

Examrace

The Vedic Culture, Buddhism, Jainism, Alexander's Invasion, Maurya Dynasty, Kushan Dynasty

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The Vedic Culture

- The Aryans came to India from Central Asia. The Rig Vedic Aryans were largely urban people. The first home of the Aryans was Punjab. The Rig Vedic Aryans were generally under a monarchical Government. Copper was first used by the Vedic people. Upanishads are books in Philosophy. They were translated into Persian, during the reign of Shah Jahan. The Aryans were skilful farmers.
- They knew the art of domesticating animals. They were engaged in trade and knew maritime navigation. The religious books of the Aryans are four in number (1) the Rig Veda, the oldest (2) the Yajur Veda (3) the Sama Veda (4) the Atharvana Veda.
- The Epics - the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. Mahabharata is the longest epic in the world, the Puranas - 18 in number; the Shastras or the Darshanas - six in number and the Manu.

Buddhism

- Buddhism was founded by a Kshatriya Prince, Siddhartha born in 1567 B.C. at Lumbini. Siddhartha was afterwards known as the Buddha, "the enlightened one". Buddha laid stress on the Four Noble Truths and the pursuit of the Noble Eight-fold path. To attain nirvana, Buddha prescribed the Eight-fold path.
- The Buddhist section which started worshipping the Buddha as a God is known as Mahayana. Buddha preached his first sermon at Saranath. Tripitacas are the sacred books of the Buddhists.

Jainism

The founder of Jainism is unknown. Mahavira, a contemporary of Buddha was the preceptor of Jainism. He was the last of the Jain teachers called Tirthankaras.

Alexander'S Invasion

- Alexander, son of Philip, King of Macedonia (Greece) crossed the Indus in 327 B.C. After defeating Pours, he retreated as his army refused to proceed further. He returned by the way of Indus and died on his way to Babylon in 323 B.C. Alexander's invasion opened the land route from Europe to India and it paved the way for the political unity of India.

Sangam Age

- It is stated that there were three Sangam; Agasthiar presided over the two Sangam. The third Sangam was held in Madurai. It was the age for the birth of art and literature. The Cholas, the Cheras and the Pandyas ruled the ancient Tamil Kingdom. The emblems were the tiger, bow and the fish respectively.
- They were the flower garlands of Aathi, Palm and Neem respectively. The Tamils were the first to build dams across rivers. They were the first experts in ship- building. The people of Sangam age divided their lands into Kurinji, Mullai, Marudham, Neithal and Palai. They worshipped Murugar, Thirumal, Indra, Varuna and Kottravai.

Maurya Dynasty

- Chandra Gupta Maurya was the founder of the Maurya Dynasty and also the founder of the first historical empire in India. With the help of his wise and able minister Kautilya or Chanakya - he drove the Greeks out of Punjab and conquered Magadha. Megasthenes, the Greek Ambassador sent by Seleucus came to his court and wrote the book "Indica" - Kautilya book Arhtasastra deals with principles and practice of state crafts.
- Asoka the Great, the most famous king of the Maurya Dynasty and one of the greatest kings in history, conquered Kalinga in 261 B.C., but the battle turned his warlike attitude and he embraced Buddhism.
- Asoka spread his Dharma through edicts by using Prakrit language and sending bikshus to the foreign countries. The core of Asoka's Dharma was peace and non-violence. Dharma Mahamatras were appointed to preach Dharma. The effects of the Kalinga war are described on rock edicts. He stressed the principles of Ahimsa and Toleration through these edicts. Asoka believed in paternal kingship, "All men are my children" he said, and felt that he should care of them in the same way.

Kushan Dynasty

- The Kushanas are important rulers of India and among them is Kanishka. The coins of the Kanishka kings help us to know the history of this dynasty. Kanishka is undoubtedly the most striking figure among the Kushanas Kings of India. "A great conqueror and a patron of Buddhism, he combined in himself the military ability of Chandra Gupta Maurya and the religious zeal of Asoka".
- Kanishka conquered and annexed Kashmir to his empire. Kanishka used to spend his summer time in Kashmir. Kanishkapura, a city after the name of Kanishka was also founded by him in Kashmir. After his conversion to Buddhism, Kanishka channelized his indefatigable energies to the propagation of Buddhism. The crowning service which he rendered to Buddhism was convened at Jalandhara according to certain authorities, while others hold the view that it met at Kashmir. The chief aim of the council was the compilation of the doctrines of Buddhism and the writing of commentaries on them. According to

Kalhana's Rajatarangini, Kanishka founded various monasteries and stupas. He also sent missions abroad to propagate Buddhism.

- Kanishka reign also witnessed a remarkable change in the fundamental doctrines of Buddhism. Buddhist creed was now divided into two big camps - Hinayan and Mahayana. The latter was accepted as the State religion by the Kushanas. During Kushanas period, two schools of art flourished in India called Gandhara School of Art and Mathura School of Art. Gandhara Art remained in existence from the first century B.C. to fifth century A.D. Gandhara Art was the combination of the Indian and Greek styles of sculpture.
- Geographically this region was so situated that it lay exposed to all sorts of foreign contacts and influences - Persian, Greek, Roman, Saka and Kushanas. In the Gandhara art sculptures representing the stories and legends of Lord Buddha's Life were made, as they were in great demand. These sculptures were produced almost in a mechanical manner. Kanishka was succeeded by his younger son Huvishka who was also a follower of Buddhism. Huvishka was succeeded by his son Vasudeva who was a weak ruler. He believed in Saivism. After him, the Kushanas dynasty practically came to an end.

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