



A Study of the Disintegration of the Maurya Empire

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Abstract:

The Mauryan Empire was India's first experience of a large empire. Chandragupta Maurya, Bindusara and Ashok succeeded in bringing many kingdoms under the power of the Mauryan Empire. A new concept was introduced in the vast empire rule. With the death of Ashok, the power of the Maurya Empire began to weaken. Maurya Empire fell in 180 BCE. More than one factors played a role in the disintegration of the Maurya Empire. In which Ashok and his policies, Asoka's pacifist policy, Dhamma bureaucrats-neglect of North West Frontier etc. are major. Apart from this, Asoka's successors were equally responsible for disorganization in the administrative system, economic problems, development of local polities, rise of large states and local states.

Keywords: *Mauryan Empire, Disintegration*

1. Introduction

Mauryan rule was India's first experience of a large empire. Chandragupta Maurya, Bindusara and Ashok were able to establish the power of the Maurya Empire over several Jana Padas or kingdoms. A new concept could be introduced in the governance of large regions. With the death of Ashok, the power of the Maurya Empire began to weaken. The Maurya Empire fell in 180 BCE. More than one factors played a part in the disintegration of the Maurya Empire.

2. Objectives of the study

The objectives of the present research are as follows.

- 1- To know the reasons for the disintegration of the Mauryan Empire.
- 2- To understand the role of Emperor Ashok in the disintegration of the Mauryan Empire.
- 3- To understand the role of economic affairs in the disintegration of the Mauryan Empire.
- 4- To understand the political, administrative and military situation responsible for the disintegration of the Mauryan Empire.

3. Key words

3.1 Mauryan Empire

The Maurya Empire was the first pan-Indian empire. Emperor Chandragupta Maurya established in 321 B.C.E. and ended in 185 B.C.E. It covered most of the Indian territories. It spread throughout central and northern India as well as parts of modern Iran.

3.2 Disintegration

When historians say that an empire collapsed, they mean that the central or state no longer exercised its broad powers. This happened because the state ceased to exist or because the power of the state declined as parts of the empire became independent of its control. Because empires are large and complex, when historians talk about the decline of an empire, they are usually talking about a long process rather than a single cause.

4. Disintegration of the Maurya Empire

More than one factor played a part in the disintegration of the Maurya Empire, which are as follows.

5. Ashok and his Policies

5.1 Rebellion of Brahmins

According to Hariprasad Shastri, there was a rebellion of Brahmins against the Maurya Empire, which not only destroyed its foundation but also broke it into pieces. Ban on animal sacrifice. The appointment of Dharma-mahamtras or moral superintendents was also a direct invasion of the rights and privileges of the Brahmins.

Another reason was Asoka's insistence on strict adherence to the principles of danda-samata and vyavahara-samata by his officers. These words are taken to indicate "equality of punishment" and "equality of lawsuits" irrespective of race, color and creed. This was offensive to the Brahmins as they claimed many privileges including exemption from capital punishment. However, according to Dr. Raychaudhary's ban on animal sacrifice should not be interpret as an attack on Brahmins. The ancient sages themselves condemned animal sacrifice and advocated the principle of ahimsa or non-violence. That the Mauryas were Shudras is not consistent on this point and the latest opinion is that the Mauryas were Kshatriyas. It is also argued that the Dharma-Mahamatras did not encroach on the rights and privileges of the Brahmins. Moreover, there is nothing to show that Dharma-Mahamatras were not recruited from among Brahmins or that Brahmins were prohibited from entering. Kautilya's Arthshastra states that a Brahmin guilty of treason was to be drowned. Relations between Jalauka, one of Asoka's successors, and the Brahmins were very friendly. Maurya kings appointed Brahmins as high officials. This is proved by the fact that Pushyamitra was the general of the last Mauryan king. Prof. Neelkantha Shastri also criticizes the view that the fall of the Mauryas was caused by a Brahmanical reaction against Asoka's pro-Buddhist policy and the pro-Jain policy of some of his successors. Dr. R.K. Mukherjee believes that Ashok mistreated the Brahmins and later rose against his successors. It is true that Pushyamitra who led the revolution was a Brahmin and it should not be forgotten that he was the commander-in-chief of the Mauryan army. His successful revolution can be attributed to his hold on the military and not to his leadership of disaffected Brahmins. Moreover, it should not be forgotten that the dynasty founded by Pushyamitra was ousted by the successful rebellion of the Brahmin minister of the last Maurya king. According to R.D. Banerjee cannot entirely freed from the charge that "the great emperor (Ashok) himself was one of the causes of this downfall. His idealism and religious spirit must have considerably weakened the morale of his army. According to Dr. R. K. Mukherjee, "This view seems plausible enough in theory, but it is difficult to determine whether the empire's weakness is attributable to this alone."

5.2 Pacifist Policy

According to Neelkanth Shastri, "Asoka's pacifism, renunciation of war as an instrument of policy, and his exhortation to his successors to follow him in this regard, had no doctrine, no evidence that he reduced the strength of the army or weakened the defences of the empire." According to Dr. Mukherjee, the reason for the fall of the Mauryan Empire was neither military nor moral. It is seen in the interior and internal position of the Mauryan Empire as a political organization. The empire was a monarchy or a despotism and no king could guarantee the continuation in his successors of the qualities on which personal rule alone could rest. Ashok himself left some independent and scattered elements to work in his empire. Instead of being subjugated, they were allowed to retain their independence and sovereignty. They are mentioned in their inscriptions and their names were Gandhara Kamboja, Yavana, Nabhapanti, Rashtriya, Bhoja, Pitinika, Pulindas, Andhra, Chola, Pandya, Satyaputra and Keralaputra. These people grew stronger after Asoka's death and ultimately contributed to the fall of the Mauryan Empire. Many scholars are of the opinion that Asoka's political decisions or the effects of these decisions were responsible for the disintegration of the Mauryan Empire. Some scholars believe that Pushyamitra Shringa, the slayer of the last Maurya emperor, represents a strong reaction

of the Brahmins against the pro-Buddhist policies of Ashok and the pro-Jain policy of his successors. The Satavahan who rose to power in the Deccan were also Brahmins.

5.3 Dhamma Officials

Officials who were devoted to Dhamma were undoubtedly given special authority and permission of the king and hence people were afraid of them. Once they began to control hard. Therefore, Asoka's contact with people must have stopped. However, that does not mean that these bureaucrats were especially enemies of Brahmins. It can be argued that Asoka's policies harmed the interests of Brahmins and it can be accepted that the Brahmin chieftain Pushyamitra rebelled.

Another group of scholars believes that Asoka's cold policy should be given special emphasis for the downfall of the Mauryas. They believe that it was responsible for weakening the power of the empire. This explanation focuses on Asoka's policy of non-violence. The effect of this policy was the tyranny of the provinces, which required control. The Greeks could not withstand the onslaught. Neglecting the Northwest Frontier – Si Huang Ti built the Great Wall of China. Neither Ashok nor his successors could make such an arrangement. Because of which there were continuous foreign invasions from here, which shook the foundations of the Mauryan Empire.

6. Successors of Ashok

Ashok died in 32 BCE. After Asoka's death, the Maurya Empire was divided among his sons. After the death of Ashok, the mighty Maurya Empire began to crumble. According to Brahmanical, Buddhist, and Jain texts, a different name is Kunal Dasharatha Samprati Salishuka Devavarman Satabhanvan Brihadratha finally in a.d. After Ashok, his general killed the last Maurya king Brihadratha in 187 BCE; various parts of his empire were fragmented. The political leaders were gradually changed one after another. The influence of the kings over the administration was weakened due to the change of political leaders. Hereditary empires depended exclusively on the power of the rulers. Asoka's successors failed in this matter. Each of them reigned for a short period. They could not formulate new policies to implement the state. They could not even maintain the old policies. After the death of Ashok, the process of division started suddenly.

7. Administrative Disarray

The disarray that occurred in the administrative system after Asoka's death. The immediate question was whether to continue Dhamma's policy and his predominance in government. This administration was not in accordance with popular consensus practice and the work of government was not easily understood. Due to political importance, there existed a large number of bureaucrats in the state who were called Dhamma Mahamatras. Some historians suggest that Ashok became more powerful and tyrannical in the latter part of his reign. The Mauryan system of governance was such that it needed a powerful king. A system required the king to be directly in touch with all affairs of state. All these functions were ultimately to be held together by a system of government centred on the king. Once the king is weak, it is natural that the whole administration will be weak. Once the centre becomes weak, then all the provinces start disintegrating. The bureaucrats of the state were chosen by the king himself and they were loyal only to the king. Once a weak ruler comes in and executes the state for a very short period, new bureaucrats are constantly created and they keep their loyalty to that king and not to the state. The danger of the rule of personal loyalty was that the bureaucrats would either support the new king with force or oppose him. Later Mauryan kings would probably have to deal with this situation constantly. Provincial governments under the late Mauryas frequently challenged central rule. The foundations of the Mauryan bureaucratic system were under great strain. As a result, the administration became inefficient and could not maintain order. The princes had a highly efficient system of spies under the patronage of the three Mauryas before centres of such importance. Appointed to convey information to erring bureaucrats. They did a skilful job. But that system broke down under the later Mauryas, who had no means by which the kings could gauge public opinion in the empire. It can curb

bribery, which inevitably comes due to weak politicians in power at the centre. The fact that the Mauryan kings lost control of the army suggests a political reason for their downfall. Another reason for the downfall of the Mauryas was attributed to the oppressive rule of the Mauryan officials in the outer provinces. He points out that the people of Taxila revolted during Bindusara's time against the oppressive rule of officials called "evil ministers". During Asoka's reign, there was another revolt of the people of Taxila against the tyranny of the ministers. Prince Kunal was sent to Taxila to suppress the rebellion and the people declared that they were not against the king but against the ministers who oppressed them. Dr. Thapar also points out that there was no distinction between the executive and the judiciary in the functioning of the government. The only investigations the king could impose consisted of royal inspectors or spies and Mahamatras in the role of reporters. The efficiency of such a system is highly dependent on individual ability.

8. Economic Problems

DD Kosambi emphasizes the economic problems faced by the Mauryas. These reasons contributed greatly to the downfall of the Mauryan Empire. His arguments revolve around two things. The internal administration of the Mauryas shows that they were under financial pressure. 1. The state has taken more measures on various items to raise taxes and Rs. The struck coins of this period show evidence of coinage. This second argument is based on a statistical analysis of attitudes at this time. Some of Kosambi's ideas are generally accepted as being responsible for major changes and eventual collapse of the Magadha Empire. That view is as follows one. It is suggested that the state gradually lost monopoly over metal. The demand for iron was a test for the agrarian economy and Magadha alone could not survive for long. Efforts were soon made to explore and develop new sites in the Deccan. However, such cast iron hollows were found in Andhra and Karnataka. The work of extracting iron from this cavity was too expensive for the Magadha kingdom. Among the many issues he had to face in this regard was the question of protection of the mining area and the encroachment of the local chieftains. Another issue is the spread of agriculture, the large-scale use of forest timber and the destruction of forests that led to floods and droughts, evidence of severe droughts in North Bengal during the Mauryan period. As such, many factors interrelated which led to a sharp decline in the revenue of the state. In times of famine, the state was expected to provide many help. The question raised many other serious obstacles in the system of central administration but not of revenue. To raise revenue, economics suggests that taxes should be imposed on actors-prostitutes, etc. This practice arose out of the need for more revenue for the exchequer to tax everything that could be taxed, or because of inflation, the currency also weakened. This step should be seen as adopted in times of economic crisis. The amount of silver in Ahtamudra doubled to meet the requirements of the empty coffers of the later Maurya rulers. The burden of expenses also started to increase. It can see from the way Ashok started spending a lot of money for public works. In addition, his travel and the travel of his bureaucrats began to use whatever was available from anywhere. The strict measures imposed by the state on its finances in the beginning thus began to change during Asoka's reign as well. According to Romila Thapar, not because of the decline in the quality of the instruments, but because of the extreme political confusion, especially in the Gangetic region, the merchant classes started hoarding money and thus the monetary system showed wear and tear. Dr. D. N. Jha's view is that the fall of the Mauryan Empire was largely due to the economic consequences of Asoka's policies. After the conquest of Kalinga, Ashok did not fight any wars and the army used only for parades and public spectacles. A large army became unnecessary and too expensive to maintain. The pre-Ashok bureaucracy was already very large and Asoka himself greatly increased its size by appointing many new officials who had nothing to do with the organization of production. His philanthropic public works only strained the state exchequer. Large-scale land clearing led to gradual thinning of forests resulting in crop damage due to floods. Indicates a depleted treasury of currency under the later Mauryan rule. The eventual political disintegration of the Mauryan Empire was therefore due to the gradual weakening of the empire's finances.

9. Development of local polities

The Mauryas directly administered only the main vast territory of the empire with Magadha as the centre. It is possible that his subjects-officials belonged to the heartlands and they exerted pressure on the representatives of the king. As stated further, the political loyalty of these bureaucrats was strictly for the continuation of the monarchical structure. Change of king i.e. restructuring of this loyalty thus occurred frequently in the post-Ashok period and fundamental weaknesses would inevitably creep in and render the whole system a failure. About half a dozen kings who came to the throne after the bereavement did not make any fundamental changes (in what the first three Mauryas had adopted) to govern the state. It has also been suggested that some of these kings may have ruled over parts of more or less empires simultaneously, indicating that the Mauryan patronage also divided the empires.

10. Major Kingdoms

Due to the disintegration of the Mauryan Empire, many kingdoms arose in different parts of India. Similarly, South and South-Eastern India were associated with the Magadha Empire, but a large-scale land-based economy remained for these regions. After the fall of the Maurya kingdom, many local rulers began to exercise princely power in regions such as Vidarbha, eastern Deccan, Karnataka and western Maharashtra. Gradually the Satavahana family consolidated many local centres and built an empire in the Deccan. Around the same time as the early Satavahana were establishing themselves. King Kharvel of Kalinga emerged as a powerful king in the Mahanadi region. Three important chiefdoms in the south began to rise from the Mauryan period. The Cheras dominated the Malabar region. The Cholas dominated the south-western coast and the Kaveri valley. In addition, the Pandya concentrated their power around the ends of the peninsula. Became more powerful at different times immediately in the Anumaurya period. Another reason for the fall of the Mauryan Empire was the Greek invasion of India. The failure of the Mauryan kings to stop the Greek invasion must have ruined their prestige in the eyes of the people of India and when that went, the empire could not survive. Lived long.

11. Local kingdoms

Many local or sub-regional powers were ruled by their kings as evidence from Indian literature such as Naga Gardbhil and Abhir shows. The list of names of kings of the Anumaurya period includes four Naga kings, seven Gardbhil kings, thirteen Pushyamitra and ten Abhir kings. The Gardbhil probably originated from the large Bhil herds of the forests of central and western India. Some of the Abhirs were from the Ahir caste and some of them were known for their agriculture. The Yaudheyos were known as professional warriors during Panini's time. During this time, it is said that the Saka king Rudradaman was subdued. His country included the land between the Sutlej and the Yamuna. Similarly, towards the southeast of Mathura, Arjuna established his independent authority at the end of the Shringa kingdom. The Udumbaras seized the land between the Ravi and the Beas in the Punjab. Kunindo became known between the Beas and the Yamuna around the foothills of the Shaivalik hills. The tribes of the republic, known during this time as Shibi Malava Trigarta, etc., were spread over the northern and north-western regions of India. In addition, at the same time independent sub-kingdoms like Ayodhya Kosambi and Mathura and Ahichhatra, which had earlier been subject to the Mauryas, re-established their rule.

12. Conclusion

Thus, more than one factor played a part in the disintegration of the Mauryan Empire, which can be attributed to Ashok and his policies like Brahmin rebellion-Asoka's pacifist policy-Dhamma bureaucrats-neglect of North West Frontier etc. Apart from this, Asoka's successors were equally responsible for disorganization in the administrative system, economic problems, development of local polities, rise of large states and local states.

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