The Mauryan Period

The Mauryan Period:-

The earliest period of documented history of Gujarat is the period of the Mauryan Rule. The Mauryan king Asoka (B.C.273-232) has left several epigraphic records in the different parts of the country. A version of the fourteen rock edicts is incised on a rock, lying on the way from Junagadh to Mt. Girnar.

The inscriptions of Asoka date certain events in the years counted from his coronation, i.e. in his regnal years. Hence it follows that no regular and continuous era was used in the Mauryan records at least upto the reign of Asoka. But from the reading 'Muriya Kāle' in the Hathigumpha inscription of king Khāravela, Bhagawanlal Indraji and Sten Konow established that the inscription virtually contains a reference to the Mauryan era. This era was presumably taken as founded by

1. The years given in his fourteen rock edicts range from year 8 to year 13: (D.C. Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, Book I, Nos. 18, 13, 8, 9, 10... Rock edicts Nos. XIII, VIII, III, IV, V.
2. R.B. Pandey, *Indian Palaeography*, pp. 183. ff
3. B.N. Barua, *Old Brāhmi Inscriptions in the Udayagiri Khandagiri caves*, p.4
4. ASIR., 1905-06, p. 166.
5. Prinsep reads - riya; Cunningham - ya, Indraji
Chandragupta Maurya (Circa 321-297 B.C.), the founder of the Mauryan dynasty in Circa 321 B.C.

This view was criticised by Fleet who maintained that there was no reference to any era in this inscription. Luders\(^6\) followed Fleet and rejected the reading proposed by Indraji and Sten Konow. Muni Jinavijayaji\(^7\) also accepted the reading *Mauriya Kāla*. Barua\(^8\) read and interpreted the phrase in a different way. D.C. Sircar\(^9\) also gives a different reading like Fleet. Both contended that there seems to be no reference to any Mauryan era or *Maurya Kāla*. If Chandragupta Maurya founded an era of his dynasty, it is inexplicable why

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and Sten Konow Muriya; Jayaswal and Benarji also offer the reading Muriya. (B.M. Barua, Op. Cit., P.27) Smith also accepts the reading proposed by Bhagawanlal Indraji (EHJ. 2nd ed., p.187, f.n.1) Jayaswal further asserted the existence of the Mauryan era (JIIORS, Vol.III, P.450)

6. EII, Vol.X, P.161

7. Muni Jinavijayaji, Pracin Jain Lekh Sahgrah. p.37

8. Barua formerly read \(\sqrt{\text{vedu/riya-nīla}}\) in place of Muriya-Kāla. (B.M. Barua, Old Brahmi inscriptions in Udayagiri and Khandagiri caves, p.26) but later on corrected it into \(\sqrt{\text{ma/khiya kāla}}\) (Indian Historical quarterly. Vol. XIV, P.469. F.n. 136)

Asoka dated the events in his edicts in his regnal years instead of the years of the Mauryan era. Moreover no other instance of the epigraphical or literary use of the Mauryan era is found. Under these circumstances there is no justification for holding the view that the Mauryans founded an era which was used after them.

As remarked above the people of the Mauryan period seem to have dated events in regnal years of the Mauryan kings. The dates in the epigraphic records of this period are given only in years and contained no particulars about months, days etc. On this account we have no data for determining the systems of the commencement of the year and the completion of the month.

**The Indo-Greek Period**

The epigraphic records in Gujarat belong to the Indo-Greek period. The *Periplus* records that coins issued by Menander (circa 155-130 B.C.) and Apollodotus II (circa 95-80 B.C.) were in circulation for centuries, in Barygaza which was known to be a

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10. R. B. Pandey, *Indian Palaeography*, p. 187
12. Ibid., p. 181
trading centre. Their coins are found off and on. These bear legends but they contain no dates.

On the other hand some casket inscriptions of the time of king Menander, found at Shinkot in Bajaur territory in the North-West Frontier province are dated. The dates of the inscriptions contain the years, the months and the lunar days. The year used in these inscriptions is regnal. The months used here are purely Indian and not Macedonian or Greek ones, some of which are used in the inscriptions issued under the reigns of the Sakas and the Kusapas.

As the lunar days are counted in a serial number even beyond the number fifteen, the months were probably sakar. The years used in the inscriptions of the time of Menander cannot be assigned to the

13. The view that the coins of Menander and Apollodotus were found to be in circulation at Barygaza was disproved by Narain A.K. who suggested that these coins came from some outside area, probably from where warlike nation of the Bactrians' ruled, or it may be that the author of the Periplus had seen the coins of a certain Apollodotus and Menander and noticed similar coins in Barygaza not necessarily of their own minting. (Narain, A.K., *The Indo-Greeks*, P.68)


15. Kartika and Vaisākha

Seleucid era 17 founded by Seleucus (in 312 B.C.) or to the Buddha Nirvana era which was started from 433 B.C., even if the figures representing hundreds are dropped 19.

As the dates of these inscriptions contain no other particulars, it is not possible to determine the systems of the years and the months.

17. The first continuously running era which ran into general circulation is that introduced to commemorate the foundation of Seleucus's dynasty. The initial point of the Seleucid era has been fixed by Fynes Clinton to the 1st of October 312 B.C. According to Ulugh Beg, this era started from 3rd October 312 B.C. This era dates from the defeat of Nicanor, general of Antigonus, by Seleucus who became the master of Babylon. (A Cunningham, A Book of Indian Eras, P. 38.)

18. According to Theravada Buddhism, the Buddha's Parinirvana occurred in 544 B.C. P.V., Bapat (Gen. Ed.) 2500 years of Buddhism, P. 5.

19. R. B. Pandey, Indian Palaeography P. 192