

Ancient and Medieval History Class 05

3rd January, 2024 at 9:00 AM

NANDA DYNASTY (09:14 AM):

- Mahapadmananda after coming to power took a determination that he would eliminate all the Kshatriyas from Magadh.
- Because of his aggressive attitude, he was popularly known as "**Ugrasena**" or "**Ekarata**".
- He occupied some parts of western Odisha.
- The most important ruler of Nanda Dynasty was Dhanananda.
- He built one of the strongest armies of that time.
- During his tenure, the ruler of Macedonia Alexander started his campaign for the East.
- On the banks of river Jhelum in the **battle of Hydaspes** (326 BC), Alexander defeated the ruler of Jhelum Pourous, and impressed by his bravery Jhelum was restored to Pourous and he became his ally.
- Alexander wanted to enter Magadh to fight with Dhanananda but at this time he was stopped by his army which was exhausted due to continuous fighting.
- Though Dhanananda was saved from the attack of Alexander, however, he could not defend himself against Chandragupta Maurya.

MAURYA DYNASTY (321-185 BC) (09:35):

- Chandragupta defeated Dhanananda due to the active support of Vishnugupta also known as Kautilya or Chanakya.
- The political mechanization developed by Kautilya against the Nanda ruler is mentioned in the historical text "**Mudrarakshasa**" written by Visakhadatta.
- Arthashastra written by Vishnugupta or Kautilya is a book of statecraft of the Maurya age.
- "**Indica**" authored by Megasthenes provides the details of Maurya society.
- In 303 BC, Chandragupta fought with the Greek ambassador of Alexander, **Seleukos Nikator**.
- Once again, with the support of Kautilya, Chandragupta was successful.
- After the defeat of Nikator, the treaty was signed whereby the area lying West of the River Indus was handed over to Chandragupta and Nikator also gave the hand of his daughter Helena to Chandragupta.
- Chandragupta accepted the Greek ambassador Megasthenes in his court.
- Chandragupta accepted the Jain faith under the guidance of Bhadrabahu.
- There was severe famine in Magadh due to which Chandragupta shifted to a place called Shravana Belgola in Karnataka where under the influence of Bhadrabahu he performed extreme Jain penance "**Sallekhana**" and ended his life by fasting till death.
- After his death, his son Bindusara (299-273) came to power.
- In Greek accounts, he is mentioned as Amitrochates or Amitroghat (destroyer of enemies).
- He annexed Southern India in the Mauryan empire which has been attested by Tibetan scholar Taranath.
- He also established a very cordial relationship with Philadelphians Ptolemy and Antiochus II of Syria.
- He requested the Syrian ruler to send Figged wine and philosophers to the Mauryan court.
- Syrian ruler refused to send philosophers as the law of Syria didn't allow it.
- In 299 BC, he convened the first Jain Council at Patliputra which was presided by **Sthulabhadra**.
- After some point in time, Bhadrabahu returned from Shravana Belgola which led to an ideological fight between him and Sthulabhadra.
- It led to the creation of two branches of Jainism **Shwetambar** and **Digambar**.
- After the death of Bindusara, a war of succession started among his sons which continued for four years.
- It is said that Ashoka killed hundreds of his brothers to assume power in 269 BC.

- **Ashoka (269-232 BC) (10:15 AM):**
- He was the most powerful Mauryan King and the first Chakravartin Samrat of India.
- His life is divided into **three phases** that are:
 - a) Chandashoka - Aggressive, brutal phase.
 - b) Kamashoka - Indulged in physical pleasure.
 - c) Dhammashoka - Propagation of Dhamma (Moral, ethical code of conduct).
- **Sources:**
- The most important sources of information about Ashoka's rule are his rock edicts and inscriptions.
- It was written in Prakrit, Greek, and Aramaic language.
- The script that was used for writing was Brahmi and Kharosthi (The language Prakrit was used for Brahmi and Kharosthi script).
- Aramaic and Greek were language as well as script.
- James Prinsep was the first person who deciphered the Ashokan inscriptions.
- In the majority of the Ashokan inscriptions, Ashoka was referred to as "Devanam Piya Piyadasi" (beloved of the Gods).
- In his 9th regnal year, Ashoka led a campaign of Kalinga to control all the major ports of Eastern India.
- In this battle which was fought on the banks of river Daya on the site of river Dhauli in Odisha more than 1 lakh people died.
- Ashoka was moved by the scene of the massacre and the blood Red colour of the Daya River.
- He was full of remorse and guilt.
- He decided that he would abandon the policy of **Bherigosh** (military annexation) and he will follow the path of **Dhammagosh** (socio-cultural annexation).
- He embarked on the path of Buddhism.
- In 250 BC, he convened the 3rd Buddhist council at Pataliputra which led to the compilation of Abhidhamma Pitak.
- After the end of the council, he started sending Buddhist missions to different parts of the world.
- He sent his son Mahendra and daughter Sanghamitra to Srilanka to propagate Buddhism.
- He also sent Buddhist missions to East Asia in countries like Myanmar, Thailand, Eastern Asia, and Central Asia.
- The strong army created by Ashoka became a burden on the weak successors after Ashoka's death.
- Later, in 185 BC, the last Maurya ruler Brihadrath was assassinated by his minister Pushyamitra Shunga.

- **Maurya Administration:**

- Maurya had a very centralized administration and the epitome of the administration was king.
- Popularly there were seven organs of Maurya administration referred to as "**Saptang**."
- Swamin - King.
- Ammatya - Ministers.
- Kosha - Treasury.
- Bala - Force.
- Durga - Fort/Janapada.
- Mitra - Ally.
- Shatru - Enemy.

- **Important Mauryan Officers:**

- Dhamma Mahamatya - Ministers who were responsible for the propagation of Dhamma.
- Sannidhata - Chief Treasurer.
- Samharta - Chief tax collector.
- Shulkadyaksha - Tax collector.
- Sitadyaksha - Minister of Agriculture Land.
- Nagarika - City administrator.
- Rajjuk - Judicial officer.
- Bhesaj - Physicians.
- Guptachar - Spies.
- Kumar Mahamatya's - Princes who hold the post of provincial Governor.
- Vyavaharika - Chief Justice.
- Sthunika - Village headman.

- **Society of Maurya's (11:10 AM):**

- Megasthenes in his book Indica referred to **7 castes** existing in the Mauryan society.
- It seems that he was confused between caste and profession and named profession as caste:
- Councillors.
- Herdsmen/Shepherd.
- Agriculturalist.
- Philosophers.
- Artisans.
- Shramanas.
- Ministers.
- Bonded labour or forced labour was also practiced in the society known as "Vasti".
- Mauryan society was comparatively unorthodox and progressive.
- There was mobility in the society.
- Elders and women were accorded respect as did the class of Shramana (progressive priestly class).
- At the time of Ashoka moral ethical code of conduct was defined for the masses.
- Non-adherence to the code of conduct led to severe punishment.
- **Other initiatives:**
- Ashoka was perhaps the first monarch of India who started creating wildlife sanctuaries for the protection of animals.
- Ashoka stopped the practice of killing animals including his favourite peacock.
- Maurya rulers also created many public hospitals.

POST-MAURYA (11:20 AM):

- After the decline of the Maurya Empire, the Magadh territory started to shrink and many ruling dynasties of indigenous nature and outsiders started to rule in fragmented areas of the erstwhile Maurya Empire.

- **Shunga Dynasty (185 -75 BC):**
- Pushyamitra Shunga revived Vedic rituals and started to repromote Hinduism.
- He performed one Ashmedha Yajana under the guidance of his chief priest Patanjali.
- The details of Asmedha yajana are mentioned in Ayodhya inscriptions.
- It is said that Pushyamitra destroyed many Buddhist stupas and monasteries at Sanchi.
- He was succeeded by his son Agnimitra Shunga.
- The love affair of Agnimitra Shunga with the princess of Vidisha Malvika is mentioned in the novel of Kalidas, **Malvika Agnimitra**.
- The next ruler Vasumitra Shunga promoted Buddhism and reconstructed all the stupas in Sanchi destroyed by Pushyamitra Shunga.
- During the tenure of Bhagabhadra, a Greek ambassador Heliodorus visited Shunga's court.
- With a large number of his followers, he accepted Hinduism.
- In the worship of Lord Vishnu, he erected a pillar named Garuda Dhvaj at Bhilsa, Besnagar, and Vidisha.
- It is regarded as the first archeological evidence of Vishnu worship in India.
- The last Shunga ruler Devahuti was killed by his minister Vasudev Kanva around 75 BC.
- It led to the establishment of the Kanva Dynasty in Magadh.
- Vedic Hinduism was still promoted during this age.

SATAVAHANAS (11:37 AM):

- Satavahanas trace their lineage with Viswamitra.
- They are also referred to as Andhra or Andhrabhritya.
- Though their origin is traced to 200 BC however they came to prominence in the first century AD.
- Simukh is regarded as the real founder of Satavahanas in the first century AD.

THE TOPIC FOR THE NEXT CLASS - SATAVAHANAS (TO BE CONTINUED.....).