AILET

Dynasties And Rulers in Ancient India for CLAT

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Bimbisara (544 BC -492 BC)

- Contemporary of Buddha.
- His capital was Rajgir (Girivraja). He strengthened his position by matrimonial alliance with the ruling families of Kosala, Vaishali and Madra (3 wives).

Ajatshatru (492 BC- 460 BC)

- Son of Bimbisara, killed his father and seized the throne. Annexed Vaishali, and Kosala.

Udayin (460 BC – 444 BC)

- He founded the new capital of Pataliputra, situated at the confluence of the Ganga and Son.

SHISHUNAGA DYNASTY

- Founded by a Minister Shishunaga. Dynasty lasted for two generations only.
- Greatest achievement was the destruction of power of Avanti.

NANDA DYNASTY (1st of non- kshatriya dynasties)

- Considered by many as the first non Kshatriya dynasty. Founder was Mahapadma Nanda.
- Alexander attacked India in their reign. Dhana Nanda was there at that time.

NOTE

- Alexanders invasion: Alexander invaded India in 326 BC. He fought the famous battle of Hydaspes (on the banks of Jhelum) with the king of Punjab, Porus.

THE MAURYAN DYNASTY

Chandragupta Maurya (322BC- 297BC)

- With the help of Chanakya, he overthrew the Nandas.

- Defeated Seleucus, the general of Alexander. Seleucus sent Magasthenes (the author of 'Indica') to his court.

BINDUSARA (297BC-273BC)

- Called Amitrghat by Greek writers.
- He is said to have conquered 'the land between 2 seas', i.e., the Arabian Sea and Bay of Bengal.

Ashoka (269 BC-232BC)

- Regarded as one of the greatest Kings of all times.
- THE KALINGA WAR (261 BC, mentioned in XIII rock edict) changed his attitude towards life. Ashoka became a Buddhist after that.
- The emblem of the Indian Republic has been adopted from the 4-lion capital of Ashokan pillar at Sarnath.
- Built the Sanchi Stupa in present-day Madhya Pradesh.

THE INDO – GREEKS

- The Indo–Greek ruler was Menander (165 – 145 BC), also known as Milinda.
- He was converted to Buddhism by Nagasena (described in the Pali text, Milinda panhoor the question of Milinda).
- Greeks were the first to issue coins which can be definitely attributed to the Kings.

THE SHAKAS OR SCYTHIANS

- The Greeks were followed by the Shakas, who controlled a larger part of India than the Greek did.
- A king of Ujjain, who called himself Vikramaditya, defeated the Shakas. An era called the Vikram Samvat is reckoned from the event of his victory over the Shakas in 57 BC.

THE PARTHIANS

- The most famous Parthian king was Gondopherns (AD 19 – 45), in whose reign St. Thomas is said to have come to India for the propagation of Christianity.

THE KUSHANS (45 AD)

- First to issue gold coins in India. Kanishka was their most famous king.
- He patronized the following persons:
- Ashwaghosha (wrote ‘Buddhacharitra’, which is the biography of Buddha)
- Nagarjuna (wrote ‘Madhyamik Sutra’).
- Vasumitra (chairman of fourth Buddhist council)
- Charak (a physician, wrote ‘Charak Samhita’)

Kanishka is known in history for two reasons:

- He started an era in AD 78, which is known as the Saka era and is used by Govt. Of India.
- He extended his wholehearted patronage to Buddhism (Held the fourth Buddhist council in Kashmir).

THE SUNGA DYNASTY

- Pushyamitra founded this dynasty.
- They were basically Brahmins. This period saw the revival of Bhagvatism.
- Patanjali’s classic Mahabhashyawas written at this time.

THE KANVA DYNASTY

- The founder of this short-lived dynasty was Vasudeva, who killed the last Sunga king, Devabhuti.
- They were swept away by the Satavahanas of the Deccan.

THE SATAVAHANAS OR THE ANDHRA

- They were the successors of the Mauryans in the Deccan and central India.
- Simuka is regarded as the founder of this dynasty. The most important king was Gautamiputra Satkarni (AD 106 – 130) who raised the power and prestige of Satavahanas to greater heights.

THE PANDYAS

- Their capital was Madurai.

- The Pandya kings profited from trade with the Roman empire and sent embassies to the Roman emperor Augustus.

THE CHOLAS

- The Kingdom was known as Cholamandalam or Cholamandal. The chief centre was Uraiyur, a place famous for the cotton trade. The capital was Kaveripattnam / Puhar.
- The main source of wealth was trade in cotton cloth. They also maintained an efficient Navy.

THE CHERAS

- Their capital was Vanji (also called as Kerela Country)
- It owed its importance to trade with the Romans. The Romans set up two regiments there to protect their interests.

NOTE

- All the gathered information on Pandyas, Cholas and Cheras is based on Sangam literature. Sangam was a college or assembly of Tamil poets held probably under Royal Patronage (esp. Pandyas).
- Sangam age corresponds to the post–Maurya and the pre–Gupta period.

THE GUPTA DYNASTY

CHANDRAGUPTA – I (AD 319 – 335)

- Started the Gupta era in 319 – 320 AD.
- He enhanced his power & prestige by marrying Kumara Devi, princes of Lichchavi clan of Nepal.
- He acquired the title of Maharajadhiraja.

SAMUDRAGUPTA (AD 335 – 380)

- The Gupta kingdom was enlarged enormously by Chandragupta’s son Samudragupta, because of his bravery and generalship he is called the ‘Napoleon’ of India (by the historian V.A. Smith).
- He assumed the title ofKaviraj and Vikramanka.

CHANDRAGUPTA – II (AD 380 – 413)

- Took the title of Vikramaditya by defeating Rudrasimha III, a Kshatrap king of Ujjain.
- He was the first ruler to issue silver coins. Also issued copper coins.
- The iron pillar inscription, fixed near Qutab Minar in Delhi mentions a king Chandra(considered by many as Chandragupta II only).
- His court was adorned by celebrated nine gems (navaratnas) including Kalidasa, Amarsimha, Varahmihir, and Dhanvantri.
- Chinese pilgrim Fahien visited India at this time.

KUMARAGUPTA – I (AD 413 – 455)

- Founded Nalanda University (a renowned university of ancient India).
- In the last year of his reign, the peace and prosperity of the empire was disturbed due to invasion of Turko – Mongol tribe, Hunas. During the war with the Hunas, Kumaragupta died.

SKANDAGUPTA (AD 455 – 467)

- Kumaragupta – I was followed by Skandagupta. He faced Hunas effectively.
- After his death, the great days of Guptas were over. The empire continued but central control weakened, and local Governors became feudatory kings with hereditary rights.

PUSHYABHUTI DYNASTY

HARSHA VARDHAN (AD 606 – 647)

- Belonged to Pushyabhuti family & son of Prabhakar Vardhan.
- Originally belonged to Thaneshwar, but shifted to Kannauj.
- Defeated by Pulakesh–II, the great Chalukya king, on the banks of Narmada in 620.
- Chinese pilgrim, Hieun Tsang (prince of travellers) visited during his reign.
- He established a large monastery at Nalanda. Banabhatta, who adorned his court wrote Harshacharitaand Kadambari. Harsha himself wrote 3 plays- Priyadarshika, Ratnavali and Nagananda.

CHALUKYAS OF VATAPATI

(Badami)

- Founder – Pulakesin-I.
- Pulakesin – II was their most famous king. Was a contemporary of Harsha.

RASHTRAKUTAS

- Founder – Dantidurga.
- Their king Krishna – I is remembered for constructing the famous rock-cut Kailash temple at Ellora.
- Their king Krishna – III set up a pillar of victory and a temple at Rameshwaram.
- Rashtrakutas are credited with the building of cave shrine of Elephanta.

THE GANGAS

- Their king Narsimhadeva constructed the Sun Temple at Konark.
- Their king Anantvarman Ganga built the famous Jagannath temple, Puri.
- Kesaris, who used to rule Orissa before Gangas built the Lingaraja temple at Bhubaneswar.

THE PALLAVAS

- Founder Simhavishnu. They set up their capital at Kanchi (south of Chennai).
- Narsimhavarman was their greatest king. He founded the town of Mamallapuram (Mahabalipuram) which he adorned with beautiful rock-cut Rathsor Seven Pagodas. Hieun Tsang visited Kanchi during his reign.

THE IMPERIAL CHOLAS (AD 846 – 1279)

- Founder- Vijayalaya. The capital was Tanjore.
- The greatest Chola rulers were Rajaraja – I (985 – 1014) and his son Rajendra – I (1014 – 1044).
- Rajaraja – I constructed the Rajrajeshwari temple(also called as Brihadeshwar Shiva temple) at Thanjavur. His son Rajendra – I annexed the whole of Sri Lanka. In the North, went as far as Ganga and the dominions of the Pala king Mahipala. He took the title of ‘Gangaikonda’ after that.
- The dancing figure of Shiva called Nataraja belong to this period only.

- Cholas temples has massive ‘Vimanas’ or towers and spacious courtyards. The entrances had elaborate Gopurams (gateways).
- Local self-government was there (the concept of Panchayati Raj has been borrowed from it).

THE PALAS OF BENGAL (Capital – Monghyr)

Its founder was Gopala (750 AD).
Their king, Dharmapala founded Vikramsila University & and revived Nalanda University.

NOTE

3 rival powers – Pratiharas, Palas and Rashtrakutas declined almost simultaneously as there was extra pressure to maintain their armies as well as the rise of feudatories.

THE RAJPUTS

- They were divided into 4 clans –
- Pratihara or Pariharas of Rajasthan.
- Chauhans of Rajasthan.
- Chalukyas or Solankis of Kathiawar.
- Parmaras or Pawars of Malwa.

This article is posted in association with clatapult.com.

First published on January 5, 2021.