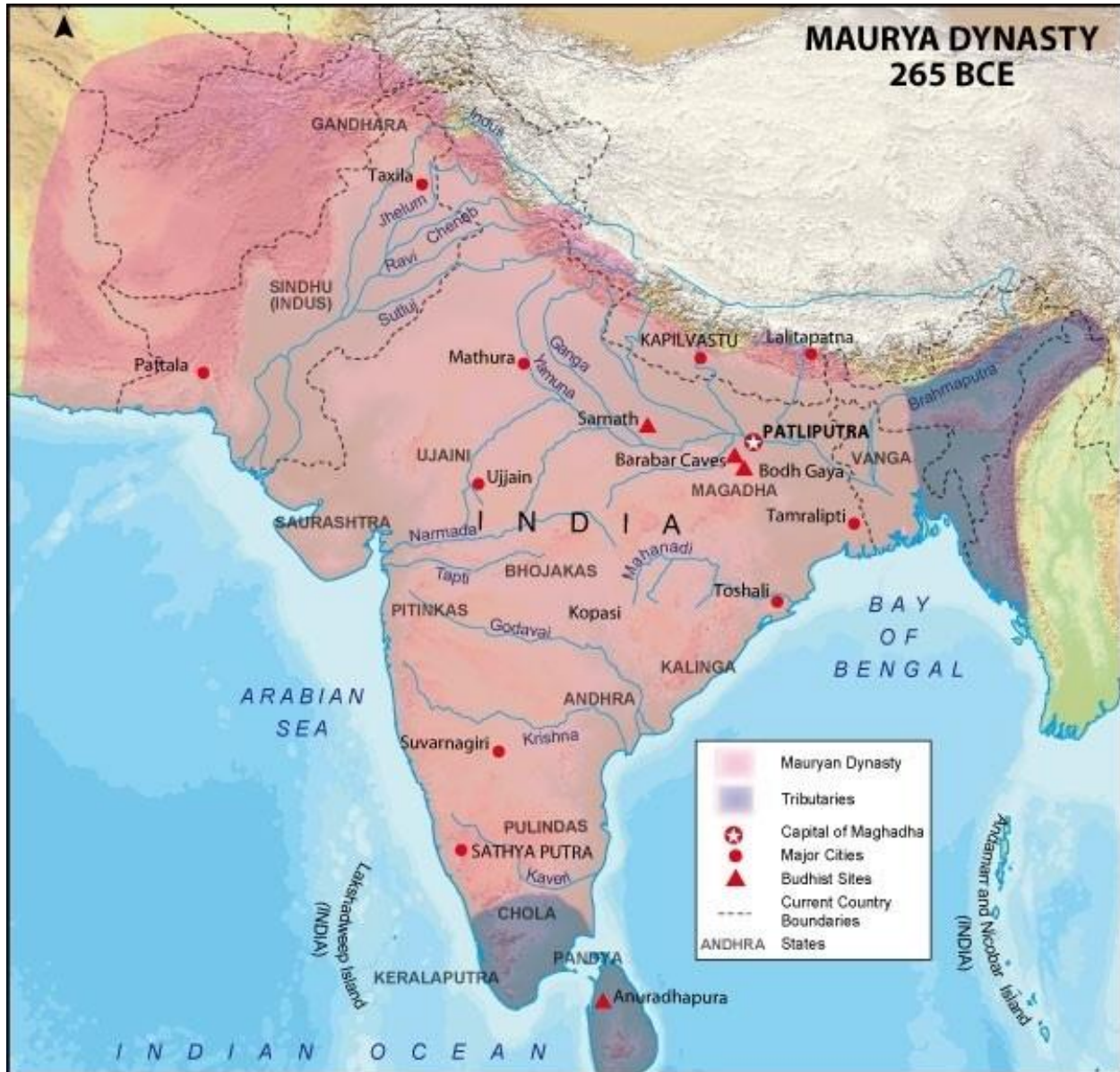
## Expansion of the Mauryan Empire

Mauryan Empire was one of the world's largest empires of that time and expanded to an area of 5,000,000 km<sup>2</sup>. Leaving the parts of NE India, Kerala and Tamil Nadu, the Mauryans ruled over the rest of Indian Subcontinent.



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## Imperial Organization

1. Accounts of Megasthenes in his book *Indika* and the *Arthashastra* (written by Kautilya) describe the elaborate arrangements made in the Mauryan administration, society and economy.
2. The empire was divided into provinces which were under Princes. Along with this, a dozen departments, the armed forces containing six wings were also maintained. Chandragupta established a well-organized administrative system and gave it a sound financial base.

## Founder of the Mauryan Empire: Chandragupta Maurya

- The beginnings of Chandragupta are shrouded in mystery. The Greek sources (the oldest) describe him as being of non-warrior ancestry. According to Hindu accounts, he was a Kautilya student of humble origin. (probably born to a Shudra woman). According to most Buddhist accounts, he was a Kshatriya.



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- It is widely assumed that he was an orphaned boy from a poor household who was trained by Kautilya.
- Sandrokottos is the name given to him in Greek sources.
- Alexander abandoned his conquest of India in 324 BC, and within a year, Chandragupta had vanquished some of the Greek-ruled cities in the country's northwestern region.
- Kautilya devised the plan, which Chandragupta carried out. They had formed their own mercenary force.
- They then proceeded eastward into Magadha.
- In around 321 BC, he defeated Dhana Nanda in a succession of battles, laying the groundwork for the Maurya Empire.
- In 305 BC, he signed a treaty with the Seleucus Nicator in which he acquired Baluchistan, eastern Afghanistan, and the area west of the Indus. He also wedded the daughter of Seleucus Nicator. Seleucus Nicator received 500 elephants in exchange. Seleucus Nicator avoided a full-scale conflict with the mighty Chandragupta in exchange for war assets that would bring him to victory over his opponents in the Battle of Ipsus, fought in 301 BC.
- Megasthenes was the Greek ambassador at the palace of Chandragupta. With the exception of a few places like Kalinga and the extreme south, Chandragupta led an expansionist strategy that brought almost the entire present-day India under his authority.
- From 321 BC to 297 BC, he ruled.
- He abdicated in support of his son, Bindusara, and travelled to Karnataka with the Jain monk Bhadrabahu. He had converted to Jainism and is said to have starved himself to death at Shravanabelagola according to Jain legend.

## Bindusara (298-273 BC)

He was known to Greeks as Amitrochates and he patronized the Ajivika sect.

- Son of Chandragupta.
- He ruled from 297 BC to 273 BC.
- Deimachus was a Greek ambassador at his court.
- He had appointed his son, Ashoka as the governor of Ujjain.
- Bindusara is believed to have extended the Mauryan Empire to Mysore as well.

## Ashoka

1. Ashoka ascended the throne in 273 BC and ruled up to 232 BC. He was known as 'Devanampriya Priyadarsi' the beautiful one who was the beloved of Gods.
2. Ashoka fought the Kalinga war in 261 BC. Kalinga is in modern Orissa.
3. Ashokan inscriptions were deciphered by James Prinsep.
4. After the battle of Kalinga, Ashoka became a Buddhist, being shocked by the horrors of the war, he replaced Bherighosha by *Dhammaghosha*
5. Ashoka was initiated to Buddhism by Upagupta or Nigrodha, a disciple of Buddha
6. For the propagation of Buddhism Ashoka started the institution of Dharmamahamatras.

## Ashokan Inscriptions

1. Ashokan inscriptions carried royal orders through which he was able to speak directly to the people. There were rock edicts and pillar edicts which were again divided into major and minor.





2. The 14 Major Rock Edicts of Ashoka tell about the principles of Dharma
3. The Kalinga rock edict explains the principles of administration after the Kalinga war. In his Kalinga edict, he mentions “All men are my children”
4. The Major Rock Edict XII of Ashoka deals with the conquest of Kalinga.
5. The term ‘Ashoka’ was mentioned only in the Maski Minor rock edict.

### Ashoka and Buddhism

- Ashoka held the third Buddhist council at his capital Pataliputra in 250 BC under the presidentship of Moggaliputta Tissa.
- He sent his son and daughter to Sri Lanka for the spread of Buddhism (Mahendra and Sanghamitra)
- Ashoka spread Buddhism to Sri Lanka and Nepal. He is known as the Constantine of Buddhism.
- Ceylon’s ruler Devanampriya Tissa was Ashoka’s first convert to Buddhism.
- The broad objective of Ashoka’s Dhamma policy was to preserve the social order.
- Ashoka ruled for 40 years and died in 232 BC.

### Mauryan Administration

Highly centralized administrative structure. Chanakya mentions the 7 elements of Saptanga theory in administration. The king is assisted by his Mantri Parishad. Important officials were appointed for various administrative activities.

The administration was divided into four units

- The chakra or the province
- The Ahar or the district
- The Sangrahana or a group of villages
- The Gram or village

The municipal administration headed by a *Nagarak* was also found in Arthashastra.

### Mauryan Art

- **Royal Art** – The Royal palaces, pillars, caves, stupas etc.
- **Popular art** – Figure sculptures, Terracotta objects etc.

The emblem of the Indian Republic has been adopted from the four-lion capital of one of the Ashokan pillars which is located in Sarnath. Another four-lion capital at Sanchi, Single lion capital at Rampurva and Lauria Nandangarh, single bull at Rampurva, and carved elephant at Dhauri are found.

The Mauryas introduced Stone Masonry on large scale. They started the process of “hewing out” caves from rocks and construction of stupas to store the relics of Buddha and Bodhisattvas which in later stages were expanded by the Guptas.

### Reasons for the decline

- Highly centralized Mauryan administration
- Partition after the death of Ashoka disturbed the unity of the empire
- Weak later Mauryan rulers were also a cause of the decline of the empire



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