

Persian & Greek Invasions

- In the 6th century BCE, India's northwest was a site of conflict between various principalities.
- Kambojas, Gandharas and Madras fought with each other.
- Since there was an absence of a powerful overarching kingdom, the principalities of the northwest could not be organised into one kingdom.
- This area was also wealthy and easily entered through passes in the Hindukush.
- Due to these reasons, foreign rulers invaded India.

Persian invasions

- Achaemenid Empire, also called the First Persian Empire, was an ancient Iranian empire founded by Cyrus the Great in 550 BC.

Rulers and their invasions

Darius (reign from 522 BC until his death in 486 BC)

- He was the 3rd king of the Achaemenid Empire.
- He penetrated northwest India in 516 BC.
- He annexed Punjab, west of the Indus, and Sindh.
- The conquered part was the 12th province (called **Satrapy**) of Iran. It was the most populated and fertile region of the empire.
- Three hundred sixty talents (a unit of weight) of gold tribute were paid, representing one-third of Iran's total income from its Asian provinces.
- The Iranian army enrolled Indian subjects.

Xerxes (486 to 465 BC)

- He continued to rule over the Indian Satrapy.
- He employed Indian subjects in the long war against the Greeks.

Effect of Persian invasion on India

- **Trade and commerce –**
 - **Persian Royal Road:** The Indo-Iranian trade flourished due to the establishment of the Persian Royal Road, which acted as a precursor to the **silk route**.
 - **Iranian coins** were used in the conquered part.

- **Cultural –**

- **Kharosthi script** was introduced. It was written right to left like Arabic. Some **Ashokan inscriptions** of the 3rd century BC in Northwestern India were written in Kharosthi script.
- **Mauryan sculptures** were greatly influenced by Iranian art. For example – The bell-shaped capitals of Ashokan pillars were similar to the Iranian capitals.
- The preamble of Ashokan edicts had Iranian influence. For example – the Iranian term *dipi* was used as *lipi* in Ashokan edicts.
- **Further invasion** – Iranian invasion paved the way for other attacks on India. For example – Greeks came to know about Indian wealth through Iranian sources.

- **Greek Invasion**

- Ancient Greece was a North-eastern Mediterranean civilisation that spanned the period of the Greek Dark Ages in the 12th and 9th centuries BC to the end of classical antiquity (around AD 600).
- However, it was only ever united once, for 13 years, under the rule of **Alexander the Great's empire (336-323 BC)**.

- **Alexander's Invasion (336 to 323 BC)**

- After defeating the Persian empire in the 4th century BC, he invaded the Indus valley in 326 B.C through the **Khyber Pass**.

- **Reasons for his invasion of India**

- He was attracted to **the immense wealth** of India. **Herodotus** and other Greek authors had portrayed India as a magnificent country.
- Further, he had a strong regard for natural history and geographic research.
- He was also **inspired by the past conquerors** and wanted to emulate and surpass them.

- **The polity of India during Alexander's invasion**

- The northwestern part of India was divided into **many independent monarchies and tribal republics** and not organised into one kingdom.

MANIDHANAHEYAM FREE IAS ACADEMY – TNPSC – IV & VAO EXAM
UNIT – IV – HISTORY & CULTURE OF INDIA

- **Taxila**, whose ruler was **Ambhi**, was situated between the rivers of Indus and Jhelum.
- **Porus** was the ruler of a kingdom between the Jhelum and Chenab rivers. He is believed to be a king from the ancient Vedic tribe named **Puru**.

The invasion

- After entering India in 326 BC, he met **Ambhi of Taxila**.
- Ambhi submitted his kingdom.
- In return, it appears that Alexander made him the governor of Taxila under his kingdom.
- **Battle of Hydaspes** –
 - After Taxila, he proceeded to a **Battle of Hydaspes** against **Porus**, wherein **Ambhi of Taxila** contributed with 5000 men at Alexander's disposal. Ambhi and Porus were already hostile to each other before the arrival of Alexander.
 - Despite **Porus' defeat**, Alexander was moved by his bravery. He thus gave him back his kingdom and made him an **ally**.
 - He then reached the **Beas River**.
- **Avoided conflict against Nandas**
 - He wanted to advance eastward, but his army refused to accompany him.
 - They learned about a formidable power on the Ganga – **the Nanda dynasty**, which outnumbered Alexander's army.
- **The retreat**
 - Alexander defeated numerous **small republics** during his return march, including **Agalassoï** (a tribe that lived in modern Pakistan in the lower Indus Valley), until he reached the end of the Indian frontier.
 - Most defeated states were restored to their rulers who submitted to his authority, which were eventually **lost to Mauryan rulers**.
 - However, his lands were divided into three sections and given to three **Greek governors**, and one such governor was **Seleucus Nikator of Northwestern India**.

- His new fleet was sent out under the command of his close friend **Nearchus** to scout the coastline and look for harbours between the Euphrates and Indus River mouth.
- He stayed in India for 19 months (326-325 BC.)

Effect of Alexander's Invasion

- He founded several **cities** in North West India.

Alexandria	Fergana Valley, near Kabul
Boukephala (on the name of his horse)	Near Jhelum River
Nicaea	Near Chenab
Alexandria	On river Indus
Alexandria	Near modern Karachi
Alexandria	Near Arachosia

Trade with Europe:

- India came into contact with Europe.
- Alexander's ships campaign opened up distinct routes by land and sea for Greek merchants for trade, which later developed as silk and spice routes, respectively.
- This eventually made India an export hub under Kushans.

Greek sources of history

- **Alexander's historian** gave a detailed version of India's social, economic and political conditions at that time. The societal needs were: –
 - Prevalence of **sati** system
 - Sale of girl child in the market places by poor parents.
 - **A good breed of oxen** was available in northwest India.
 - The most popular craft in India was **carpentry**, where artisans constructed chariots, boats, and ships.
- His invasions weakened North-western India, which paved the way for the expansion of the Mauryan empire into northwest India.