Maurya Period (322 BC-185 BC)

Origin of the Mauryas
➢ The Puranas describe them as **Shudras.**
➢ 'Mudrakshasa' of Vishakhadatta uses the terms **Vrishal/ Kulhina** (of low clan).
➢ The Classical writers, such as Justin, describe Chandragupta only as a man of humble origin.
➢ The Junagarh Rock Inscription of Rudradaman (150 AD) has some indirect evidence, suggesting that the Mauryas might have been of **Vaishya** origin.
➢ The Buddhist work, on the other hand, try to link the Mauryan dynasty with the **Sakya Kshatriya** clan to which Buddha belonged, the region from which the **Mauryas** came was full of **Mor** and hence they came to be known as '**Moriyas**'.
➢ we can say that the Mauryas belonged to the **Moriya** tribe.

Chandragupta Maurya: 322 BC-298 BC
➢ Chandragupta dethroned the last Nanda ruler **Dhananand** and occupied **Patliputra** in 322 BC with the help of **Kautilya or Chankya.**
➢ Chandragupta Maurya defeated **Selecus Nikator in** 305 BC, who surrendered a vast territory including herat, Kandhar, Baluchistan and Kabul, in return for 500 elephants.
➢ After treaty between Chandragupta and Selecus, the Hindukush became boundry between their states.
➢ Selecus Nikator sent **Megasthenese** to the court of Chandragupta Maurya.
➢ Under Chandragupta Maurya, for the first time, the whole of Northern India was united.
➢ Trade flourished, agriculture was regulated, weights and measures were standardised and money came into use.
➢ Taxation, sanitation and famine relief became the concerns of the state.

Bindusara: 298 BC-273 BC
➢ Chandragupta Maurya was succeeded by his son Bindusara.
➢ Bindusara, known to the Greeks as **Amitrochates** (derived from the Sanskrit word **Amitraghata**)
➢ Bindusara patronised **Ajivikas.**

Ashoka: 273 BC-232 BC
➢ According to Buddhist texts when Ashoka, the son of Bindusara, was born, his mother, happy to have a child, said, 'Now I am Ashoka', i.e., without sorrow. And so. the child was named.
➢ It appears from the available evidence (Buddhist literature mainly) that there was a struggle for the throne among the princes on the death of Bindusara.

- According to Buddhist tradition, Ashoka usurped the throne after killing his 99 brothers and spared **Tissa**, the youngest one. Radhagupta helped him in fratricidal struggle.
- This war of succession accounts for interregnum for 273-269 BC and only after securing his position on the throne, Ashoka had himself formally crowned in 269 BC.
- Under Ashoka, the Mauryan Empire reached its climax. the whole of the sub-continent was under imperial control.

Later Mauryas: 232 BC-185 BC
- The Mauryan dynasty lasted 137 years.
- After the death of Ashoka, the division of the Mauryan Empire into two parts-Western and Eastern. **Kunala** son of Ashoka ruled the Western part and **Dasaratha** ruled the Eastern part.
- **Brihadratha** the last Mauryan ruler was assassinated in 185 BC by his commander in - chief, **Pushyanitra** Sunga, who established his own Sunga dynasty.

Causes for the Decline:
1. Highly centralised administration
2. Pacific policy of Ashoka
3. Brahmanical reaction
4. The partition of the Mauryan Empire
5. Weak later-Mauryan Rulers
6. Pressure on Mauryan economy
7. Neglect of North-West Frontier.

Sources for Mauryan History
- **Kautilya's 'Arthasastra':** It is the most important literary source for the Mauryas. It is a treatise on government and polity. It gives a clear and methodological analysis of political and economic conditions of the Mauryan period.
- **Megasthenese's 'Indica':** **Megasthenese** was the ambassador of Selecus Nikator in the court of Chandragupta Maurya. 'Indica' refers to Mauryan administration, 7- caste system, absence of slavary and usuary in India etc.
- **Visakha Datta's 'Mudra Rakshasa':** it was written during Gupta Period, it describes how Chandragupta Maurya get Chanakya's assistance to overthrow the Nandas.
- **Puranas:** Though they are a collection of legends interspread with religious teachings, they give us the chronology and lists of Mauryan kings.
- **Buddhist Literature**:
  1. Indian Buddhist text **Jatakas** reveal a general picture of socio-economic conditions of Mauryan period.
  2. **Dipavamsa** and **Mahavamsa** describe the part played by Ashoka in spreading Buddhism to Sri Lanka.
  3. **Divyavadana** gives information about Ashoka and his efforts to spread Buddhism.

- **Ashokan Edicts and inscriptions:** There are Rock Edicts, Pillar Edicts and Cave Inscriptions located at several places in the Indian sub-continent. Majority of them are in the nature of Ashoka's proclamations to the public at large, and only a small group of them describe his own acceptance of Buddhism and his relationship with the Sangha. They used **Prakrit language**, the script varied from region to region like **Kharoshti** in the North-West, **Greek and Aramaic** in the West and **Brahmi** in the East of India.

Army

- Mauryan administration was maintain a huge army. They also maintained a Navy.
- The Army administration was carried by a board of 30 officers divided into 6 committee, each committee consisting of 5 members. They are Infantry, Cavalry, Elephants, Chariots, Navy and Transport
- **Sansthan** (Stationary) and **Sanchari** (Wandering) were the two types of **Gudhapurushas** (detectives).

Economy

- The state controlled almost all economic activities.
- 1/4 to 1/6 of the produce collected from peasants varied as a Tax.
- The irrigation facilities were provided by state.
- State had enjoyed Monopoly in mining, forest, salt, sale of liquor, manufacture of arms.
- **Bharukachch/Bharoch and Supara in** Western coast and **Tamralipti** in Bengal were the **Important ports.**
- During Mauryan period, the punch-marked coins (mostly of silver) were the common units of transactions.