
PERSIAN AND MACEDONIAN INVASIONS

PERSIAN INVASION

The ruling Achaemenian Dynasty of Persia was constantly striving to expand its borders. The first Achaemenian ruler, Cyrus, had already captured Babylon, Media and Assyria and made an unsuccessful attempt to invade India too. He could capture the Hindukush and Gandhara regions, but had incurred a heavy defeat at Jeddrosia. He was succeeded by Cambyses, the second ruler of this dynasty, who had little interest in India and, therefore, carried on his Egyptian conquest ignoring India. During the time of the third emperor of Persia, Darius (522-486 BC), the Magadha Empire has grown bigger after the north-western Indian kingdoms were merged into it. The regions of Afghanistan, Gandhara and Baluchistan (Indus), which now were under the Magadha rule, were the first to be attacked by the Persian rulers. The small administrators and rulers of these regions were in close contact with the Persian rulers and they helped Darius to attack these pockets of the Magadha Empire. Darius divided the entire empire into 24 provinces (satraps), with the captured Indian regions of Gandhara and Indus forming his 24th province. He also recruited many Indian soldiers into his army and gave them high rank. He was succeeded by his son, Xerxes (486-465 BC), who came to throne at an age of 18 in 486 BC. He was a great warrior and was helped greatly by his Indian soldiers during his war with the Greeks. However, after him, the Persian Empire disintegrated by the end of fourth century BC and the Indian province became independent of Persia. But India was then divided into several small kingdoms which were not united. They had mutual disregard and grudges against each other and so fought among

themselves. The major kingdoms were the Malwas, the Gandharas, the Kshudrakas, the kings of Jhelum and Ravi (Porus), Taxila (Ambi) and Abhisara. The state of India was then a natural target for possible invasions from formidable foreign empires like Macedonia and after the conquest of Bactria, Alexander invaded India through the Hindukush Mountains.

MACEDONIAN INVASION

Although Indian accounts, to a large extent, ignored Alexander the Great's Indus campaign in 326 BC, the Greek writers recorded their impressions of the general conditions prevailing in South Asia during this period. Thus, the year 326 BC provides the first clear and historically verifiable date in Indian history.

The Licchavi Kingdom

The Licchavi Kingdom was an ancient republic that existed in modern day Bihar during the time of Buddha in India. In the Buddhist Pali canon, the Licchavi are mentioned in a number of discourses, most notably the Licchavi Sutta, the popular Ratana Sutta and the fourth chapter of the Petavatthu.

★ Ajatashatru's Conflict with Licchavi

Following the assassination of Bimbisara by his own son, Ajatashatru, the widowed princess of Kosala also died. It made King Prasenjit's revoke the gift of Kashi resulting into a war between Kosala and Magadha. Ajatashatru was defeated and was captured along with his army. He entered into a peace treaty in which he married Prasenjit's daughter and subsequently

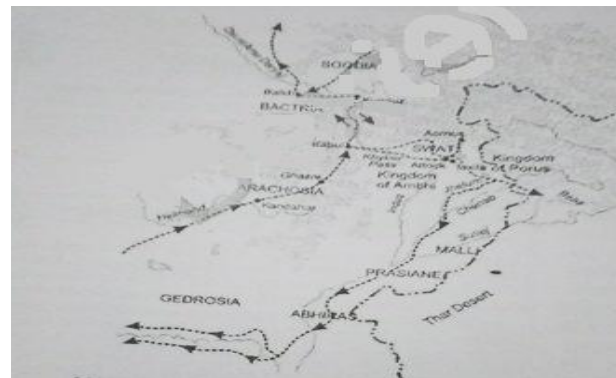
Kashi was restored to Magadha. The conflict between Ajatashatru and the Licchavi republic would have decided the destiny of eastern India, and it drew the attention of Buddha. He suggested to the democratic Licchavis to empower themselves by holding full and frequent assemblies, while keeping internal concord and efficient administration respecting elders, women, shiras and saints. Nevertheless, Ajatashatru sent a minister to Vaishali, who worked to weaken the unity of the Licchavis. To undertake his conquering expedition across the Ganga, Ajatashatru needed to construct a fort at his new capital known as Pataliputra. It later became a great centre of commerce as per the prophecy made by Buddha. The Licchavis were easily subdued after the fort was built.

Alexander the Great

Alexander (356-323 BC) was the son of Phillip of Macedonia (Greece). He was only 22 years old when he ascended the throne. He was a general and he divided his army into two units to effectively capture India. The first unit invaded India under his personal leadership, defeating the North Indian states and the other unit, under Commander Hephastian, defeated the kingdoms on the bank of the River Indus. The disunited Indian kingdoms posed no real challenge to any of his units and soon the Greek army conquered all kingdoms before uniting at Ohind (place near Attock). Some kings, like the King of Ambi, accepted defeat without even fighting the Greek army. Alexander had never thought that his conquest of India would be so easy and fruitful. Other states that fought against Alexander were Panjkoru, Stath, Asmanai, Kunar, etc. However, his major battle was with Porus, the king of Punjab, on the banks of Jhelum. Alexander found a formidable enemy in Porus, who was himself a great warrior. He fought the

Hydraspas battle against King Porus on the bank of the River Jhelum and finally emerged victorious. Later, Porus was brought to the Alexander's court as a prisoner. The episode in Alexander's court, which depicts the self-respect of King Porus, finds respectable the Indian and Greek history.

Alexander also conquered the kingdom on the banks of the rivers Ravi and Beas and further south. He had plans to conquer the Gangetic plains as well, but had to stall them because of the rising mutiny in the ranks of the Greek army. Greek army had been away from their home for a time and wanted to go back instead of progressing farther. The great general decided to return to Macedonia. His return journey to Babylon was full of adversities and he had to battle throughout his journey. He fought with the Malwa and Kshudraka rulers and those were among the last battles he fought on the India soil. He reached Babylon in 325 BC and died in 323 BC of some mysterious disease.



MAP 1.6 The Persian Empire

CAUSES OF ALEXANDER'S SUCCESS

- (a) Good leadership provided by Alexander and a well disciplined and superior Greek army;
- (b) North-western India was divided into numerous small states;
- (c) Outdated and outmoded techniques of war followed by the Indian soldiers.



Alexander and India

For nearly a millennium and a half, from the period of Harappa, the people of India entered into no commerce or trade with the Mesopotamians. However, around 700 BC. Indians started to trade again with the Mesopotamian cities. Trade was at its flourishing best by the time of Alexander. Out of curiosity, and a desire to conquer the entire world, Alexander and his army pushed towards east, through northern Iran and all the way to India. He conquered Bactria at the foot of the western Himalayas. From there, he gathered a huge Bactrian army, after marrying a Bactrian princess. But by reaching the regions of the present day Pakistan, his army began to grow tired forcing him to abandon the eastward conquest in 327 BC. Alexander could only make it upto the region of Gandhara. Alexander returned on reaching the Indus, Alexander's conquests yielded two important results: first, Greek and Indian culture started Intermixing, and second, it set the stage for the first great emperor of Indian history, **Chandragupta Maurya** (reigned 321- 297 BC). He united all the kingdoms of northern India into a single empire.

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End of Persia and Rise of Alexandria

By the end of Darius' rule, there began an intense struggle with Greece, which concluded with the superiority of the Persians. Xerxes, son of Darius, was the ruler of Persia at that time. During the early part of his rule, there were revolts in Egypt and Babylonia. However, six years later, he was able to turn his attention towards Greece. Xerxes tried to conquer Athens, but all he achieved was the destruction of the abandoned city. The Athenians were waiting for him at Salamis. Xerxes knew that to gain control of the Peloponnese, he would have to win that battle. The Greek and Persian fleets faced each other at Salamis in 480 BC. The Greeks won very convincingly. In 465 BC



Xerxes was murdered in his palace and his successor, Artaxerxes, continued construction work at Persepolis. It was concluded during the rule of Artaxerxes III, in 338 BC. In 334 BC, Alexander, the Great humiliated the Persian armies of the third Darius. He subdued Iran and turned his attention to Persepolis, and burnt it. This was the fall of the great Persian Empire.

INFLUENCE OF ALEXANDER'S INVASION

Two-way cultural fusion between several Indo-Greek elements—especially in art, architecture and coinage—occurred in the next several

★ Origins of the Mauryas

Brahmanical sources have termed Mauryas as shudras.

Buddhist sources describe Chandragupta as a kshatriya

Jain sources associate Chandragupta to the Moriya tribe of peacock tamers.

Greek sources Marcus Junianus states that Sandrokottas (Chandragupta) belonged to a humble family.

Hundred years. It opened up free intercourse between India and the west and strengthened commercial ties. The Greeks influenced science and astronomy also. North India's political landscape was transformed, by the emergence of Magadha in the eastern Indo-Gangetic Plain.

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