

# CANDRAGUPTA MAURYA

?-298 BC



## HOW HE AFFECTED THE REGION

Candragupta Maurya was the founder of the Mauryan Empire, the first empire to unite most of India. He ruled from 324 to 301 BC.



*As you read the biography below, think about how Candragupta Maurya was able to rule such a large empire.*



Candragupta Maurya's early life is a mystery. Some historians think that he was the son of a prince. Other sources state that he was raised by peacock tamers and may have come from a low **caste**.

When he was young, Candragupta was exiled from the Indian kingdom of Magadha. According to Greek historian Plutarch, Candragupta met Alexander the Great during this time. Alexander told Candragupta that he could return to India and easily seize power, since the current king was unpopular with the people.

Candragupta began raising an army. He was able to retake much of the land in northwestern India that Alexander had conquered once Alexander had left India. Candragupta was greatly influenced by Alexander the Great. Many scholars say that the way Candragupta ruled was very similar to the way Alexander ruled.

In 321 BC Candragupta returned to Magadha and overthrew the king. He then began building his empire. As a young man, Candragupta had been taught by a Hindu minister named Kautilya. With Kautilya's help, Candragupta conquered the last of the Magadha kings and captured the capital city of Pataliputa.

## VOCABULARY

**caste** social class based on wealth, rank, or occupation

**abdicated** gave up

In 324 BC Candragupta Maurya founded the Mauryan Empire, which was the first empire in India's history to include most of the subcontinent. The empire covered much of present-day India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and part of Afghanistan.

Candragupta ruled the empire with the help of a complex government and a network of spies. He also created a large and powerful army of more than 600,000 soldiers, thousands of chariots, and war elephants. To finance his army and government, Candragupta taxed India's commerce, as well as trade with Greece and Persia. Candragupta also used this money to improve irrigation and build new roads and canals throughout India.

A Greek writer and traveler named Meghasthenes visited India during Candragupta's reign. He wrote *Indica*, which documented life during this time in India. *Indica* describes government and social life during the rule of Candragupta Maurya.

In 301 Candragupta decided to become a monk. He **abdicated** his throne to his son, who continued to expand the empire. Candragupta's grandson, Asoka, extended the Mauryan Empire over most of India. The Mauryan Empire continued to expand until its collapse in 185 BC.

### WHAT DID YOU LEARN?

**1. Recall** What political figure was Candragupta Maurya said to resemble?

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**2. Draw a Conclusion** What do think *Indica* might have described?

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### ACTIVITY

Use an encyclopedia, your textbook, or online reference to research Alexander the Great. Create a chart that compares and contrasts Candragupta to Alexander.