

## A Study on Human Rights in Ancient India

Sahil Chahal, Department of History, VPO-Alewa, Distt. Jind, Haryana, India

[Sahilchahal555@gmail.com](mailto:Sahilchahal555@gmail.com)

### ABSTRACT

We will discuss the dynasties that governed from around 300 B.C. to 300 A.D. in this chapter, as well as their organisational structure. We don't really know much about how things were run throughout the Vedic and post-Vedic eras. The situation is substantially different with regard to the Mauryan government. The empire's splendour throughout the Mauryan era is remembered. This is mostly due to the depth of the unique content that may be exploited. We have illuminating bits of writings by numerous Greek authors, some of whom had first-hand knowledge of the country and its governance, such as the Indica of Megasthenes, in addition to key contemporaneous indigenous sources like the Arthashastra of Kautilya and the Aoka inscriptions. In the post-Mauryan era, which lasted from 200 B.C. to 300 A.D., several states gained control across the Indian subcontinent. A large portion of central Asia was covered by the Kushas' empire, while some were more modest in size. Along with the introduction of innovative elements in art, architecture, and religion, we can see the rise of several political movements in various parts of the subcontinent. Trade and business also facilitated the rapprochement of the subcontinent at this period.

**KEYWORD:** Mauryan Government, Post-Mauryan Era, Saurashtra and Anarta, Chandragupta's Mauryan Empire

### INTRODUCTION

Without a doubt, Chandragupta ruled over a huge area. Plutarch claims that Chandragupta conquered all of India with an army of 60,000 troops after finishing his conquests in northern India, but he offers no proof to support this wide claim. The Aoka inscriptions offer unambiguous evidence of every conquest, despite the fact that the circumstances of each one are unknown. Saurashtra was a province of the Mauryan Empire, according to Rudradaman I's inscription at Junagarh. Under the rule of Aoka, it was ruled by Pushyagupta, a Visva regional governor of Chandragupta, and by Yavana (Greek) Raja Tashaspha. Later, Saurashtra and Anarta were merged to form the Western Indian Mauryan province.

The position of an Aokani inscription at Sopara in the contemporary Thana District demonstrates that Chandragupta's Mauryan Empire also included the area around Sopara or Surparaka in its provinces.<sup>3</sup> The only conquest listed in Aoka's inscriptions is Kaliga. However, the location of these inscriptions and the information contained within them indicate that his dominion reached as far as Mysore in the south and as far as the northern and western borders of Persia. Fourteen An Aokani inscription found in Sopara in the modern Thana District proves that the region around Sopara or Surparaka was part of Chandragupta's Mauryan Empire.<sup>3</sup> Kaliga is the sole conquest mentioned in Aoka's inscriptions. But according to the location of these inscriptions and the details they convey, his rule extended as far as Mysore in the south and as far as the northern and western borders of Persia. The important inscriptions of Aoka are divided into three categories: the Fourteen Rock Edicts, the Minor Rock Edicts, and the Seven Pillar Edicts. These inscriptions offer crucial details for recreating the life and career of the great monarch.

They resemble an autobiography in several ways. The famed monk Upagupta is said to have converted Aoka to Buddhism not long after the Kaliga battle. His rules attest to this. The most emotional wording may be found in the Rock Edict-XIII, which is Aoka's honest regret for the suffering caused by the struggle. It is generally accepted that the emperor personally authored this report due to its extreme sincerity and conviction. Aoka converted to Buddhism, became a vegetarian, and spent the rest of his reign advancing the religion despite his respect for all other faiths. Buddha also requested the Third Buddhist Council at Pataliputra to resolve conflicts among the monastic community and conclude the collection of the Buddhist canon.

Only by sticking to the same blood and iron policies that it was founded on could the empire be maintained. But by forgoing all wars and rejecting the aggressive imperial project, Aoka compromised the fundamental tenets of the empire. If he had cared to send a strong army there instead of Buddhist missionaries, he might have easily finished the political unification of India by conquering the Tamil lands in the far south. The emperor's continuous exhortations to the great virtue of Ahi's (non-injury) are believed to have had a lasting effect on both the state's military organisation and the people's innate aptitude for battle. It is further claimed that the suspension of all military actions after the Kiliga war and the emperor's repeated exhortations had a negative effect on both.

### POST MAURYAN PERIOD

The fall of the Mauryan Empire led to the rise of several regional kingdoms in various parts of the country. At the same time, several ethnic groups from western China and Central Asia are encroaching. Indo-Greeks included the Scythians (also known as the Akas), the Parthians (also known as the Pahlavas), and the Kushas. Through these political processes, India and central Asian politics and culture became more familiar with one another.

### THE SUNGAS-

Pushyamitra Sunga created the Uga dynasty. It started out in vile treachery, and that's how it ended up. The tenth King of the dynasty, Devabhumi, had a bad reputation and was assassinated on the orders of his minister Vasudeva. The Uga dynasty's 10 kings governed for 112 years, from 185-73 B.C.

### THE KANVAS-

Vasudeva established the Kvas dynasty, which had just four monarchs and controlled the Magadha Empire for 45 years. The Andras deposed the fourth king, Suasrman.

### THE GREEKS-

Around the start of the second century B.C., Demetrius, the Greek King of Bactria, had conquered the northern regions of the Magadha Empire. Demetrius' trip to the American continent was so successful that the Greek historians dubbed him "king of the Indians." Although Eucratides was successful in overthrowing Demetrius while he was occupied in India, he was not destined to enjoy his ill-gotten authority for very long. The Bactrian kingdom was instead taken during his absence. His own son brutally killed him by running over his father's body with his chariot. The Greeks' internal conflicts likely provided Pushyamitra with an excellent chance to reclaim some of the lost territory and reestablish order in the Empire. The Scythian forces attacked Bactria when they were fighting amongst themselves, putting an end to Greek rule in the lovely Oxes Valley for good (120 B.C.). After being expelled from Bactria, the Greeks were compelled to seek refuge in their Indian possessions in Afghanistan and the western Punjab, where they reigned for an additional 200 years.

### THE PARTHIANS-

The Indian border was not just persecuted by the Greeks. They were followed by a number of peoples, the most prominent being the Parthians, Akas, and Kushas. In the middle of the third century B.C., a successful uprising against Syria's Seleucid ruler led to the establishment of the Parthian monarchy. Mithradates I, ruler of the Parthians, had sent his armies up to the Sindhu as early as the middle of the second century B.C. Later, a strong ruler by the name of Maues founded a principality in the western Punjab. Around the same period, the Kandhr area was controlled by a dynasty of Parthian rulers, with Vonones and Azes being the most noteworthy. Lower Sindhu's Parthian lords were battling for control around the end of the first century A.D. The Peshwar valley was also home to a few Parthian rulers. One of these Indo-Parthian chiefs, Gondophares, whose chronicle was discovered at Takhi-i-Bahi (in N.W.F.P. ), is the subject of intense study. The Apostle St. Thomas visited his court and converted him and his family to Christianity, according to a very old Christian narrative.

**THE SAKAS:** Originally a nomadic tribe, the Akas settled on the Jaxartes or Syr Daria river's northern bank. They invaded Bactria after being driven from their native regions by the Yueh-Chi, another nomadic tribe, and overthrew the Hellenistic kingdom there. Later, they travelled south and east before making their way through several bands and routes to enter India. Given that the area was given the name "akasthna" in their honour, they must have established a substantial village along the Helmund River's bank. Three significant "aka principalities" may be traced back to India with ease. Two of them, Mathur and Takshail, respectively, were the capitals of Northern India. The third included the western Indian peninsulas of Malwa and Kathiwar.

The akas rulers of Mathura and Takshail are recognised by contemporary historians as the northern Satraps, while those of Malwa and the Kathiawar Peninsula are recognised as the western Satraps. We are aware of four northern Satraps in all, however we know very little about them in depth. The western Satraps governed for three centuries and numbered more than twenty.

**KUSHANAS:** These foreign invaders were members of the Yueh-Chi, a nomadic Turkish tribe that had previously made its home in northwest China's Kan-Su region. Around 65 B.C., they were driven westward by the Hiung-Nu (Huns), another nomadic tribe, and came across the Akas who were occupying the region to the north of the Jaxartes Rivers. They had hardly settled into the territory of the Akas when they were beaten by their arch-enemy, the Huns, and forced to depart towards the south. As a result of this incident, the Akas migrated, and they eventually settled in India. As was already reported, the Yueh-Chi pushed the Akas from Bactria to the south of the Oxus and conquered and colonised the region. Here, two significant shifts occurred. First, they gave up their wandering lifestyle and opted for a stable one. Second, the vast Yueh-Chi tribe's unity was dissolved, and in the captured territory, five of its clans founded five autonomous realms.

**SASSANIAN INVASION:** It is widely acknowledged that the invasion of the Sassanians, who had destroyed the Arsacid dynasty and established a potent monarchy in Persia early in the third century A.D., had a significant role in the demise of the Kusha Empire. The Kushas were conquered by the Sassanian monarch Shapur I (241-272 A.D.), who is known to have undertaken large victories in Bactria and Afghanistan. The most recent view on the issue states that Shapur's invasion, which occurred between 241 and 250 A.D., roughly corresponds with Vasudeva's end-of-reign date, making Kusha's accession 100 years earlier fall around 142 A.D. However, the fall of the Kusha Empire did not spell the end of Kusha influence in India. For a very long time, Kusha rulers known historically as the later Kusha and going by the titles Kanishka and Vasudeva reigned over Kabul and a portion of the Panjab valley. Another branch of the clan, the Kidra Kushas, who reigned in the same area until the fourth century A.D., drove them out.

#### **THE WESTERN SATRAPS:**

Also known as the governors who oversaw the Kathiawar Peninsula and Malwa. Apart from the fact that he belonged to the Kshahartha dynasty and reigned over a vast area that included Malwa, Gujart, the Kathiawar Peninsula, and maybe even some of Rputna and Sindh, very little is known about Bhumaka. The next Satrap Nahapna, who took on the title of rjan, is a more eminent character. His dates are between 119 and 125 A.D., and his coins and inscriptions prove beyond a shadow of a doubt that he ruled as a sovereign over a wide realm that stretched as far south as Nasik and Poona area as north as Ajmer. However, the Stavhana ruler Gautamputra Stakari overthrew him, and the Satrapy was taken over by a new dynasty named as

The founder of this dynasty, Chashana, is unquestionably to be connected with Tiastenes, who is described as having governed with Oozene (Ujjayin) as his capital in Ptolemy's Geography, which was published about 140 A.D. Evidently, he reclaimed at least portion of Nahapna's kingdom to the north of the Narmada from the Stavhanas. However, the conflict persisted, and Chashtana's grandson Rudradman is now referred to as the ruler of all the nations that

Gautamputra Stakari has conquered. Furthermore, he asserts that he twice vanquished the Dakshipatha lord Stakari, yet because to their close bond, the latter was spared destruction. A somewhat damaged document names Vsishputra Stakari's bride as the daughter of a Mahkshatrapa, whose name has only been retained in its initial letter, ru. The Mahkshatrapa may have been none other than Rudradman, and Pulumyi, who some claim to be his brother, was his son-in-law. Rudradman vanquished the lord of Dakshipatha, who is typically thought to be Pulumyi himself, however some people mistakenly attribute him to his father Gautamputra.

#### ANDHRAS:

A strong kingdom was founded in the Deccan by the Andhras while the Greeks, Parthians, Akas, and Kushas invaded India's northwestern border. The Aitareya Brhmaa has a mythology that mentions the Andhras, an ancient tribe who dwelt on the edge of Aryan settlements and included a mix of Aryan and non-Aryan blood. This notice may be from around 800 B.C. Five hundred years later, we learn that they were a very powerful people with a large number of villages and thirty towns, as well as an army of 100,000 infantry, 2,000 cavalry, and 1,000 elephants, as well as walls and towers to defend them. Pliny made this claim, and he likely sourced it from Megasthenes. The Andhras established a powerful empire in the Deccan when the Greeks, Parthians, Akas, and Kushas conquered India's northwest. The Andhras, an ancient tribe with a mixture of Aryan and non-Aryan blood who lived on the outskirts of Aryan villages, are mentioned in the mythology of the Aitareya Brhmaa. This notification might date back to about 800 B.C. After 500 years, we discover that they were a very strong people with hundreds of villages and thirty towns, a 100,000-person infantry, 2,000-person cavalry, and 1,000-person elephant army, as well as walls and towers to protect them. This assertion was made by Pliny, who most likely got it from Megasthenes.

#### SATAVAHANAS:

The royal family Simuka established was known by the names "livhana" or "tavhana." The Deccan plateau was completely covered by the dominions of Simuka and his two successors from the mouth of the Krishna. Their western city was Pratishha, which is now Pahn or Pytoon on the Godvari, while their eastern capital was Dhnyakaaka, which is close to Bezwada on the Krishna. For about 200 years, the family's influence was restricted to the regions south of the Vindhya. However, the Puras claim that the Stavhanas slew the last Kva king and took control of Magadha in the last century B.C.

#### CONCLUSION

The evidence mentioned above demonstrates that in ancient India, the concept of human rights was recognised and upheld. The human rights have been implicitly articulated in the scriptures and are visible in inscriptions, on coins, as well as in modern art and architecture. The Dharmastras and Grihastra outline the Hindu way of life and provide specific standards, obligations, and rights as they describe how one person should relate to another, to society, to the state, and vice versa. Every Indian's life is governed by the sixteen samskaras, with all their anomalies and inconsistencies, from birth until death. As an instance, the marriage samskara establishes a bond between two people, defining their obligations to one another and to society as a whole. Kautilya, Manu, and others agreed that the proprietary rights to Istrdhana resulting from marriage were revoked. Similar to this, Kautilya accords several rights to widows, such as the freedom to marry again or live a virtuous life. The majority of Smti support the nyog provision. The lack of sati columns throughout the time of our study is evidence that sati does not exist. Such sati columns are a typical element of Pratihara era artworks. The Eran Inscription from the Gupta era has the first epigraphic proof of sati. The art of the time did not include any sculptures of ladies wearing veils, so neither do we. Instead, a strong and liberated portrayal of the famine's beauty is used.

The salabhanjika and yakshi pictures are wonderful representations of women's liberation. We may state with certainty that the mediaeval period's sati and purdha curses were non-existent from around 300 BC to 300 AD since sculptures represent the social climate of a certain epoch. However, women did not have the same position and privileges in society as males did. The dras were not intended to attend the upanayana ceremony.

The dharamastras also acknowledge the rights of slaves. There were eight different categories of slaves, each of which had its own limitations, responsibilities, and privileges. Under some conditions, they may even be freed from slavery. In comparison to other regions of the modern world, their lives were far better in India. Megasthenese were unable to find slavery in the Mauryan Empire for this reason. To sum up, we may agree that it is improper to compare the effectiveness and scope of the human rights protections practised in ancient India to those in the present. In contemporary civil society, the widely accepted and practised rule of "eye for an eye" or "cutting off limbs" as a penalty for numerous offences is a grave violation of human rights.

For each user of electronic media, the right to privacy and the freedom of speech have become fundamental rights. Similar to how society is rapidly evolving, ancient sexual taboos have evolved into basic human rights. The social structures of the majority of the world's countries have legally recognised the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people. The Oxford Dictionary, according to The Times of India, has introduced a new honorific Mx. to denote a transgender person's status. Following the Supreme Court of India's ruling recognising the rights of transgender people, Panjab University has added a third gender column to all of its application forms for admission and employment.

The issue of marital rape is currently the subject of a very important discussion in India between supporters of women's rights and those who believe that marriage is a sacred bond between two people. The issue at hand is whether or not a lawfully married man engaging in sexual activity without his wife's permission constitutes a crime punishable under state law. Such an act is referred to as marital rape in many industrialised countries and is punishable.

#### REFERENCE:

- K. A. N. Sastri, Comprehensive History Of India vol-2, S.C. Ghose Calcutta Press Pvt Ltd, Calcutta, 1957, p. 8.  
 E. I, Vol.8, pp. 45- 49.  
 R. C. Majumdar, Age of Imperial Unity (ed), Delhi, 1990, p. 61, 62.  
 Ashvini Agrawal, Rise and Fall of the Imperial Guptas, Delhi, 1989, P. 50-51  
 A.S. Altekar; R.C. Majumdar, The Vākātaka- Gupta Age, Delhi, rep. 1967, p. 31,32  
 Panini, IV. 2. 53 and IV. 1. 110.  
 Brihatsamhita, XVI. 22 and XIV. 25.  
 A.S. Altekar, op.cit., 1967, p. 31-32.  
 D. R. Bhandarkar, Asoka, New Delhi, reprint. 2005, p.15  
 J.W. McCrindle, Ancient India as described by Megasthenes and Arrian, London, 1877, fragm. XXVII  
 A.S. Altekar, State and Government in Ancient India, Delhi, Reprint. 2001, 314- 315.  
 V.A. Smith, Asoka, R.E- VI, Clarendon Press, 1920, p.172.  
 V. R. Ramachandra Dikshitar, The Mauryan Polity, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, rep.1993, p. 213.  
 T.S.N, Sastry, India and Human Rights: Reflections, (ed.), (M. Ramajois, In judicial colloquium in Bangalore, 24-25 fed, 1998), New Delhi, 2005, pp.45, 47.  
 Ratnamayidevi Dikshit, Women in the Sanskrit Dramas, Vol. I, Delhi, 1964, pp. 115-116, 42, 15,118.  
 Mandagadde Rama Jois, Legal and Constitutional History of India, New Delhi, 2010, p. 607.  
 V.S. Agrawala, India as known to Panini, Lukhnow, 1953, p. 21.  
 S.K. Aiyangar, Hindu India from the Original Sources (part- I), Delhi, 1977, pp. 72, 73.  
 Kiran. Pawar., Women in Indian history:social, economic, political and cultural perspectives,(ed), New Delhi, 1996, p.160.  
 R.S. Tripathi, History of Ancient India, Delhi, rep. 1992, pp. 2- 8.