



## Chapter 7| Mauryan Empire

The growth of Magadha culminated in the emergence of the Mauryan Empire. Chandragupta Maurya, who founded the empire (321 BC), extended control as far northwest as Afghanistan and Baluchistan, and his grandson Asoka, arguably the most famous ruler of early India, conquered Kalinga (present-day coastal Orissa).

### 7.1. Sources

- Historians have used a variety of sources to reconstruct the history of the Mauryan Empire. These include archaeological finds, especially sculpture. Also valuable are contemporary works, such as the account of Megasthenes (a Greek ambassador to the court of Chandragupta Maurya), which survives in fragments. Another source that is often used is the *Arthashastra*, parts of which were probably composed by Kautilya or Chanakya, traditionally believed to be the minister of Chandragupta. Besides, the Mauryas are mentioned in later Buddhist, Jaina and Puranic literature, as well as in Sanskrit literary works. While these are useful, the inscriptions of Asoka (c. 272/268-231 BC) on rocks and pillars are often regarded as among the most valuable sources.
- Other source is the 'Mudrarakshasa' written by Vishakhadatta in the 5th century A.D. gives an interesting account of how Chandragupta with the help of Kautilya and a Paurava prince defeated the Nandas. Jain and Buddhist traditions also throw light on the history of the Mauryas. Jain scriptures refer to Chandragupta's death and the Buddhist work, 'Mahavamsa', relates an account of the life and work of king Ashoka. Malvikagnimitram written by Kalidasa throws enough light on the last years of the Mauryan rule and the ascendance of Pushyamitra Sunga.
- Asoka was the first ruler who inscribed his messages to his subjects and officials on stone surfaces – natural rocks as well as polished pillars. He used the inscriptions to proclaim what he understood to be *dhamma*. This included respect towards elders, generosity towards Brahmanas and those who renounced worldly life, treating slaves and servants kindly, and respect for religions and traditions other than one's own.

### 7.2. Foundation & Consolidation

#### 7.2.1. Chandragupta Maurya

- Chandragupta Maurya was the founder of the Mauryan dynasty. He took advantage of the growing weakness and unpopularity of the Nandas in the last days of their rule. With the help of Chanakya, he defeated the Nandas and established the rule of the Maurya dynasty.
  - Chandragupta erected a big empire which was not limited to Bihar but also extended to western and north-western India, and the Deccan.
  - The Mauryas ruled over the whole of the subcontinent. In the north-west, they penetrated over certain areas which were not included even in the British rule.
- Chandragupta was a just king. He himself attended the court and gave justice. He appointed all the high officials of the states such as the 'Sachivas' or 'Amatyas' 'Mantrins' or the High Ministers, the 'Purohita' or the High Priest, Spies, 'Adhayakshas', who maintained correspondence with the Mantri parishad.
  - The administration of Patliputra was carried by six committees entrusted with sanitation care of foreigners, registration of birth and death, regulation of weights and measures and similar other functions.
  - Chandragupta's government was divided into two parts, the **Central** and the **Provincial Governments**. The empire was divided into a number of provinces which were subdivided into districts. But the exact number of provinces are not known.
  - He was the chief architect of the Mauryan empire and built a vast empire, which included Bihar, Nepal, western and north-western India, and the Deccan.

- He was called *Sandrocottus* by the Greek scholars (identified by William Jones). Greek sources even suggest a meeting between Chandragupta and Alexander (who invaded northwest India during 327–326 BCE).
  - They also account for the conflict between Chandragupta Maurya and Seleucus Nikator (who was one of the generals of Alexander, and after his death, had succeeded in gaining control over most of the eastern Asiatic provinces).
  - Chandragupta defeated him around 301 BCE and Seleucus was compelled to yield *Arachosia* (Qandahar area of south-east Afghanistan), *Gedrosia* (south Baluchistan), and *Parapomisadai* (area between Afghanistan and the Indian sub-continent, such as Kabul, Herat, Gandhara) to him in return for 500 elephants.
  - Seleucus sent an ambassador to the Mauryan court, Megasthenes (who wrote the *Indica*).
- According to Jain texts and tradition, Chandragupta adopted Jainism and went to the hills of Shravana Belagola (near Mysore) with Bhadrabahu and committed *Sallekhana* (death by slow starvation).

### 7.2.2. Bindusara

- Chandragupta was succeeded by his son Bindusara. He defeated the rulers of 16 kingdoms and added their lands to his empire. Under him, the Mauryan Empire spread across the whole of Indian subcontinent. Except for Kalinga (Orissa) and a few kingdoms in the south.
- Greek writers address him as *Amitrochates* (destroyer of foes), while the *Mahabhasya* refer to him as *Amitraghat* (killer of enemies). It is rather strange that Buddhist sources are silent on Bindusara. However, stories from the Ajivika sect do mention of a fortune-teller who prophesied to Bindusara about his son Ashoka's future greatness.
- He Conquered 'the land between the two seas', i.e., the Arabian sea and the Bay of Bengal. The Tibetan monk Taranatha (who wrote a 17th-century history of Indian Buddhism) states that one of Bindusara's great lords, Chanakya, destroyed the nobles and kings of 16 towns and made him master of all the territory between the eastern and western seas.
- Greek sources also mention of his diplomatic relations with western kings. According to Strabo, Antiochus (Syrian king) sent Deimachus as an ambassador to Bindusara's court. Similarly, Pliny mentions that King Ptolemy II Philadelphus of Egypt sent one Dionysius as an ambassador to India.
- In *Divyavadana*, probably during his reign, there is a mention of his son Ashoka, who quelled a rebellion against wicked ministers at Taxila. Believed to have joined the Ajivika sect. Under his rule, almost the entire sub-continent (as far south as Karnataka) was under Mauryan suzerainty.

### 7.2.3. Ashoka

- Ashoka was the most famous Mauryan king and one of the greatest rulers. The British historian *H.G Wells* had this to say about Ashoka—Amidst the tens of thousands of names of monarchs that crowd the columns of history... the name of Ashoka shines and shines almost alone, like a star.
- After Bindusara's death in 273 BCE, there was a four-year succession conflict.
  - He was appointed the viceroy of Taxila and Ujjain (both cities handled commercial activities) during the reign of Bindusara.
  - According to *Divyavadana*, Bindusara wanted his son Susima to succeed him, and Ashoka was the choice of Bindusara's ministers. Later, with the help of a minister named Radhagupta, and after killing 99 brothers, Ashoka finally acquired the Magadha throne and thus, after four years, came his formal consecration.

Name of Ashoka	Sources
Ashoka	Maski Minor rock edict
Devanampriyas Ashoka Rajas	Gurjara minor rock edict
Raja Ashoka	Nittur minor rock edict
Raja Ashoka Dewanampiya	Udegolumn minor rock edict
Piyadassi Raja Magadh	Bhabru-Bairat minor rock edict
Piyadassi Raja	Barabar cave inscription
Piyadassi	Kandhar major rock edicts and Deepvamsa
Ashoka Maurya	Rudradaman's Junagarh rock edict
Ashoka Vardhan	Puranas

- He is regarded as one of the greatest kings of all time and probably was the first ruler to maintain direct contact with his people through his inscriptions.
- Ashoka's mother was a daughter of a Brahmana of Champa named **Subhadrangi**. According to belief, Ashoka got his name (literally meaning 'without sorrow') from the fact that his birth resulted in the reunion of his mother and father, who were otherwise separated due to palace intrigue.
  - It is from her exclamation, "I am now without sorrow", that the child Ashoka got his name.

- Buddhist texts such as the *Dipavamsa* and *Mahavamsa* provide a detailed account of his queens. According to legend, Ashoka had a love marriage with his wife Mahadevi (daughter of a merchant of Vidisha, who later became the mother of Mahendra/Mahinda and Sanghamitra/Sanghamitta, the celebrated children of Ashoka who helped in the propagation of the Buddhist religion).
  - These two texts also mention the queens Asandhimitta, Padmavati, Tissarakhita (who tried to get the Bodhi tree cut), and Karuvaki (only queen to be mentioned in the Queen's Edict/Allahabad-Kosam pillar edict, where she is described as *the mother of prince Tivara*, the only son of Ashoka to be mentioned by name in inscriptions).
- His empire covered the whole territory from Hindukush to Bengal, and extended over Afghanistan, Baluchistan, and the whole of India including Kashmir and the valleys of Nepal (the first empire to do so), with the exception of a small area in the far south (which, according to rock edict 13, were inhabited by the Cholas and Pandyas, and according to rock edict 2, by the *Keralaputras* and *Satiyaputras*).
- His Hellenistic contemporaries were Antiochus II of Syria, Ptolemy II of Egypt, Antigonus of Macedonia, Magas of Cyrenaica (Libya), and Alexander of Epirus, as all of them are mentioned in the edicts of Ashoka.
- He organised the third Buddhist council at Pataliputra (in the 18th year of his reign), after which he sent Buddhist missionaries to Ceylon and Suvarnabhumi. In the course of his second Dharmayatra tour (in the 21<sup>st</sup> year of his reign), he visited Lumbini (the birth place of Buddha). He Banned animal sacrifice, regulated the slaughter of animals for food, and established *dharmashalas*, hospitals, and *sarais* throughout his kingdom.
- **Kalinga War (261 BC):** When Ashoka became the king, Kalinga was the only kingdom which was not under Mauryan control. Kalinga was important as it controlled the land and sea routes to south India and south-east Asia. Ashoka attacked Kalinga and conquered it after a fierce battle.
  - The war with Kalinga was a turning point in the life of Ashoka. The death, destruction and suffering that he saw in the war made him very sad. He realized the futility of fighting a war and vowed not to fight any more wars. He devoted the rest of his life to serve his people.
- Like his predecessors, Ashoka assumed the title of **Priyadarshi** (pleasing to look at) and Devanampriya (beloved of Gods). In the Sarnath inscription, he adopted the third title, i.e. **Dharmshoka**.

Ashoka's Contemporaries	
Antiochus II Theos	Syria
Ptolemy II Philadelphus	Egypt
Magas	Cyme
Antigonus Gonatas	Macedonia
Alexander	Epirus

### 7.3. Decline of Mauryan Empire

- According to Buddhist texts, Ashoka ruled for twenty-seven years. The subsequent history of the Mauryas under his successors is very inadequately known.
  - This is because a state of disintegration seemed to have set in immediately after Ashoka's death. The post-Ashokan period is a dark chapter in Indian history and no first-rate source material is available on the period.
  - Pillar Edict VII mentions **Tivara** as a son of Ashoka. Three other sons-**Junala**, **Jaluka** and **Mahendra** are known to literature.
  - It appears on the evidence of the Vayu Purana that Junala ruled for eight years, but the extent of his dominions is not indicated therein.
  - Moreover, Jain and Buddhist writers tell us that **Samprati**, the son of Junal, who was incapable of ruling because of blindness, immediately succeeded Ashoka to the throne of Patliputra.
- The tenth and the last of the Mauryas was **Brihadratha** who, according to the testimony of **Banabhatta**, was murdered by his general **Pushyamitra** and who ascended the throne in 187 B.C. The empire founded by him is known as the **Sunga Dynasty**. With Brihadratha's death (185 B.C.) this historic rule of the Mauryas came to an end within less than half a century of Ashoka's death and 137 years since its foundation by Chandragupta Maurya.
- **Historical Debate:** Harprasad Shastri holds that Brahmanical reaction was responsible for the downfall of the Mauryan empire.
  - D.D. Koshambi says that heavy economic pressure was the chief cause of the downfall of the Mauryan empire.
  - Ghosal says that the propagation of Buddhism during Ashoka's period disturbed Brahmanical social and religious order, which weakened the state.
  - Romila Thapar says that the nature of organisation or administration and the faulty conception of the state ultimately caused the downfall of the empire.

#### 7.4. Dhamma

- Ashoka's *dhamma* did not involve worship of a god, or performance of a sacrifice. He felt that just as a father tries to teach his children, he has a duty to instruct his subjects.
  - He was also inspired by the teachings of the Buddha. There were a number of problems that troubled him.
    - People in the empire followed different religions, and this sometimes led to conflict.
    - Animals were sacrificed.
    - Slaves and servants were ill-treated. Besides, there were quarrels in families and amongst neighbours.
- Ashoka felt it was his duty to solve these problems. So, he appointed officials, known as the *dhamma mahamatta* who went from place-to-place teaching people about *dhamma*.
- Besides, Ashoka got his messages inscribed on rocks and pillars, instructing his officials to read his message to those who could not read it themselves.
- Ashoka also sent messengers to spread ideas about *dhamma* to other lands, such as Syria, Egypt, Greece, and his son Mahendra and daughter Sanghmitra to Sri Lanka. He built roads, dug wells, and built rest houses. Besides, he arranged for medical treatment for both human beings and animals.

#### 7.5. Administrative Controls

- There were five major political centres in the empire – the capital Pataliputra and the provincial centres of Taxila, Ujjayini, Tosali and Suvarnagiri, all mentioned in Asokan inscriptions. If we examine the content of these inscriptions, we find virtually the same message engraved everywhere – from the present-day North West Frontier Provinces of Pakistan to Andhra Pradesh, Orissa and Uttarakhand in India. Could this vast empire have had a uniform administrative system?
  - The Mauryan empire was divided into three different political rules; Metropolitan State, Core Area, and Peripheral Area. This system is called as 'complex system of administration by historian Romila Thapar.
- Historians have increasingly come to realise that this is unlikely. The regions included within the empire were just too diverse. Imagine the contrast between the hilly terrain of Afghanistan and the coast of Orissa. It is likely that administrative control was strongest in areas around the capital and the provincial centres. These centres were carefully chosen, both Taxila and Ujjayini being situated on important long-distance trade routes, while Suvarnagiri (literally, the golden mountain) was possibly important for tapping the gold mines of Karnataka.
- Communication along both land and riverine routes was vital for the existence of the empire. Journeys from the centre to the provinces could have taken weeks if not months. This meant arranging for provisions as well as protection for those who were on the move. It is obvious that the army was an important means of ensuring the latter.
- Megasthenes mentions a committee with six subcommittees for coordinating military activity. Of these, one looked after the navy, the second managed transport and provisions, the third was responsible for foot soldiers, the fourth for horses, the fifth for chariots and the sixth for elephants. The activities of the second subcommittee were rather varied: arranging for bullock carts to carry equipment, procuring food for soldiers and fodder for animals, and recruiting servants and artisans to look after the soldiers.
- Asoka also tried to hold his empire together by propagating *dhamma*, the principles of which, as we have seen, were simple and virtually universally applicable. This, according to him, would ensure the well-being of people in this world and the next. Special officers, known as the *dhamma mahamatta*, were appointed to spread the message of *dhamma*.

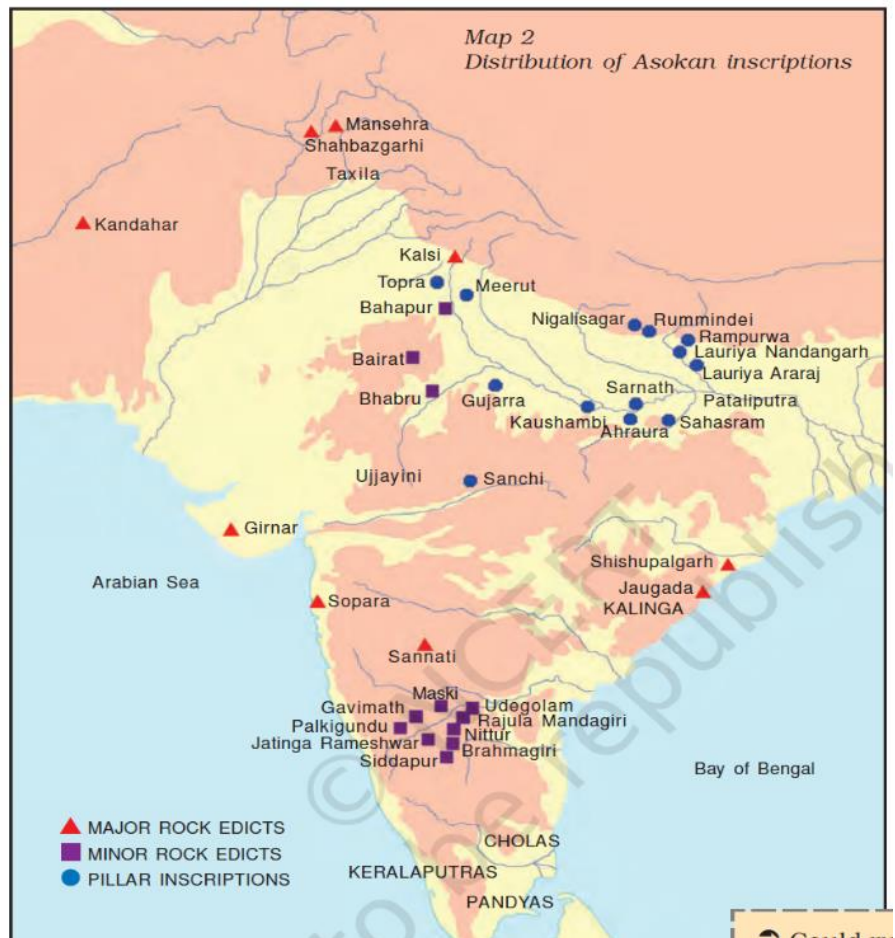
Mauryan	Mantriparishad
Mantrin	Chief Minister
Purohita	High Priest
Senapati	Commander-in-charge
Yuvaraj	Crowned Prince
Samaharta	Collector of Revenue
Yukta	Subordinate Officer-in-charge of Revenue
Prashasti	Head of Prisons
Sannidata	Head of Treasury
Nayaka	Head of City Security
Paur	City Police
Byabharika	Chief Judge
Karmantika	Head of Industries and Factories
Dandapala	Head of Police
Durgapala	Head of Royal Fort
Annapala	Head of the Food Grains Department
Rajjukas	Officers responsible for land measurement and fixing its boundary.
Pradesika	Head of District Administration

## 7.6. Inscriptions of Ashoka

The inscriptions are the most important feature of the Mauryan Empire which talks about the different policies of the Mauryan empire King Ashoka, especially his Dhamma policy. There are three categories of inscriptions found across the Indian subcontinent, i.e., Major Rock Edicts, Minor Roc Edicts, and Pillar Edicts.

### 7.6.1. Fourteen Major Edicts

1. First Edict: Declared prohibition of animal sacrifice
2. Second Edict: Medical treatment of human and animals, planting beneficial medicinal herbs and roots, fruits, and the digging of wells
3. Third Edict: Mentions *Pradeshikas*, *Rajukas*, and *Yuktas* and their need for going on tours of inspection every five years as part of their other duties, preaching *dhamma*, and also adopting liberal attitude towards *Brahmanas* and *Shramanas*
4. Four Edict: *Bheri Ghosha* (war drum) replaced by *Dhamma Ghosha* and King Ashoka attached greatest value to this duty
5. Fifth Edict: Appointment of *Dhamma Mahamattas*, a special cadre of officials entrusted to spread dhamma within the kingdom
6. Sixth Edict: Mantri parishad and officers like *Pulisani* and *Pativedakas* (reporters)
7. Seventh Edict: Religious tolerance amongst all sects and welfare measures for public not only in his own kingdom but also in the neighbouring kingdoms of Cholas, Pandyas, and that of Antiochus in the north-west.
8. Eighth Edict: Royal pleasure tours (*Vihara-yatras*) replaced by *dhamma* tours (*dhammayatras*). Ashoka himself went to Sambodhi at Bodhgaya.
9. Ninth Edict: Criticism of the uselessness of various ceremonies, instead lays stress on dhamma and moral conduct
10. Tenth Edict: *King desires no more fame or glory*
11. Eleventh Edict: Announces that the gift of dhamma being the best gift of all gifts and the Policy of *Dhamma* is the best policy to follow. *Dhamma* included giving respect to elders, and good behaviour towards slaves.
12. Twelfth Edict: Mention of *Ithijika Mahamatta* (*mahamattas* in charge of women's welfare) and appeals for not only tolerance amongst sects, but also for people to honour and understand the dhamma of others
13. Thirteenth Edict: The Kalinga war (261 BCE, occurred in the ninth year after Ashoka's consecration) changed his attitude and Ashoka, who was the worshipper of Shiva, turned towards Buddhism. *Digvijay* was replaced by *Dhamma Vijay*, the sword was replaced by *dhamma*, the war drum (*Bheri Ghosha*) became law (*Dhamma Ghosha*). His *dhamma* contained the essence (good qualities) of all the religions of the world. The king considered victory by *dhamma* to be the foremost victory; mention of victory by *dhamma* on his Hellenistic neighbours like Antiochus, and others like the Cholas and Pandyas. But, in this rock edict itself, he sternly warns the forest tribes against any intransigence.
14. Fourteenth Edict: Purpose of rock edicts.



## 7.6.2. Pillar Edicts

- The majestic free-standing Ashokan pillars probably signify the axis of the world (*axis mundi*) that separated heaven and earth. Pillar edicts have been found at Lauriya-Araraj, Lauriya Nandangarh, Rampurva, Nigali Sagar, Sarnath, Topra, and Meerut.
- It is rather interesting to note that two pillars, one from Topra and the other from Meerut, were shifted to Delhi by Feroz Shah Tughlaq. There are pillars without inscriptions such as the bull capital pillar at Rampurva, the pillar with the lion capital at Vaishali, and the Kolam pillar, which is also without a capital.
- The motifs associated with the Ashokan pillars have a rich and varied symbolism in resonance with many prevailing Indian religious traditions.
- For instance, the most found motifs were of lotus (symbolised, purity and fecundity in Indian tradition), lion (is a solar symbol and represents the Buddha too, as he is referred to as *Sakyasimha*, i.e., lion among the Sakyas), bull (symbol of fertility), elephant (relevant in Buddhism as according to Buddhist tradition, Buddha entered his mother's womb in the form of a white elephant), spoked wheel (represents *dharmachakra*, i.e., the wheel of dharma and also associated with sovereignty), and horse (symbolises departure of Siddhartha from his home).
  1. First Pillar Edict: Social code
  2. Second Pillar Edict: Describes *dhamma* as consisting of the least amount of sin, performing virtuous deeds, having compassion, purity, and truthfulness
  3. Third Pillar Edict: Soul and Sin
  4. Fourth Pillar Edict: *Rajukas*
  5. Fifth Pillar Edict: Popularly known as the Delhi-Topra pillar edict, it features prohibitions regarding animal killing.
  6. Sixth Pillar Edict: Welfare of people
  7. Seventh Pillar Edict: *Dhamma Mahamattas*

### The different categories of Ashokan inscriptions and their location

#### The set of 14 major rock edicts (or portions thereof) occur at:

1. Kandahar (in Kandahar district, south Afghanistan) (only portions of rock edicts 12 and 13)
2. Shahbazgarhi (Peshawar district, North-West Frontier Province [NWFP], Pakistan)
3. Mansehra (Hazara district, NWFP, Pakistan)
4. Kalsi (Dehradun district, Uttarakhand)
5. Girnar (Junagadh district, Gujarat)
6. Bombay-Sopara (originally at Sopara in Thana district, Maharashtra; now in the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya, Mumbai only fragments of rock edicts 8 and 9)
7. Dhauli (Puri district, Orissa; separate rock edicts 1 and 2 replace major rock edicts 11-13)
8. Jaugada (Ganjam district, Orissa; separate rock edicts 1 and 2 replace major rock edicts 11-13)
9. Erragudi (Kurnool district, AP)
10. Sannati (Gulbarga district, Karnataka; portions of rock edicts 12 and 14 and separate rock edicts 1 and 2 were found on a granite slab in a medieval goddess temple.)

#### The set of six (and in one case seven) pillar edicts, or portions thereof, occur at:

1. Kandahar (Kandahar district, south Afghanistan) (only portions of pillar edict 7)

2. Delhi. The Delhi-Topra pillar originally stood in Topra (Ambala district, Haryana). This pillar has seven edicts.
3. Delhi. The Delhi-Meerut pillar originally stood in Meerut (Meerut district, UP).
4. Allahabad. The Allahabad-Kosam pillar was probably originally located in Kosam, i.e., Kaushambi (Allahabad district, UP).
5. Lauriya-Araraj (Champan district, Bihar)
6. Lauriya-Nandangarh (Champan district, Bihar)
7. Rampurva (Champan district, Bihar)

#### The minor rock edicts (MREs) occur at:

1. Bahapur /Srinivasapuri in New Delhi (MRE 1)
2. Bairat (Jaipur district, Rajasthan) (MRE 3)
3. Ahraura (Mirzapur district, UP) (MRE 1)
4. Sahasram (Rohtas district, Bihar) (MRE 1)
5. Gujjara (Datia district, MP) (MRE 1)
6. Rupnath (Jabalpur district, MP) (MRE 1)
7. Panguraria (Sehore district, MP) (MRE 1)
8. Maski (Raichur district, Karnataka) (MRE 1)





9. Gavimath (Raichur district, Karnataka) (MRE 1)
10. Palkigundu (Raichur district, Karnataka) (MRE 1)
11. Nittur (Bellary district, Karnataka) (MRE 1 and 2)
12. Udegolam (Bellary district, Karnataka) (MRE 1 and 2)
13. Rajula-Mandagiri (Kurnool district, AP) (MRE 1 and 2)
14. Erragudi (Kurnool district, AP) (MRE 1 and 2)
15. Brahmagiri (Chitradurga district, Karnataka) (MRE 1 and 2)
16. Siddapura (Chitradurga district, Karnataka) (MRE 1 and 2)
17. Jatinga-Rameshvara (Chitradurga district, Karnataka) (MRE 1 and 2)

As for the minor pillar inscriptions, versions of the schism edict have been found at Sanchi (Raisen district, MP), Sarnath (Varanasi district, UP), and Kaushambi (Allahabad district, UP). Commemorative inscriptions occur at Nigali Sagar and Rummindei (both in Bhairwa district, Nepal). A fragmentary inscription, which may be Ashokan, has been found at Amaravati (Guntur district, AP). Three cave inscriptions of Ashoka's time have been found in the caves in the Barabar hills (Gaya district, Bihar). A donative edict of one of Ashoka's queens is inscribed on the Allahabad-Kosam pillar.

Other Important Inscriptions	
Inscription Name	Descriptions
Allahabad – Kosam/Queen’s Edict/ Kausambi or Schism Edict	Ashoka warns members of the <i>Sangha</i> against causing division in the ranks. Samudragupta’s inscription is on this edict itself. Jahangir was probably responsible for its removal to the fort at Allahabad.
Girnar Rock Inscription of Rudradaman (Kathiawar)	Mentions the Sudarshan Lake constructed by Pushyagupta, a <i>rashtriya</i> (means provincial governor) of Saurashtra during Chandragupta Maurya’s reign
Kandahar Inscription, Bilingual Greek, Aramaic inscription, Nigali Sagar Inscription (Nepal)	To record the first enlargement of the stupa (14 years after his consecration) and later Ashoka’s visit to the site (20 years after his consecration)
Rummindei Inscription (Nepal)	To commemorate the birthplace of the Buddha, Ashoka visited Lumbini, worshipped here and gave tax concessions to the villagers. It records that <i>the village of Lumbini was exempted from bali and was to pay only one-eighth of bhaga.</i>
Sannati Inscription (Karnataka)	Site of all 14 Major Rock Edicts as well as two separate Kalinga edicts.
Kalinga Edict (Bhauri and Jaugada)	Mentions “ <i>All men are my children</i> ”
Saugaura Copper Plate Inscription and Mahasthan	The inscription of Chandragupta Maurya; mentions relief measures adopted during famine in Magadha
Minor Rock Edict 1	Indicates that Ashoka turned towards Buddhism gradually (nearly after 2.5 years in power), and not suddenly
Minor Rock Edict 3	Ashoka greets the <i>Sangha</i> , professes his deep faith in the Buddha, <i>dhamma</i> , and <i>Sangha</i> and recommends six Buddhist texts for monks, nuns, and the general laity
Brahmagiri Minor Rock Edicts I-II	Local Administration

### 7.7. Mauryan Art

- Maurya Empire contributed significantly in the field of arts including architecture, sculpture, engineering, polishing, etc.
  - The palace of Chandragupta was made of wood. Ashoka during his long reign further improved the wooden walls and buildings of the capital and added many attractive edifices, which could be traced from the site at Kumrahar.
  - Ashoka constructed as good as 84,000 stupas. These buildings were solid and domed, made of rock or bricks. The art of sculpture or rock cutting also reached its zenith during Ashoka’s time.
- Seven rock-cut sanctuaries lying about 25 miles north of Gaya, Bihar, four on the Barabar hills and three on the Nagarjuna hills belong to the time of Ashoka and his successors. The caves are a fine example of Mauryan art. The caves were used for religious ceremonies and also as assembly halls.
- The Mauryans introduced stone masonry on large scale. Fragments of stone pillars and stumps indicating the existence of an 80 pillared hall have been discovered at Kumrahar on the outskirts of Patna.
- The pillars represent the masterpiece of Mauryan sculpture. Each pillar is made of a single piece of sandstone, only their capitals which are beautiful pieces of sculpture in the form of lions or bulls are joined with a pillar on the top.
- The Mauryan artisans also started the practice of hewing out caves from rocks for monks to live in. The earliest example is the Barabar caves in Gaya. Stupas were built throughout the empire to enshrine the relics of Buddha. Of these, the most famous are at Sanchi and Barhut.
- Another remarkable feature was the art of polishing monuments, pillars, caves made of hard rocks, etc. The art of engineering equally flourished. Civil Engineering was in a highly advanced state and, therefore, so many spectacular buildings, stupas, and pillars could be constructed with perfection and efficiency. Also, the art of jewellery attained remarkable progress.
- The **punched marked silver coins** of the Mauryas which carry the symbols of the **peacock**, and the hill and crescent were also a part of Court Art.

	<b>Single lion</b> capital at Rampurva at <b>Lauriya</b> Nandangarh.
	Single bull capital at Rupurva.
	<b>Four lion</b> capital at Sarnath and Sanchi.
	A carved elephant at Dhauri and engraved elephant at Kalsi.

- The other type of art included the folk tradition of arts represented by figures of Yaksha and Yakshinis found in Besnagar, Daidrganj, etc. The abundance of beautiful pottery called **Northern Black Polished Ware** (NBPW) and terracotta figurines were another item of popular art.

## 7.8. Other Important Features of the Mauryan Empire

- **Army:** Mauryas owned a big army. According to Pliny, Chandragupta maintained 6,00,000-foot soldiers, 30,000 cavalry and 900 elephants. According to Megasthenese, the army was administered by six committees consisting of five members each, taken from a board of 30 officers.
- **Espionage:** It was an important part of the Maurya administration; and was of two types, i.e., **Santha** and **Sanchar**, the former worked by remaining stationed at a public place and the latter by moving from place to place. The spies were the ears and eyes of the king. They were also called '*Cudhapurshas*'.
- **Revenue Administration:** There were various sources of state revenues: cities (durga), rural areas (rashtra), mines (khan), road and traffic (vanikpatha), pastures (Vraja), Plantations (setu) and forests (vana).
- **Import Duties:** Prabeshya or import duties were fixed at 20 per cent of the cost price. *Panyadhyaksha* and *Pattanadhyaksha* was respectively responsible to verify every import to the state. They were also responsible for the export of each article from the state and collected the revenue known as nishkramya.
- **Sales Tax:** Taxes were imposed on every article before it was sold or purchased by Sulkadhyaksha. 9.5 per cent on items sold on the basis of calculation, 5 per cent on the items sold on the basis of measurement, and 6.5 per cent on the goods sold on the basis of weight.
  - Besides these, there were many other taxes collected by the state such as taxes on artisans and artist, taxes on animal slaughter-houses, taxes on manufacturing houses, taxes on gambling houses, on prostitutes, on the income of temples and on the additional incomes of the wage earners.
- **Social Conditions:** Kautilya's Arthashastra and Megasthenes's Indica give a detailed view of the society and social condition of the people. Varna or the caste system and stages of religious discipline took a definite shape, which corresponds to the Hindu caste system. Slavery was an established institution.
  - **Women** were placed in high esteem. Yet, **prostitution** was an established institution. Festivals and merry gatherings were common. The people led a simple and peaceful life and were inspired by a sense of morality and idealism.
  - The Jainism and Buddhism were the main religions. In addition, several minor religions including Ajivikas were also in existence.
  - The Mauryan rulers took much pain to spread education and to set up literary standards for their subjects as well. The universities of Taxila and Banaras earned world fame for teaching Brahmanical and Buddhist literature.
- **Economic Conditions:** It was mainly based on agriculture as cultivators formed a majority of the population, though trade was also important.
  - **Agriculture:** Some lands were owned by a state called Sita Lands which were either cultivated by labourers or leased out to cultivators. Private Landowners are required to pay taxes in the form of **Bali, bhaga, shulka, kara**, etc.
  - **Trade:** The state was also a big trader. It also collected tolls through officials. Trade was also internal to foreign countries. It exported spices, pearls, diamonds, cotton textiles, ivory works to Greeks and Verma. It imported horses, gold, glass, linen, etc. from other countries. The balance of trade was very much in favour of India.