

Chapter – 8 History

Ashoka the Emperor who gave up War

- By the end of the Vedic period, the Aryan tribal settlements spread across the Indo-Gangetic plains grew into territorial divisions like Janapadas.
- One of the most powerful Janapadas, was that of Magadha under the Mauryas.
- **Rise of Magadha:**
 - (i) The rise of Magadha is attributed to the fertile plains along the river Ganga.
 - (ii) The Haryanka, Shishunaga and Nanda dynasties helped in the development of Magadha as a powerful state.
 - (iii) Around 326 BC, Greek ruler Alexander invaded India. At that time Magadha was ruled by Nandas.
 - (iv) The Nanda rulers who had humiliated Chanakya were overthrown by Chandragupta who established the Mauryan empire in 321 BC with his capital at Patiliputra.
 - (v) Chandragupta captured Punjab, Gujarat, Afghanistan. He even defeated Greek ruler Seleucus in 305 BC.
 - (vi) After ruling for 25 years, Chandragupta became a Jain ascetic and gave his kingdom to his son Bindusara who further expanded it southwards.
- **Ashoka: From a Warrior to Messenger of Peace:**
 - (i) Bindusara was succeeded by his son Ashoka, the greatest Mauryan emperor.
 - (ii) He undertook military campaign against Kalinga. After defeating it he saw a pool of blood.
 - (iii) The sight of large scale killing moved Ashoka and he embraced Buddhism.
 - (iv) He began to spread the teachings of Buddha not only in India but even abroad.
 - (v) His philosophy called 'Dhamma' was propagated all over. He preached peace, tolerance, shunning violence, stopping animal sacrifice and respect of slaves by their masters.
 - (vi) He sent missionaries called 'Dhamma Mahamattas' to Sri Lanka, Burma and South-east Asian countries to propagate Buddhism.
- **Mauryan Administration:**
 - (i) The Central administration was headed by the king who was the supreme judge and the law giver.
 - (ii) The king appointed several officials called mantris and amatyas to assist him.
 - (iii) The provincial administration was headed by a governor who was generally a Kumara or an Aryapura.
 - (iv) The provinces were divided into district or Janapada. It had three important officials called Pradeshika, Rajuka and Yukta.
- **Military System:**
 - (i) The Mauryas had established a vast empire with the help of a powerful army.
 - (ii) Megasthenes, a Greek ambassador wrote that soldiers were most numerous class next to the cultivators.
 - (iii) The Arthashastra mentions three types of soldiers namely, hereditary fighting class, mercenaries willing to fight for any government which engaged their services; and artisans.
 - (iv) The army consisted of 6,00,000 infantry, 30,000 horsemen, 3,000 chariots and 9,000 elephants.

- (v) The army administration was under a commander-in-chief.
- (vi) There were six specialized departments to look after the military administration.
- (vii) Further the king appointed a number of trusted secret servicemen as spies. It helped the king to know what people thought about him.

- **Achievements of Mauryas:**

- (i) The agriculture was the main occupation of the Mauryas.
- (ii) In addition, merchants were also found in large numbers.
- (iii) Division in society was based on the different occupations of people.
- (iv) Mauryan art and architecture in the form of stupas, viharas, pillars and rock edicts is very popular.
- (v) Megasthenes Indica and Kautilya's Arthashastra are two valuable sources of knowing about the Mauryas.
- (vi) The state became weak politically and financially after the death of Ashoka and started declining.

