

INDO-GREEKS(PART-1)

B.A. (HISTORY) PART-1 PAPER-1

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INTRODUCTION

The post-Mauryan period saw the emergence of small indigenous and foreign kingdoms. Hence this period has been designated as the 'Age of small kingdoms'. In eastern India, central India and the Deccan, the Mauryas were succeeded by number of Native rulers such as the Sungas, the Kanvas, and the Satavahanas. In north-western India, the Mauryas were succeeded by a number of ruling dynasties from Central Asia. The Greeks were the first to extend power over North-Western India. This period is notable for intimate and widespread contacts between Central Asia and India. The Greeks were known as Yavanas in the Indian literature. They were the rulers of Bactria, lying south

INTRODUCTION

of the Oxus in the area covered by north of Afghanistan. The Greeks of Bactria were originally Satraps (subordinate rulers) of the Seleucid empire of West Asia. In about the middle of 3rd century BC. Diodotus I revolted against the Seleucids and established an independent kingdom. The Bactrian's extended their control into other areas as well. By the early 2nd century BC, they had moved into the area south of the Hindu Kush. On account of growing pressure from the Scythian tribes, the later Greek rulers were unable to hold their power. In the middle of 2nd they lost their hold over Bactria, but continued to rule in the north-western part of the sub-continent for a few decades. The Bactrian Greeks who ruled over parts of North-west India are known as Indo-Greeks or Indo-Bactrians.

INITIAL PRESENCE OF GREEK IN INDIA

After Alexander invaded the northwest part of the subcontinent, one of his generals, Seleucus Nicator, founded the Seleucid Empire.

In Seleucus's conflict with the mighty Chandragupta Maurya, he ceded large parts to the west of the Indus, including the Hindu Kush, present-day Afghanistan and Balochistan to the Mauryan king. After this, Megasthenes was sent to reside at Chandragupta Maurya's court. Other Greek residents at Mauryan courts were Deimachus and Dionysius.

INITIAL PRESENCE OF GREEK IN INDIA

- ◉ Greek populations lived in the north-western part of the Mauryan Empire as evident from Ashoka's edicts.
- ◉ Mauryas also had departments to take care of foreigners like Yavanas (Greeks) and Persians.
- ◉ In ancient Indian sources, Greeks were called Yavanas (Sanskrit) and Yonas (Pali).

INDO-GREEK KINGDOM

The Indo-Greek kingdom was ruled by over 30 Hellenistic (Greek) kings in the northwest and north India from the 2nd century BC to the beginning of the First century AD.

- ◉ The kingdom started when Graeco-Bactrian king Demetrius (son of Euthydemus I) invaded India around 180 BC. He conquered southern Afghanistan and parts of Punjab.
- ◉ He made Sakala (Sialkot in Punjab) as his capital
- ◉ The names of many Indo-Greek rulers are known from their coins. But their reign, sequence, chronology and extent of political control is not clear.

INDO-GREEK KINGDOM

- ◉ Demetrius I, Demetrius II, Appolodotus, Pateleon and Agathocles ruled over north-western India
- ◉ They failed to establish united rule in India
- ◉ Two Greek dynasties ruled on parallel lines
 1. Euthydemus (Demetrius)
 2. Eukrtides

Menander (165-145 B.C)

- Most famous of Indo-Greek rulers
- Also known as Milinda
- His capital was Sakala
- Empire extended from Kabul to Mathura

INDO-GREEK KINGDOM

- Converted to Buddhism by Nagasena
- He was succeeded by incompetent rulers

Apollodotus

- He conquered Indus Valley and Gujrat
- His territory extended from Barygaza to Kapisa and Gandhara
- He was defeated by Eucratides who in turn was assassinated by his own son Heliocles

The Greek influence in India lasted for more than a century after the death of Menander. Rulers of this line included queen Agathokleia and her son Strato whose joint coins issues have been found.

INDO-GREEK KINGDOM

Eucratides

- They made Taxila as their capital
- Feud between the ruling houses of Euthydemus and Eukratides began after the reign of Demetrius I
- Rulers like Amyntus, Antialcidas, Arhebius and Hermaeus belong to the house of Eukratides.

Antialcidas

- He has been referred in an inscription at Besnagar near Bhilsa (Besnagar Garuda Pillar inscription)
- According to inscription his rule extended up to Taxila
- Heliodorus is described as a native of the city, who was deputed by the king to the court of Kasiputra Bhagabhadra as ambassador

INDO-GREEK KINGDOM

- Besnagar Pillar was erected in honour of Vasudeva
- Earliest reference to the existence of Vaishnavism in ancient India
- Heliodorous was the first foreigner to embrace Vaishnavis

It indicates one of the stages in the evolution of Bhakti movement in India

The Parthian defeat of Hermaeus signaled the end of Greek rule in Bactria and south of the Hindu Kush.

MAP OF INDO-GREEK KINGDOM

