

MAGADHA EMPIRE

4.1 NANDA DYNASTY

Mahanandi, the last King of Sishunaga dynasty, was succeeded in the year 1634 BC by Mahapadmananda, the son of his Sudra wife.. Mahapadmananda was the most powerful king of his time and had conquered all the important kingdoms of India. He put to death all the Kshatriya kings of those kingdoms and therefore he has been compared with Parshuram, the killer of all Kshatriyas.

Mahapadmananda is well known for his extreme greed and the habit of hoarding wealth. It is said that levying taxes on skins, gums, trees and even stones he amassed millions of gold coins. It is said that he made holes in rocks to bury the money and sealed them with molten lead. These rocks were under the river Ganga which was diverted from time to time by anicuts to facilitate the safe burial of the coins. Because of his greed for wealth, Mahapadma has also been known as Dhanananda. Mahapadmananda ruled for a period of 88 years. During this period most of the kingdoms of India, particularly the kingdoms of Western India, were reduced to a state of penury.

Mahapadmananda had eight sons. In the year 1546 BC he was succeeded by his eldest son Sumalya. However Sumalya and his seven brothers were put to death by a Brahmin Chanakya, also known as Koutilya or Vishnugupta. The eight sons of Mahapadmananda ruled for a total period of 12 years. Thus the Nanda dynasty came to an end in the year 1534 BC.

4.2 MAURYA DYNASTY

Chanakya placed Chandragupta, an illegitimate son of Mahapadmananda, on the throne of Magadha in the year 1534 BC. Under the guidance of Chanakya, Chandragupta recovered the buried treasure of the Nandas and used it for the consolidation of his empire as well as for the welfare of his subjects. There were 12 kings in the Maurya dynasty established by him.

Name of the King	Year of coronation
Chandragupta	1534 BC
Bindusara	1500 BC
Ashokavardhana	1472 BC
Suyasa	1436 BC
Dasaratha	1428 BC
Indrapalita	1420 BC
Harshavardhan	1350 BC
Sangata	1342 BC
Salisuka	1333 BC
Somasarma	1320 BC
Satadhanva	1313 BC
Brihadradha	1305 BC

Among these kings, Ashokvardhana is believed by modern historians to be Ashoka the great who according to the Buddhist accounts waged the Kalinga War and thereafter embraced Buddhism. However, from the Puranic accounts it appears that it was king Dharmashoka of Kashmir who had embraced Buddhism. There appears to be some confusion in the Buddhist accounts which were actually written in the Christian era (in Pali language).

According to the Puranic accounts king Brihadradha was a man of dissolute character. He was addicted to women and neglected the administration. There were repeated attacks by Yavanas from across the river Indus and king Brihadradha became unpopular because of his inability to defend the kingdom.

4.3 SUNGA DYNASTY

Pushyamitra, also referred to as Puspamitra, was the commander in chief of Brihadradha. He murdered Brihadradha through a coup and himself ascended the throne. He was originally a Brahmin of Samaveda branch. He performed the Aswamedha sacrifice. There were in all ten kings in his dynasty which ruled from 1218 BC to 918 BC.

Name of the King	Year of coronation
Pushyamitra	1218 BC
Agnimitra	1158 BC
Vasumitra	1108 BC
Sujyestha	1072 BC
Bhadra	1055 BC
Pulindaka	1025 BC
Ghoshaivasu	992 BC
Vajramitra	989 BC
Bhagavata	960 BC
Devabhuti	928 BC

The Barhatstupa in Central India between Allahabad and Jabalpur was constructed during the reign of the Sunga Kings. Devabhuti the last king was addicted to a life of pleasure. He entrusted the administration to his minister Vasudeva and himself retired to Vidisa. Being enamoured by the beauty of the married daughter of minister Vasudeva he arranged for the assassination of her husband and seduced her in the disguise of her husband. The poor girl committed suicide. Vasudeva arranged the assassination of Devabhuti and thus the Sunga dynasty came to an end.

4.4 KANWA DYNASTY

On the death of Devabhuti, the last king of Sunga dynasty, the minister Vasudeva himself ascended the throne. He belonged to a Brahmin family of Kanwa sect and therefore his dynasty has been known as Kanwa dynasty. Some Puranas describe it as the Sungabhrtuya dynasty. While Vasudeva himself ruled the empire with capital at Giribraja the descendants of Devabhuti continued to rule Vidisa where Devabhuti had spent the last period of his life.

There were four kings in Kanwa dynasty which ruled for a period of 85 years from 918 BC to 833 BC.

Name of the King	Year of coronation
Vasudeva	918 BC
Bhumimitra	879 BC
Narayana	855 BC
Susarma	843 BC

Susarma was killed by his general Srimukha who established the Satavahan dynasty.

4.5 SATAVAHAN DYNASTY

There were 32 kings in the Satavahan dynasty established by Srimukha. Srimukha is also known as Sindhuka or Sishuka. This dynasty ruled for a period of 506 years from 833 BC to 327 BC.

Name of the King	Year of coronation
01. Srimukha	833 BC
02. Sri Krishna Satakarni	810 BC
03. Sri Mallya Satakarni	792 BC
04. Purnothesanga	782 BC
05. Sri Satakarni	764 BC
06. Skandhastambhin	708 BC
07. Lambodara	690 BC
08. Apitaka	672 BC
09. Meghaswati	660 BC
10. Sataswati	642 BC
11. Skanda Satakarni	624 BC
12. Mrigendra Satakarni	617 BC
13. Kuntala Satakarni	614 BC
14. Soumya Satakarni	606 BC

15. Sata Satakarni	594 BC
16. Puloma I	593 BC
17. Megha Satakarni	557 BC
18. Arishta Satakarni	519 BC
19. Hala Satavahana	494 BC
20. Mandalaka	489 BC
21. Purindrasena	484 BC
22. Sundara Satakarni	463 BC
23. Chakora Satakarni	462 BC
24. Mahendra Satakarni	461 BC
25. Siva Satakarni	461 BC
26. Goutamiputra Satakarni	433 BC
27. Puloma II	408 BC
28. Sivasri Satakarni	376 BC
29. Sivaskanda Satakarni	369 BC
30. Yajna Sri Satakarni	362 BC
31. Vijaya Sri Satakarni	343 BC
32. Chandra Sri Satakarni	337 BC
33. Puloma III	334 BC

During the reign of Satavahan kings the capital was finally shifted from Giribraja to Pataliputra. King Chandra Sri also known as Chandrabij has been referred to as Xandramese in Greek accounts. He was assassinated by Chandragupta. Chandragupta belonged to a tribe from Shree Parbata. He had earlier married a princess from Nepal and had a son from her named Samudragupta. Later he married the sister of the queen of King Chandrabij and settled at Pataliputra as an employee of King Chandrabij. He had won the confidence of the queen who colluded with him in the assassination of the king. After the death of Chandrabij, Puloma III, who was still a minor, was put on the throne with Chandragupta as the guardian.

With the rise of Satavahan dynasty in Magadha there was also the rise of the Malva kingdom with its capital at Ujjain. In the year 725 BC. Malva was declared an independent state under the leadership of a descendant of Dhunji. This year commemorated the beginning of Malva Gana Saka. The empire of Syrus in Iran also reached its peak around 550 BC when the Satavahan kings were ruling over Magadha.

4.6 ADI SHANKARACHARYA

Adi Shankaracharya was born in South India in the year 509 BC. When he was 9 years old he came to Ujjain to become a disciple of Govindapadacharya. By that time he had got all the four Vedas by heart. Inspired by the teachings of Govindapadacharya, Sankaracharya started the movement for the restoration of Hinduism. By the year 480 BC Sankaracharya had traveled all over India and had established monasteries in five different places.

The teaching of Shankaracharya had a deep influence on the ruling family of Ujjain. King Sriharsavikram, the son of Sheelavati, also became a disciple of Govindapadacharya. Earlier his elder brother Bhartrihari had already become a monk (see item 7 of the eras in Section 2.1).

According to the list of the heads of Monasteries maintained at Kamakoti Pitha, the Monastery was established in the year 482 BC. Similarly Dwarka Pitha is said to have been established in the year 491 BC. After the death of Adi Shankaracharya, the heads of five monasteries established by him continued the propagation of his teachings. Many rulers made further donations to the monasteries and temples connected with the life and teachings of Adi Shankaracharya. King Goppaditya who reigned in Kashmir from 368 to 308 BC. built the temples Jyestheswara and Shankaracharya on the hills now known as Takht-i-Sulaiman.

4.7 THE INVASION OF ALEXANDER

Much is said of the invasion of Alexander in modern history books of India. However, there is no reference to this in any of the Puranic accounts or the Buddhist accounts. It appears that the invasion was of little impact and was limited only to a few insignificant kingdoms on the banks of the river Indus. According to the classical European accounts the soldiers of Alexander refused to proceed eastwards being afraid of the mighty army of Xandramese who ruled on the banks of the river Ganga.

Though the classical European accounts claimed that Alexander was victorious in the battle with King Porus, a critical examination indicates that the claim may not be wholly true. However, it is clear that when he decided to return he had lost control over most of the conquered territory of the Middle East. Therefore he had to take a sea route and died before reaching Greece.

Selucus became the ruler of the Eastern Portion of the Empire of Alexander. He was defeated by Prince Sandrocypus of Magadha.

4.8 RISE OF THE GUPTAS

Chandragupta who had treacherously killed King Chandrabij in connivance with the Queen became the guardian of the minor king Puloma III, the son of Chandrabij (see Section 4.5). Later he murdered the Queen and still later the minor king. Then he himself became the King of Magadha. He has been referred to in the classical European accounts as Sandrocotus. The treacherous nature of Sandrocotus has been duly recorded by the classical writers.

Since Chandragupta was originally a servant of the Satavahan kings the dynasty started by him is also known as the Satavahan Bhritya dynasty. On his coronation in the year 327 BC, Chandragupta assumed the title Vijayaditya.

Chandragupta had married Kumaradevi, a princess of Nepal, and had a son by her named Samudragupta. By his wife from Lichchavi who was the sister of the Queen of King Chandrabij he had a son named Ghatotkacha Gupta. He nominated Ghatotkacha Gupta as his successor. Thereupon his eldest son Samudragupta revolted and with the help of the soldiers from Nepal conquered Magadha in the year 327 BC. He put his father Chandragupta and stepbrother Ghatotkacha Gupta to death.

4.9 SAMUDRAGUPTA

Having defeated his father, Samudragupta became the emperor of Magadha in the year 320 BC, assuming the title Ashokaditya. Before his coronation he had already distinguished himself as a great conqueror and had defeated the Greeks. Many Mleccha soldiers from North West India had fought in his army along with the soldiers from Nepal in the battle against his father Chandragupta.

After his coronation he conquered the whole of India and some neighbouring kingdoms. His conquests and achievements have been recorded by his court poet Harisena. He ruled for a period of 51 years. He is also known for his patronage of poets and musicians.

4.10 GUPTA DYNASTY

Including Chandragupta and Samudragupta there were 7 kings in Gupta dynasty which ruled for a period of 248 years from 327 BC to 82 BC.

Name of the King	Year of coronation
1. Chandragupta Vijayaditya	327 BC
2. Samudragupta Ashokaditya	320 BC
3. Chandragupta Vikramaditya	269 BC
4. Kumaragupta Mahendraditya	233 BC
5. Skandagupta Parakramaditya	191 BC
6. Narasinghagupta Prakasaditya	166 BC
7. Kumargupta Kramaditya	126 BC

The Mandasara inscriptions were made during the rule of the Gupta dynasty. During the rule of Skandagupta there were repeated attacks by the Huns from the West. Skandagupta lost his life in one of the battles with the Huns. After him the influence of Gupta kings continued to decline though they were nominally the emperors of India till the rise of Vikramaditya of Ujjain.

4.11 CONTEMPORARY KINGS OF NEPAL

In Nepal the Soma Vansa came to end with Bhaskaravarman in the year 1712 BC who is said to have adopted Bhumivarman as his successor. Names of 31 kings starting with Bhumivarman are available. These 31 Surya Vansi kings ruled for a period of 1612 years. However the duration of the reign of each of the first 18 kings is given as more than 60 years. It is possible that the names of some of the kings are not available. The names available today are as follows:

Name of the King	Year of coronation
01. Bhumivarman	1712 BC
02. Chandravarman	1645 BC
03. Jayavarman	1584 BC
04. Varshavarman	1502 BC
05. Sarvavarman	1441 BC
06. Prithvivarman	1363 BC
07. Jyeshthavarman	1287 BC
08. Harivarman	1212 BC
09. Kuberavarman	1136 BC
10. Sidhivarman	1048 BC
11. Hariduttavarman	987 BC
12. Basuduttavarman	906 BC
13. Pativarman	843 BC
14. Sivavridhivarman	790 BC
15. Vasantavarman	736 BC
16. Sivavarman	675 BC
17. Rudravarman	613 BC
18. Vrisadevavarman	547 BC
19. Sankaradeva	486 BC
20. Dharmadeva	461 BC
21. Manadeva	437 BC
22. Mahideva	417 BC
23. Vasantadeva	397 BC
24. Udayadevavarman	382 BC
25. Manadevavarman	377 BC
26. Gunakamadevavarman	347 BC
27. Sivadevavarman	337 BC
28. Narendradevavarman	276 BC
29. Bhimadevavarman	234 BC
30. Vishnudevavarman	198 BC
31. Vishwadevavarman	151 BC

The 11th king Hariduttavarman is famous for having built the temples of four Narayanas. During the rule of the 18th king Vrisadevavarman. Adi Shankaracharya preached the Adwaita philosophy in the attempt to revive Hinduism.

As a result of his preaching king Vrisadevaraman, who was a staunch Buddhist God converted to Hinduism. His successor was named as Shankara in memory of Adi Shankaracharya.

The last king Vishwadevavarman gave his daughter in marriage to Ansuvarman who established the Thakuri dynasty.

4.12 CONTEMPORARY KINGS OF KASHMIR

During the reign of Mahapadmananda, King Godhara established a new dynasty in Kashmir. The kings of his dynasty continued to rule Kashmir till the time of King Vikramaditya of Ujjain. The names of the kings are as follows:

Name of the King	Year of coronation
01. Godhara	1557
02. Suvarna	1518
03. Janaka	1479
04. Sachchindra	1448
05. Dharmasoka	1400
06. Hjalauka	1344
07. Damodara II	1294
08. Kanishka	1234
09. Abhimanyu	1182
10. Gonanda II	1147
11. Vibhishana	1093
12. Indrajit	1057
13. Ravana	1027
14. Vibhishana II	992
15. Kinnara	952
16. Siddha	892
17. Utpalaksha	862
18. Hiranyaksha	815
19. Hiranyakula	764
20. Vasukula	704
21. Mihirakula	634
22. Baka	594
23. Sitinandana	564
24. Vasunandana	512
25. Nara	477

26. Aksha	417
27. Gopaditya	357
28. Gokarna	322
29. Kinkhila (also known as Narendraditya)	285
30. Andha Yudhistira	272
31. Pratapaditya	240
32. Jalaukasa	208
33. Tunjina	172
34. Vijya	164
35. Jayandra	127
36. Sandhimati	80
37. Meghabahana	46
38. Prabarasena	16
39. Hiranya	14

The 5th king Dharmasoka had embraced Buddhism and sent emissaries to China, Sri Lanka and other places abroad to spread Buddhism. Many of his deeds are wrongly attributed to King Ashokavardhana of Maurya dynasty of Magadha. His great grandson Kanishka had convened the world Buddhists conference which classified the Buddhists into Mahayana and Hinayana sects. Kanishka had conquered much of the adjoining areas of Afghanistan and modern Russia.

King Hiranya, the 39th king, died issueless and the ministers appealed to Emperor Vikramaditya of Ujjain to appoint a successor. Matrigupta was appointed by Vikramaditya as the new king. As a result a new dynasty was established in Kashmir.

4.13 KINGDOM OF UJJAIN

Not much is known about the earlier history of Malwa. In the year 850 BC a brahmin named Dhunji, with the support of the local population, tried to establish an independent kingdom at Malwa, but without success. He became a Vassal of the Kanwa kings and the Satavahan kings of Magadha. In the year 730 BC, at the time of Sri Satakarni of Satavahan dynasty of Magadha, a descendant of Dhunji declared independence of Malwa. The declaration was accepted by the Emperor of Magadha and a new era Malwa Gana Saka was started in the year 725 BC. However, Malwa again lost its independence and was included in the Gupta empire at the time of Samudragupta. At that time the kings of the Pramara dynasty were the local rulers of Malwa.

King Pramara had originally established his dynasty over the kingdom of Avanti with its capital at Ujjain. Later the influence of the Pramara kings was spread over the whole of Malwa. However, after the first 4 kings the names of the other kings for a period of 195 years are not available. The names of the first 4 kings are as follows:

Name of the King	Year of coronation
Pramara	392 BC
Mahamara	386 BC
Devapi	383 BC
Devadutta	380 BC

The successors of Devaduta are said to have ruled from Srisailam in Deccan. In the year 182 BC, King Gandharbasena became the ruler of Malwa with his capital at Ujjain. He had a son named Shankha. When Shankha came of age, Gandharbasena installed him as the king and retired to a hermitage. However, during the lifetime of Gandharbasena, Shankha died issueless and Gandharbasena had to return from the hermitage to again become the ruler. King Vikramaditya was born in the year 101 BC, when Gandharbasena was the ruler for the second time.

4.14 DECLINE OF BUDDHISM

Starting with the preaching of Shankaracharya around 500 BC, there was a steady and continuous decline of Buddhism all over India, particularly in the kingdom of Ujjain, which was progressively becoming more powerful. Bhabishyapurana states that King Pramara, the founder of Pramara dynasty, had got killed thousands of Buddhists in his kingdom. However, the Gupta kings were somewhat neutral and a number of Buddhist monasteries and centres of learning flourished in the Magadha empire.

The Buddhists being driven out of Ujjain and the adjoining kingdoms sought the protection from the Hunas and other invaders from the West. This collusion with the Hunas further estranged the Buddhists from the main stream of Hinduism.

Decline of Buddhism was also accompanied by the revival of interest in Sanskrit. Buddhism was preached mostly in Prakrit languages. Most of the Buddhist scriptures were in Pali. The Hindu scriptures being mostly in Sanskrit were not intelligible to the majority of the people. Shankaracharya popularized the use of Sanskrit and it found progressively wider use in the courts and the edicts of the kings. The version of Sanskrit which evolved as a result is what is now known as classical Sanskrit in contrast to the older Vedic Sanskrit.

It is interesting to note that while Shankaracharya is hailed as a monist saint the practical result of his movement was a widespread revival of idol worship.