CHAPTER IV.

THE MAURYAN DYNASTY (312 to 180 B. C.)

1. Chandragupta (312-288. B. C.) was the founder of a new dynasty called the Mauryan, from his mother Muri. The Nanda Brothers had scornfully rejected her claim to queenship. Now Chandragupta, her successful son and the first universal monarch of India, exalted her name, by calling the dynasty after her. Dr. Spooner holds that Mura was a woman of Persian extract. But neither Indian tradition nor Greek record
favour the conjecture. Yet after careful enquiry I am now convinced that Mura was a Persian woman. Her name does not seem to be Indian and is probably connected with Persian Mers or Maur. The Puranists called the Indo-Parthians Morandus, the "Morundae" of Ptolemy. This early Noor-Jahan ("Light of the World"), probably daughter to some Persian merchant of Patallputra, had caught the eye of Nanda Raja who, late in life, made her a partner of his royal bed and love. Had she been a fair but common Sudra woman of India, she would not aspire to rank as a queen. The mother of Nanda Raja also was at first a pretty dancing maiden; but Mahamandi the last king of the Sisunaga dynasty, took a fancy to her and made her a concubine. Nanda was born of her by the King.

The word Brishala applied to Chandragupta seems to be a Sanskritised form of Parasyala, i.e. Persian. In his first rise and success in the Panjab, Chandragupta was much helped also by the Persians who sympathised with him as one of their own and against the common enemies—the Greeks. Later on, he conquered Magadh mainly with the help of Persian soldiers.

The term Sura applied to Nanda, Chandragupta and others by some later Puranists, is highly objectionable, as neither law nor usage sanctioned it in Ancient India. They were genuine Kshatriyas, though of a somewhat low degree. This dynasty of 10 kings ruled 133 solar years.

Acc. to the Kumārīkā-Khanda, Agni Purana and Shanda Purana, Chandragupta began to rule on
312 B.C. This is also our proposed date. It is likely that his Indian conquests were complete before 312 B.C. For, some Puranas state that he ruled 24 or 25 years peacefully, Chandragupta built Chandragupta nagari on the R. Krishna (Deccan). The author of the Mudra-Rakshasam and his annotator both belonged to that town. From this we infer that Chandragupta conquered almost the whole of India. His empire extended from the Persian Frontier and the Hindukush to the Bay of Bengal and from the foot of the Himalayas to the 13th degree North Latitude. Only Kalinga, Chera, Chola, Pandya and Kerala—all covered now by the Madras Presidency, were allowed to live free. The merit of these splendid achievements was mainly due to Chanakya, the Peshwa of the Mauryyas. His Prince Vindusara also bore a great part. Chandragupta founded the Mauryya Era counted from 312 B.C. Shortly after his ascension, both he and Chanakya made a pilgrimage to the Suka-Tirtha on the Nabada to atone for their sins: (Kumarika-Khanda and Agni Purana). On the death of Alexander in 323 B.C., his Generals fought for his vast empire. Seleukus, one of the Generals, succeeded in making himself master of the Central and Western Asia (312 B.C.), The Seleukidan and the Mauryan Ears began almost at the same time. Now Seleukus made a vigorous attempt to regain the Indian possessions. But in 305 B.C., Chandragupta, after a successful campaign, forced him not only to abandon all thoughts of conquest in India but
also, to cede all territories east of Persia. Thus Afghanistan, Beluchistan Mekran Coast, the Indus Valley, Sindh, the Panjab—became Chandragupta's. In 303 or 2 B.C. Seleucus concluded a treaty with Chandragupta under the following unfavorable terms:—
(i) Seleucus renounced all claims on India. (ii) Ceded a considerable part of Ariana, west of the Indus. (iii) In exchange for 500 elephants, he surrendered his claim on Afghanistan, Beluchistan and the Mekran Coast. (iv) Gave a daughter in marriage to Chandragupta and (v) placed an envoy in the court of Pataliputra. Thus was India saved from the Greek rule.
Chandragupta was one of the greatest monarchs of the world. We are indebted to Megasthenes, the first Greek ambassador in the Mauryan Court, for an entire and accurate account of Chandragupta and his administration. The following points are chiefly notable:—
(i) Pataliputra: it was now the metropolis of India and a great emporium of trade. Numberless foreign vessels always lay on the Ganges. The city was 9 miles long and 1½ miles broad, defended by a strong wooden palisade having 64 gates and strengthened by 570 turrets. It was further guarded by a deep and wide moat fed by the waters of the Sone=Hiranyavâha, Greek Erasbas. (ii) Palace: The palace of Chandragupta was chiefly built of wood overlaid with floriated gold leaves, and was unsurpassed in splendor. (iii) Chandragupta:—His favorite amusements were combats of animals, gladiatorial contests, various races and the chase. Generally
he lived in the inner palace protected by female guards, probably composed of Greek women. He gave audience to the people once a day when he received petitions and heard cases in person. A certain Persian influence was visible in some of his personal habits and style of architecture. He was a Hindu Raja; there was perfect toleration under him. The caste system was well-organised and all followed the hereditary professions assigned to each. He highly honoured the worthy Brahmins with whom he held an annual council to discuss the welfare of the state. Siva was worshipped in the Royal Family. (iv) Municipality. The capital was administered by a municipal body of 30 members divided into 6 Boards of 5 members each: the 1st Committee superintended the industrial arts; the 2nd, looked after the foreign residents and visitors; the third inspected the vital statistics; the fourth had the charge of trade and commerce; the fifth looked after the manufactures and the sixth collected a tithe (ती) on sales of goods. The whole body were responsible for the good administration of the city and had to keep in order markets, temples and other public works. (v) Provincial Government.—The provinces were governed by viceroys generally relatives of the king who constantly watched over them by means of "news-writers" who acted as spies and reported to the king privately all that occurred in the country. Taxila, Ujjain, Bhilsa in Central India were the viceregal seats. (vi) Justice was very strict, criminals were punished with much severity. (vii) The
Irrigation—Army—General Progress.

Agricultural land was regarded as the property of the Crown. Cultivators had to pay a tax to the Government amounting to one-fourth of the gross produce of the fields on which great care was bestowed. Large sums at public costs were spent on irrigation work. There was a regular system of canals, tanks, wells, and lakes. A special department looked after the irrigation of the country. (viii) The army—The military administration was excellent. The state maintained a huge standing army of thirty thousand horse, six hundred thousand foot, 9000 elephants, besides chariots, in regular pay. The military department was supervised by a Committee of thirty members divided into six boards of five members each. The first looked after the admiralty; the second looked after commissariat; the third after the infantry; the fourth after the cavalry; the fifth after the war-chariots and the sixth after the elephants. There were regular arsenals and docks. Soldiers were highly paid.

(ix) Peace, progress and prosperity reigned everywhere in the empire. Great encouragements were given to learning, arts and industries. The roads were maintained in excellent order. Pillars serving as milestones and sign-posts were set up at the intervals of half a kos, 2,024.5 English yds. A grand trunk-road about 1200 miles long connected the North-West Frontier with Pataliputra. The Greek observers testify to the high degree of civilization of the first Mauryan empire. Chanakya's Artha Sāstra (Art of Government) also fully supports it.
(X) Success of Chandragupta:—Chandragupta was about 23 when he met Alexander in 326 or 325 B.C. He was crowned in 312 B.C. and ruled for 24 years. So in 22 or 23 years, he rose from a mere helpless exile to be the greatest emperor India has yet seen. His splendid achievements were (1) The expulsion of the Macedonian garrisons. (2) The decisive repulse of Seleukus the conqueror. (3) The subjugation of the largest empire yet known in India. (4) The formation of a gigantic army. (5) The thorough organisation of the civil government of a vast empire. (6) His power was so firmly established that no disputes or opposition arose to his son and grandson’s peaceful succession. (7) His alliance was courted by the powerful Greek kings. (8) The Greek princes made no attempt to renew the aggressions and were content to maintain friendly diplomacy and commercial relations with the Mauryans for 3 generations. (9) Chandragupta received from and sent to Seleukus various gifts. (V. A. Smith). In everything, Chandragupta adopted and worked upon the ancient Hindu model. “The little touches of foreign manners in his court and institutions, were Persian and not Greek.” Towards the latter part of Chandragupta’s reign, Chanakya had a quarrel with him; so he left for the wood for penitential purposes. Chandragupta also retired to Mysore in 288 B.C. and was succeeded by his son Visudasara alias Amitraghata, Gk. Allatro Chades (slayer of foes). Chintal-patan in Mysore was probably the town built by Chandragupta.
VINDUSĀRA: THE ROYAL CHILDREN.

2. Vindusāra:—He made no fresh attempt at conquests. The friendly relations with the Greek Powers of the west continued, Megasthenes and Deimachus were the Greek ambassadors in his father's court. Ptolemy Philadelphus of Egypt placed Dionysus in his Court. Fully secure, Vindusāra now gave himself to pleasures. By 16 wives, he had 100 children, male and female. His marriage with the mother of Asoka is curious. An astrologer had predicted her great fortune. So her father, a poor Brahman of Champapuri (near Bhagalpur) came to Vindusāra at Pataliputra to make fair Subhadrāṇgi his queen. Vindusāra accepted her. But the other queens, jealous of her beauty and youth, put her out of the emperor's sight and employed her in the inner quarters as a female barber. Thus she spent her days most miserably. One day Vindusāra wanted a barber at an unusual hour. The Chief Queen thinking that the King had forgotten her by that time, sent her to shave the king. Pleased with her work Vindusāra asked her who she was. She stated her case, and the king remembered everything. From that time, she became the most favorite queen.

She bore him 3 sons: the 1st was Asoka and the second, Vittalōka. Asoka was ugly in form, dark in complexion and very unruly. So, his father did not like him much. The people gave him the name of Chand i.e. Terrible. For training, he was handed over to the great astronomer Pingala-Vatsa who, struck with the many auspicious signs on his person, predicted his great fortune and said that he would next inherit
the crown. Prince Asoka reached due age but his nature remained quite unchanged. He became so wild that Vindusara sent him to far off Taxila to put down a mutiny or to be killed in the attempt. Asoka was heroic and a man of great parts. He quelled the revolt and was cordially received by all. Vindusara, pleased with him next sent him out to Ujjain as Viceroy. Here he married fair Devi, daughter to a rich Jeweller, by whom he had the son Mahendra and daughter Sanghamitra. Certainly this name was given her after initiation.

Vindusara supervised all state affairs but the real burden was borne by the able ministers, of whom Radhagupta was the chief. Susima, the eldest prince did not like to be under the control of Radhagupta. So, he began to be independent and tyrannical. This offended Radhagupta who cleverly sent him to Taxila and brought Asoka to Pataliputra. Shortly after, Vindusara fell ill, Susima being away in Taxila and Vindusara not so willing to nominate Asoka his heir, the ministers induced Vindusara to appoint Asoka his Regent. But as soon as the emperor died, Asoka was however declared emperor. On hearing the death-news of Vindusara, Susima hastened towards Pataliputra but on his way he learned that he had been deprived of his father's throne. So, he rebelled and being aided by some of his brothers, invaded Pataliputra. But Asoka, with the help of his able ministers, defeated them and made them prisoners. Then to guard against future evils, Asoka commanded the ministers to put them to death; but they refused. Thereupon he
himself cut off their heads. The allegation that Asoka put most of his brothers and sisters to death is baseless.

3. Asoka:—Thus secure, he began to rule with an iron hand (264 or 63 B.C.) He was at first a staunch Hindu Saiva and used to feed 60,000 Brahmins every day with meat, drink and other palatables. The complaints of the people against Buddhistic conversion and the probable insinuations of the Brahmins led Asoka to be a bitter persecutor of the Buddhists: he had the Bo-Tree cut down, an image of Buddha broken down and the executioner Chanda employed to kill every Buddhist monk he would meet with. Owing to its abstract character, Buddhism was a failure in India. In 3 centuries, there were only a few thousand adherents, mostly monks. Now the persecution of Asoka seemed to threaten its very existence. But ere long the table was turned and Asoka became a strenuous advocate of Buddhism. In 261 B.C., Asoka conquered Kalinga, a very powerful ancient kingdom lying on the Bay of Bengal between the Mahanadi and the Godavari. (i) His empire:—Asoka’s empire extended in the north-west to the Hindu Kush; in the west to the Persian frontier and the Mukran Coast. Northwards, his dominions reached the foot of the Himalayas and appear to have comprised the districts round Srinagar (built by him) and the territory round Lalita Patan in Nepal, 2½ miles south-east of Katamandu (also built by him). The whole of Bengal acknowledged his sway. Only the Upper Assam and the Tamil kingdoms of Chera
Chola, Pandya, Satiya, were independent. The Andhra kingdom between the Godavari and Krishna was a Protected State. The Hill Tribes of the empire were probably semi-independent. (ii) Administration:—Pataliputra was the metropolis and the seat of the central government. The vast empire was divided into 5 parts, (1) Magadh and the adjoining tracts were ruled under the direct supervision of the emperor. (2) The North-West Provinces comprised the Panjab, Kashmir, Gandhara, Afghanistan, Beluchistan, Sind &c.: capital Taxila, the famous seat of Hindu learning—were ruled by a Viceroy. The Western Provinces of Rajputana, Malwa, Gujrat and Cathiawar were ruled by the nephew (sister's son) of Asoke from the capital Ujjain, a sacred seat of Hindu learning, religion and astronomy. (4) The Eastern Provinces with Kalinga were ruled by a Viceroy from the capital Tosali in Orysa. (5) The Deccan was ruled by a Viceroy from the capital Vidisa, now Bhilsa. The administration was probably, on the whole, a highly efficient one (iii) His family:—Asoke, a polygamist had 4 queens viz. Padmavati, Asandhimitra, Pavishyaraksha and Tishya-raksha. The mother of Mahendra was rather a concubine, daughter to a Vaishya jeweller of Ujjain. On the death of Asandhimitra, Asoke, in his old age married a young dissolute woman Tishya-raksha by name. She tried to induce Kunala, son to the queen Padmavati, to approach her. But pious Kunala declined. This enraged her much. Asoke once fell seriously ill. It is said that by Tishya-raksha's
careful treatment the emperor came round. He promised her a boon. Now, as a reward, Asoka allowed her to rule the empire for a week. Asoka had sent Prince Kunala to put down a rebellion headed by Kunjarakarna of Taxila. Kunala suppressed the revolt but was blinded by Kunjarakarna at the command of Tishyaraksha. Kunala turned a Bhikshu and with his wife Kanchanalii came to Pataliputra and passed the night piping in the elephant-stable. Asoka discovered him in the morning, learnt the machination of Tishyaraksha and at the earnest request of Kunala, spared her life. Asoka was generally kind and affectionate towards all. He made ample provisions for his surviving brothers and sisters. (iv) His Conversion and Works for Buddhism:—The blood, blood-shed and the miseries of the Kalinga War moved Asoka. He preferred the peaceful life of a Buddhist monk. In the 10th year of his reign i.e. in 253 B.C., he was initiated by St. Upagupta formerly of Mathura. His brother, wives, ministers and the Brahmins tried their utmost to change his mind, but in vain. With Upagupta, he was out on a pilgrimage and visited Kapilavastu, Lumbini Park now (Rumluadi), Sarnath (Benares), Buddha Gaya, Nepal, Kashmir and other sacred places. He honoured the Previous Buddhas, distributed the relics of Buddha building holy stupas everywhere. He erected 84,000 Buddhist chapels mostly in Magadh, which gave it the new name of Vihara (country of monasteries). For the up-keep and propagation of Buddhism, Asokavardhana now made it his
official religion, created a special department of religion, appointed Buddhist officials, held councils and meetings, gave alms, maintained a large number of learned monks set up edicts, tables, sent missionaries all over the empire and abroad, employed censors to look after the morals of the people. He is now called Dharmasoka (Plows) and "Beloved of gods."

He was perfectly tolerant, and equally honored the Brahman and the Buddhist Sramanas. In the 17th or 18th year of his reign i.e. in 246-245 B.C., the Third Great Buddhistic Council of 1,000 monks met for 9 months at Pataliputra with Tissaya as the president. Its object was the suppression of many heretics and false monks and the settlement of much disagreement about the sacred books. The rules of the Order and the doctrines of the Faith were solemnly rehearsed and settled. The result was inscribed in an Edict found at Bhabra. At the end of the Council the following missionaries were sent:--(1) Madhyantika went to Kashmir and Gandhar (2) Mahadeva went to Mahisa Desa i.e. countries south of the Godavari, including Mysore (3) Rakshita to Banaivasi Desa (a part of Rajputana) (4) Dharma-rakshita went to Aparanta Desa (countries west of the Punjab) (5) Mahadharama-rakshita went to Maharashtra (not Bombay Presidency, but Burma and the Malaya Peninsula) Madhyima to the Himalayas. (7) Maharakhita Bhadanta to Yona-loka i.e. the Greek countries of Egypt, Asia Minor, Syria, Greece and Macedonia. (8) Sena and Uttara to Suvarna Bhumi i.e. Golden Chersonese up to Singapore. (9) Mahendra
and Sanghamitra to Ceylon. (V) The results of the Mission were indeed very great: (a) It turned the sectarian Buddhism into a world-religion. (b) It made Asoka the emperor of a religious empire never known before. (c) It made Asoka a great benefactor of mankind. (d) It brought about a closer touch of the Indians with the Greeks and other peoples. (e) Through it, Indian lore again found its way abroad. (f) Bhadanta introduced Greek sciences, arts, architecture, astronomy &c into India. (g) It paved the way of the future rise and success of Christianity. He spent crores of rupees in maintaining monasteries, monks and preachers and himself turned a monk before his death. It should be noted here that these efforts did not extinguish, drive away or eclipse Hinduism even from Magadh. Hindus also were astir and preached the Pauranic Hinduism in North India and the Deccan. Buddhistic converts were mostly from the low-caste Hindus and from the Non-Aryans.

(IV) His works for the people—His principles of government and ethical system, meant for the progress of the people were engraved on rocks, pillars and caves throughout the empire. They speak of perfect toleration and persuasion as the best means of converting others, and forcing purity of life. He excavated tanks and wells, planted trees on the wayside, built rest-houses, fixed mile-stones on the roads, set up schools, established hospitals for men and beasts; made arrangements for the education of men and women; took measures for the civilisation of the aborigines and strictly prohibited
the slaughter of animals. To serve as a model, he himself refrained from all cruel sports, abolished the royal hunt and forbade prisoners to be tortured. He aimed at being a true father to the people. He would hear their complaints at any time. He strictly enjoined all officials to work earnestly for the good of the people. He appointed censors to look after the morale of the people. He held periodical assemblies to settle disputes or other intricate points of law and custom and thereby encouraged arts and letters. (vii) His Foreign Relations:—His relations with the 5 Greek Powers of the west continued friendly as ever. (viii) His Edicts:—Of the 84,000 chapels, few exist. Of the Edicts, 14 are as yet discovered. "Those Edicts, engraved in different Prakrit dialects on pillars or rocks, whose wide distance from one another shows the great extent of Asoka’s empire. The pillars are at Delhi and Allahabad, the rocks at Kapur-da-giri near Peshawar; at Girnar in Gujrat and Dhauli in Orissa and at Bhakra on the road running south-west from Delhi to Jaipur" (R. Davids’ Buddhism PP. 222-23). They are of 3 kinds viz., religious, administrative and personal. (ix) His architecture: With Asoka, the architectural History of India begins. Some of his pillars still stand. The Sākasar Pillar near Mirzapur, Dist. Dacca seems to be of Asokan origin. His monuments at Bharhut, Sanchi, and Buddha Gaya were contemporary or a little later. Nothing remains of his magnificent palaces; but Fa Hian in 414 A. D. says, from the ruins of his buildings and a tower that his palace was too admirable
to have been the work of any mortal. The ancient Pataliputra lies buried under 18 ft. of the present E. I. Ry. Bankipur and Patna. Some remains of Ancient Patna have been recently dug out by Dr. Spooner.

(3) His Partition:—After a long and prosperous reign, Asoka passed into religious retirement in 227 B.C. and lived as a Buddhist monk on Senu, Skr. Suvarnagiri, to practise religion himself. His vast empire was partitioned among his sons. Kumara got the Panjab, Afghanistan &c. under the name of Dharma-Vardhana. Prince Jalauka got Kashmir. Prince Suyaasa got the home-provinces and ruled as emperor at Pataliputra. Other Princes got the remaining dominions. Asoka's waste of the imperial fund for church forced the ministers to remove him from power and place the eldest Prince Suyaasa on the throne. Prince Tibara by the Queen Charu-Vâki, a favourite child of the old emperor, had pre-deceased Asoka. The new emperor Suyaasa also died soon. His son Dasarattha succeeded on the throne of Pataliputra. He is known from brief dedicatory inscriptions on the walls of cave-dwellings at the Nâgarjuni Hills bestowed on the Ajivakas. The script, style and language of Dasarattha's records show that his date was not far from that of Asoka. Two Purânas assign to him a short reign of 8 years only. Jalauka is reputed to have been an active and vigorous king of Kashmir, who expelled certain foreigners and conquered the plains as far as Kanouj. He was hostile to Buddhism and as a devout Sâiva, erected many temples at places which can be identified.
Kunala, as the eldest prince and son to the chief queen Padmavati, was heir to the throne, but for blindness, he was set aside. His son Samprati, not verified by any epigraphic record, got the Western Provinces and ruled at Ujjain. The Jains of Western India praised him as an eminent patron of Jainism, who founded many monasteries even in Non-Aryan countries. He was called the Jain Asoka. His successors were Vrishapati Vrisha-seva Pushya-dharman—Pushyamitra (?)—Bombay Gaz. Vol. I, Part I, p. 15, 1896.

The connection of Asoka with the ancient Khotan kingdom appears to have been close. It is said that Asoka had banished some nobles of Taxila to the north of the Himalayas as a punishment for their complicity in the wrongful blinding of Kunala. One of the nobles was elected king who reigned till he was defeated by a Chinese rival.

Another tale states that the earliest ancestor of the Khotan royal family was Kunala son of Asoka. Probably Asoka's political jurisdiction extended into the basin of the Tarim.

(XL) Down-fall of the Mauryyas:—7 weak kings ruled after Asoka, but the vast empire daily dwindled into a small State. Soon after the death of Asoka, Kalлага and Andhra became free. Akbar built the Mogul empire but Aurengzeb ruined it. Chandragupta built the Mauryan Empire but Asoka sowed the seeds of its speedy fall. The causes were (a) extreme religious fervour. In an empire of different castes, creeds and colours, Asoka was not right in being a religious zealot.
nor was he right in spending vast sums of his people's money for one particular religion. (b) Weakness of his successors. (c) Revolts from within:—(i) After the death of Asoka, the pent-up Hindu discontents began to burst forth. Asoka had dethroned their Brahmins from the supreme place in religion and politics; had obstructed their sacrifice that essentially needed the slaughter of animals, and had filled all high offices by Buddhists. The Hindus at last revolted, led by Pushya or Pushpa Mittra, a heroic Brahman youngman of Rohilkhand. Vrihadhratha, the last Mauryan ruler of Pataliputra, recognised the Hindu claim and appointed Pushyamitra as the commander of the Imperial troops. (ii) The Andhras, probably an Aryan people formerly living in the delta between the Godavari and Krishna, now after Asoka's death became free and spread their power to the sources of the Godavari and soon stretched right across the peninsula from the Bay of Bengal to the Arabian Sea. (d) Invasion from without: Bactria, Skr. Balkhika Desa, north of the Hindukush mountain, was a kingdom of Seleukus and his successors. About 250 B.C., the Greeks there became free. In 206 B.C., Antiochus, the Greek ruler of Syria crossed the Hindukush, reached Kabul, forced its Hindu king Subhagasena to pay him elephants and tribute and then returned home through Candahar. The Greeks next wrested Afghanistan from the Mauryyas. About 170 B.C., the powerful Greek king Demetrius conquered Kapisa, Gandhar, the Panjab, Sindh and some other tracts. Next Eucratides and other Greeks founded
several small kingdoms in India. Menander was the next great Greek conqueror. He annexed the Indus delta, Gujrat, parts of Rajputana and Oudh. About 180 or 179 B.C. he was marching upon Pataliputra, but General Pushyamitra advanced, checked his progress, and signally defeated him. Thus the Greeks had conquered North-West India, western half of North India, Western India and the Central Province. The Purana mention 8 great Greek rulers of India. Some of them embraced Hinduism and were Vaishnavas. Their empire was however overturned by the Sakas. The Greeks became gradually absorbed in the Hindu population. The last Mauryan ruler of Pataliputra was murdered by Pushyamitra who usurped the throne and founded the Sunga dynasty (179-78 B.C.). The Mauryan dynasty continued to rule in Magadha till the 7th century A.D. Minor Mauryan dynasties, connected with the main House, continued to rule in Konkan, Chitor and other parts of Western India till the 8th century A.D.