

Study of Literary Sources and Inscriptions during the Maurya Era

Satbir*

VPO-Keorak, Patti / Bhyankar, District-Kaithal, Haryana

Abstract – India's cultural heritage is rich. The advance of man in the past is the topic of history. To grasp the moment. India, in ancient India, we have to find its origins. However, the scholars find it impossible to recreate their past. In fact, it is challenging to cope with the forms and existence of sources. With the establishment of the Mauryan Empire (322 BCE-185 BCE), national stability was achieved for the first time in the history of India. History writing is apparent from this time on because of the historical precision and the source. Apart from various Indigenous and International literary references, epigraphic documents for the past of this time are also available.

Keywords: Literary Sources, Inscriptions, Maurya Era

-----X-----

INTRODUCTION

Literature and inscriptions are a reliable way to know regarding Mauryan empire past. James Prinsep deciphered the Ashokan rock edicts in 1837. Because these documents were written on rocks and pillars, they are classified as rock edicts or pillar edicts. These decrees were placed in influential locations such as main roads, close towns and religious places to draw the people's interest.

Some of the pillars have been relocated from their initial positions over time. For eg, Firoz Shah Tuglaq moved the pillars of Topra and Meerut to Delhi, Pillar was moved to Allahabad at Kausambi and Cunningham moved to Calcutta the pillar of Bairat.

These edicts were usually published in Prakrit and Bramhi. But the script in the North West was Karosti, while the script was Greek and Aramaic in Far West. The Ashoka edicts offer general knowledge on administration, faith, principles, international and domestic affairs and the scope of the Mauryan Empire.

HISTORY OF MAURYA ERA

Chandragupta Maurya (322-298 BC)

- Toward Chandragupta Maurya was the Mauryan Empire's founder. The Greek scholars named Chandragupta Sandrocottus.
- He kidnapped Pataliputra Dhanananda, the last king of the Nanda empire.

- He was supported in this mission by Kautilya, also identified as Chanakya or Vishnugupta.
- The Gangetic valley, after having developed its control, marched northwest and conquered the territory as far as the Indus. He then travelled to Central India and occupied the Narmada River area north.
- In 305 B.C., he marched and conquered Seleucus Niketar, General of Alexander's Northwest Indian Influence, and a treaty was concluded.
- The Trans-Indus - Aria, Aracosia and Gedrosia - is ceded by Seleucus Niketar to the Mauryan Kingdom, as provided for in the Treaty. He also gave the prince Mauryan to his daughter in marriage. Chandragupta offered Seleucus a gift of 500 elephants.
- Further Megasthenes was sent as Greek Envoy to the Mauryan court.
- Towards the end of his rule, Chandragupta adopted Jainism, stepping down from the throne in favor of his uncle, Bindusara. Then he and the Jain monks led by Bhadrabahu went to Sravana Belgola, near Mysore, and starved to death (Sallekhana).

Bindusara (298 -273 BC)

- Against Bindusara was named "Amitragatha" by the Greeks, meaning enemy slayer.
- Towards Mysore he invaded the Deccan. Taranatha, a Tibetan monk, notes that 16 states covering 'the territory between the two oceans' have been invaded by Bindusara.
- The literature of the Sangam Tamil often confides in the attack of the Mauryan from the far south.
- Towards Bindusara Deimachus was received as King Antioch I's envoy to Syria.
- Towards Antioch, Bindusara wrote asking for sweet wine, dried figs and a sophist. There was a mistake (The latter sent all but a sophist because the Greek law prohibited sending a sophist.)
- Towards Bindusara the religious sect Ajivikas was sponsored.
- Bindusara appointed as governor of Ujjain his son Asoka.

Asoka the Great (273-232 BC)

- Former Asoka served as Ujjain's administrator, and he also crushed the Taxila rebellion during his father's rule.
- Four years had passed between the accession of Asoka to the throne (273 B.C.) and his subsequent coronation (269 B.C.). Thus the existing data suggests that there was a battle for the throne after the death of Bindusara. 82
- THE Ceylon's Chronicles, Dipavamsa & Mahavamsa note that Asoka caught control after his 999 brothers and his elder brother Susima were destroyed. Tissa's younger sibling was saved. THERE, Asoka only killed six of his brothers according to Taranatha of Tibet.
- Terminus Asoka's Edict often applies to his brothers acting under his government as soldiers.
- There was his triumphant Battle with Kalinga in 261 B.C. as the main occurrence in Asoka's rule. He annexed Kalinga to the Mauryan Empire after the battle.
- Although the cause and the path of a war are not detailed, in Rock Edict XIII Asoka himself described the results of a war: "A hundred

and fifty thousand have been killed and many times that number perished...."

- Another significant impact in the Kalinga war was that Asoka adopted Buddhism under the control of Upagupta, a Buddhist monk.

MAURYAN HISTORY SOURCES

There are two forms of Mauryan history sources. One is archaeological and the other is literary. Kautilya's Arthashastra, Visakhadatta's Mudra Rakshasa, Megasthenes's Indica, Buddhist writing, and Puranas were literary references. Archeological records include edicts from Ashoka, inscriptions and remains such as silver and copper-punched coins.

LITERARY & NON-LITERARY SOURCES**Kautilya's Arthashastra**

- Kautilya, the modern and tutor of Chandragupta Maurya, wrote about Arthashastra in Sanskrit. (Kautilya was also named 'Machiavelli Indian')
- The Arthashastra manuscript was first discovered by R. In 1904, Shamashastry.
- The Arthashastra consists of 15 books and 180 verses, but can be divided into 3 sections:
 - ▶ the first part involves the monarch, his council and the government departments; —
 - ▶ The second portion covers constitutional and criminal law;
 - ▶ The third segment reflects on diplomacy and conflict.
- There is the most significant literary source in Mauryas culture. Mudrarakshasa's Vishakhadatta
- The Mudrarakshasa of Vishakhadatta is a Sanskrit play.
- Although it was written during the Gupta era, it explains how Chandragupta conquered the Nandas with the aid of Kautilya.
- It also provides an outline of the Mauryas socio-economic situation.

Megasthenes' Indica

- The Greek diplomat in Chandragupta Maurya's court was Megasthenes.

- The book of Megasthenes Indica only existed in fragments. However Indica provides information about the administration of Mauryan, particularly the administration of Pataliputra, the capital city and the military organisation.
- Information of modern social life are extraordinary.
- Towards 'Mudra Rakshasa's Visakha Datta:
- The explains, while it was written during the Gupta Era, how Chandragupta Maurya receives the aid of Chanakya in overthrowing the Nandas. It also provides an outstanding account of the socio-economic conditions.

Puranas

Although they're a set of legends interspersed with religious teachings, they provide us the interpretation and lists of Mauryan kings.

Buddhist Literature

- The following Indian Buddhist text Jatakas (a portion of Suttapitaka's Khuddaknikaya detailing 549 tales of Buddha's past birth) shows a general description of Maurya's socio-economic circumstances.
- Dipa vamsa and Maha vamsa define the position that Ashoka has performed in expanding Buddhism to Sri Lanka.
- Divyavadana provides details on Ashoka and his attempts to promote Buddhism.

Other Literatures

- The Puranas and the Buddhist literature including Jataka, in addition to these three significant books, include details regarding Maurya's.
- The Ceylon Chronicles Dipavamsa and Mahavamsa shed light on Asoka's position in Sri Lanka's Buddhist expansion.

ARCHEOLOGICAL SOURCES

- The historical sources in the Mauryan period include substantial numismatic (coin study) proofs, artefacts of archaeological digging and art items.
- A significant range of punch-marked silver and copper coins are also available. These seem to have been in existence throughout the entire Mauryan era.

- These coins have some knowledge of the Mauryan socioeconomic life. For instance, Chandragupta was portrayed standing in one of his coins with the Greek Queen, revealing pleasant ties between Magadha and Greece.
- The Asoka inscriptions on rocks and pillars offered authoritative information of inestimable importance.
- Towards Asokan edicts in Afghanistan were not only used in the Indian Subcontinent but also in Kandhar.
- There are 44 royal orders for these inscriptions and there are many versions of each royal order. The inscriptions were written in Prakrit and in Brahmi (published from left to right) with in empire.
- The Kharoshti script written from right to left occurs on the northwest side, and it is in both the Greek and Aramaic scripts in the Kandhar region.
- These entries have usually been put on sidewalks.
- They shed light on Asoka's career, on his external and domestic policies and on his empire's size.
- The Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum was written in 1879 by Cunningham, and is a series of inscriptions regarding the past of Maurya, post-Maurya, and Gupta.
- A 150 AD (also known as Girnar rock inscription) also provides some valuable input to Gujarat provincial administration under the Mauryas.

ACCOUNTS OF FOREIGNERS:

Foreigners toured India from ancient times. Any of them have left precious records of their journeys or visits. Ancient Greek and Roman writers also wrote about their experience and facts regarding India. Both these international accounts are valuable for history writing.

We hear of the triumph of Chandragupta Maurya over the Greek accounts. They listed him in their writings as Sandrokottas. Ambassador Megasthenes of Greece remained at Chandragupta Maurya's court and wrote his well-known work India. Sadly, this study has been lost. Yet fragments of it have been retained by other Greek authors in the quotations. However, also these short accounts are deemed the most useful to know Mauryan politics and culture.

Through works like Ptolemy's Geography, we know about the ports and harbours of India. From the work of Pliny, we know about Rome-India trade ties. In the early centuries of the Christian period these scholars wrote. In the imperial Gupta era, the Chinese traveller Fa-Hien left valuable accounts. The 'Prince of Pilgrims' Hieuen Tsang wrote information about the India of Harsha period. Another Chinese man, I-tsing, came to India in the 7th century A.D. He has the socio-religious state of those days in his records.

Islamic world travellers have toured India. Al-Beruni, who had come to learn Sanskrit himself at the time of Mahmud of Ghazni. His texts on 'Hind' contain valuable details.

History calls for commitment to the reality. Historians construct history from multiple sources to present to the men of today and the future the facts of the past.

Written records by Foreign Authors

In his book 'Indica' Megasthenes recordings

- Megasthenes provided a direct address of the Mauryan Empire throughout the book called Indica. Megasthenes was Seleucus' ambassador to the Chandragupta Maurya court. Some of Megasthenes' valuable information is as shown in:
- King was the most powerful character in the Empire's organizational apparatus. Megasthenes says that the king is a very hard worker.
- A small number of influential councilors assisted the King.
- The King used many spies
- During the Mauryan period, criminal law was very serious
- Veneration was one of the recognized punishments
- Punishment as death for injuring royal craftsmen
- The state also provided arms and equipment to its soldiers and regular wages
- Four horses were usually drawn on the chariot
- The main weapon during the Mauryan era was broad sword. Javelins, bows and arrows are additional weapons.
- Indians were free and no slavery occurred, according to Megasthenes.

- He notes that Indians are very fair and robbery was very uncommon.
- It also states that famines have never existed in India and that nutritious food availability has never been scarce.
- Stayed in the palace under armed woman guards' security
- Shooting was the key royal fun.
- Many published diplomatic papers include
- The geography and marriage alliance between Seleucus and Chandragupta were published by Strabo
- Diodorus provided Greek account of Megasthenes's job
- Pliny, the author of natural history, presents Indian geographical details from Greek sources
- Arrian offers Alexander's expedition and social life in India the strongest account
- Plutarch cites Chandragupta and Alexander's conference.
- Justin provides Maurya's account of the rise to power. Justin refers to Maurya's as of modest origin.

ASHOKAN EDICTS AND INSCRIPTIONS

Rock edicts, column edicts and grotto inscriptions are found in different parts of the Indian subcontinent. Their value was only understood after Janie Prinsep deciphered it in 1837 and after Ashoka was identified as the creator of these edicts at the start of the twentieth century. Much of them are of the form of the public declarations by Ashoka, and only a limited group explains his own recognition and friendship with Buddhism with the Sangha (Commune). While Prakrit was the language used the script differed from region to region (Kharoshti in the North-West, Greek and Aramaic in the West and Brahmi in the East of India).

Other inscriptions: Rudradaman Junagadh Rock Inscription, Sohagaura Copper Plates Inscription in U.P. District of Gorahpur, Bangladesh District Mahasthan Inscription. - All these affect the Mauryan Era specifically, but they do not actually refer to Ashoka.

Remains of material: Chandragupta Maurya's wooden palace, Northern Black Polished Ware

(NBPW), Silver and Copper punch-marked Kumharar (PATNA) coins, etc.

Ashokan inscriptions

Detailed details regarding the Ashokan era can be found on inscriptions of Ashokan, 39 in number and listed in main, minor and different rock edicts, major and minor edicts. Ashoka's name can be identified only in the copies of Minor Rock edict 1 found at 3 locations in Karnataka and one spot in Madhya Pradesh while other inscriptions mention his little 'DEVANAPIYA PIYADASI.' Devanpiya title may have used the designation of PIYADASI from previous monarchs, which implies the good looks is unique.

In India, Pakistan, Nepal and Afghanistan, Ashokan inscriptions were discovered. Found in 47 separate sites, their complete edition is 182, including 2 bogus edicts. Composed in Prakrit, they are written in Brahmi script primarily in India but exist in the Arabic and Chroshti scripts in the north-western portion of the Indian subcontinent. They are located in six separate sites in Afghanistan and are written in both Greek and Aramaic.

Ashokan's inscriptions shed light on his job, on his external and internal policies, and on his kingdom. He used his inscriptions as a contact tool and used his inscriptions to give his citizens a clear message. His inscriptions concentrated largely on promoting the concepts of Dhamma.

The decryption method of Ashokan inscriptions at the beginning of the 19th century exposed numerous collections of Ashokan edicts, which were distinct from one another. Each edict was numbered in conjunction with its place in respect of other edicts in the inscriptions, and thus Ashokan inscriptions were divided into the following categories:

- 1) **Minor rock edicts:** Most scholars regard them as the oldest of all documented Ashoka edicts. Minor Rock edict 2nd is registered in Karnataka and southern Andhra Pradesh in seven locations. Ten other inscriptions in the region north of Bahapur (Delhi) and Sasaram (Bihar) include copies of only the minor rock edict 1st.
- 2) **Major Rock edicts:** They are 14 and have copies on rocks and slabs from the northwest boundary to the south of Andhra Pradesh. Two of them are sole inscriptions in Sahabazgiri and Mansehra are composed in Chroshti. Kalsi, Girnar and Eragudi are also included. Just fragments of the collection were contained in Sopara and Sannathi. In Odisha the inscriptions on the Dhau and Jaugada comprise all the rock edicts save Rock Edict 11th and 13th. Dhau and

Jaugada found a pair of independent rock edicts, pursuing the main sequence of rock edicts.

- 3) **Pillar Edicts:** They were located in Delhi, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh in six locations. The two pillars in Delhi were originally not installed, but were brought in by Sultan Feroz Shah Tuglaq from Topara in Haryana and another from Meerut in Uttar Pradesh who ruled from 1351 to 1388. The Topara-Delhi pillar includes the very significant 7th pillar, which is located nowhere.

Importance of inscriptions:

Inscriptions are particularly significant for the reconstruction of history since they not only provided us insight into the political developments of the time in question, but also into socio-economic circumstances and cultural facets of the time.

The geographical distribution of a king's inscriptions is also seen as an example of that specific king's region of influence. Inscriptions often include details on the king's administrative establishment. For starters, we would not have been able to know the exact extent of the rule of Samudragupta and its political institutions, had the inscription on the Allahabad pillar not been visible. This inscription in the pillar also sheds light on how the kings and their samantas interact. A single Parantaka-1 stupa inscription provides a concise description of the laws and regulations on the election of village meetings.

Inscriptions often offer insights into the social life of times, which, aside from the social practices of the day, sheds light on caste and class systems. Brahmadesham, for example, applies to the Sati of the first child of a queen of Rajendra. Inscriptions reflect Indian languages in their earliest written form. Through researching terminology, grammar and types of the inscription's linguists have been able to establish their knowledge of how and where languages have evolved in culture. It is worth noting here that more than 55% of the epigraphic inscriptions contained in the Indian Archeological Survey are Tamil.

Inscriptions provide us with valuable perspectives into the economic life of the times involved. For eg, Junagadh Inscription the Junagadh inscription Rudraman states that Sudarshan was founded by Chandra Gupta Maurya but was restored by Rudraman and then by Chandra Gupta Maurya 2nd. This indicates that the kings have taken numerous steps for agricultural growth. The inscriptions after Mauryan imply that guilds played a significant role in commercial practices, while craftsmen and traders belonging to various professions had their own guilds. In addition to Chiklad registrations, send

us details on the time taxation method. The Chola royal cultivators received taxes such as Irai, Kadamai, Echchoru and Vetti.

Inscriptions include comprehensive contextual background on faith rituals, structures and numerous sects of faith. For eg, Skandagupta's copper plate inscription date 464-465 B. C. Refers to the worship of the Light. Its adorned Sun God with Bhaskara's name. Inscriptions are full of schooling and learning sources. For example, Virarajendra's Trummukkudal registration refers to the judgement college and subjects learned there in addition to teachers' remuneration.

Inscriptions include dance, music and other arts material. The first reference to a dancer is contained in the Jogimara cave from the 3rd century B. C. And Tamil Nadu's kudimmiyanmalai inscription is one of the oldest musical inscriptions. In comparison, inscriptions are of great literary importance. Even now in this century elements of Sanskrit poetry started to emerge in the inscriptions of North Indians. The inscription in Junadgard reveals clearly the ornate Sanskrit prose form. Inscriptions may also be considered an intelligence treasure house. They have useful knowledge about all facets of the ages involved.

CONCLUSION

The Mauryan Empire's establishment begins a new period of India's past. Political stability was first achieved in India. In comparison, history research from that time has since been evident thanks to factual precision and sources. Apart from various indigenous and international literary sources, a variety of epigraphic documents can also be published for this time. Contemporary literature and archaeological discoveries are primary knowledge outlets.

REFERENCES

1. Ghosha, A. Encyclopedia of Indian Archaeology,
2. Richard Solomon: Indian epigraphy
3. L. Basham: A Cultural History of India
4. RomilaThapar: Interpretations of Ancient Indian history
5. Upinder Singh: A History of Ancient and Early Medieval India
6. R. S. Sharma: India's Ancient Past, Rethinking India's Past
7. John Key: A History of India, New York: Grove press, 2000

8. L. P. Sharma: History of Ancient India
9. C. Chakrabarti: The Bhagvad Gita and Ashokan Inscriptions
10. Aamir Khan: Inscriptions: As A Source of History
11. S. priyadarshini: Sources of Ancient Indian History: Archaeological and Literary Sources
12. @studyandscore: The Mauryan Empire: Sources, Inscriptions and Literature

Corresponding Author

Satbir*

VPO-Keorak, Patti / Bhyankar, District-Kaithal, Haryana