

UPSC Civil Services Examination

UPSC Notes [GS-I]

Topic: Persian and Greek Invasions of India [Ancient Indian History for UPSC]

Persian Invasion of India

Persian Invasion

- Cyrus, the founder of the Achaemenid Empire in ancient Iran invaded the North-Western front of India in 550 BC.
- At that time, there were many small provinces like Gandhara, Kamboja and Madra who were constantly fighting one another.
- At that time, Bimbisara of Haryanka dynasty was ruling over Magadha.
- Cyrus succeeded in bringing under Persian control all the Indian tribes west of the Indus like Gandhara.
- Punjab and Sindh were annexed by Darius I, Cyrus's grandson.
- Son of Darius, Xerxes, could not move ahead with the further conquest of India because of war with the Greeks. He had employed Indian cavalry and infantry.

What were the effects of Persian Invasion?

Effects of Persian invasion

- Trade between India and Iran grew.
- The Kharoshti script was brought to northwest India by the Persians.
- Some inscriptions of Ashoka were written in the Kharoshti script in these parts.
- Kharoshti script is derived from the Aramaic script and is written from right to left.

Greek Invasion of India and its Impact

Alexander's Invasion (327 BC)

- Alexander (356 BC – 323 BC) was the son of Philip of Macedonia.
- He became king in 336 BC.
- Alexander had conquered Asia Minor along with Iran and Iraq. He then marched into northwest India from Iran.

- He had annexed the whole of Persia (Babylon) by defeating Persian King Darius III in the Battle of Arbela (330 BC).



- Alexander was attracted to India's wealth.
- In northwest India, just before Alexander's invasion, there were many small rulers like Ambhi of Taxila, and Porus of the region of Jhelum (Hydaspes).
- Ambhi accepted Alexander's sovereignty but Porus put up a valiant but unsuccessful fight.
- Alexander was so impressed with Porus's fight that he granted him his territory back. Porus might have accepted lordship. The battle between him and Porus is called the Battle of Hydaspes.
- After that, Alexander's army crossed the river Chenab and annexed the tribes between Ravi and Chenab.
- But his army refused to cross the river Beas and revolted. They were exhausted after years of battles.
- Alexander was forced to retreat in 326 BC. On his way back, he died at Babylon in 323 BC aged 32.
- After his death, the Greek Empire split in 321 BC.
- In northwest India, Alexander left four of his generals in charge of four regions, one of them being Seleucus I Nicator, who would later trade his territories in the Indus Valley with Chandragupta Maurya.
- Eudamas was the last General of Alexander in India.

Effects of Alexander's invasion

- Alexander's invasion augmented political unification in northern India under the Mauryas.
- After the invasion, there was direct contact between India and Greece.
- Post the invasion there were Indo-Greek rulers in the northwest part of India.
- Grecian impact on Indian art can be seen in the Gandhara School of art.

