

# LARGER THAN LIFE

A CELEBRATION OF GREATNESS



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भारत

CHANDRAGUPTA MAURYA INDIA

1981

# Chandragupta Maurya

325 BC - 296 BC

## Introduction

Chandragupta was the **founder of the Maurya dynasty**, which ruled ancient India for about 140 years. His troops **conquered one northern Indian kingdom after another and claimed lands that stretched as far as west as Afghanistan**. In this way, Chandragupta **united northern India under one ruler for the first time in history**.

## Birth And Early Years

Chandragupta Maurya's origins were shrouded in mystery. Having been brought up by peacock tamers, he could be of low caste birth. According to other sources, Chandragupta Maurya was the **son of a Nanda prince and a dasi called Mura**. It is also possible that Chandragupta was of the Maurya tribe of Kshatriyas. Much of what is known about his youth is gathered from later classical Sanskrit literature, as well as classical Greek and Latin sources which refer to Chandragupta by the names 'Sandracottos' or 'Andracottus'.

## Rise To Power

Chandragupta's adviser or prime minister Chanakya, who is also known as Kautilya and is regarded as the architect of Chandragupta's early rise to power. Chandragupta Maurya, **with the help of Chanakya, began laying the foundation of the Maurya Empire**. In order to defeat the powerful Nanda army, Chandragupta needed to raise a formidable army of his own.

**After Alexander's death** in 323 BCE, Chandragupta, turned his attention to Northwestern India (modern Pakistan), **where he defeated the satrapies** (described as "prefects" in classical Western sources) left in place by Alexander.

## Maurya Empire

**Chanakya had trained Chandragupta** under his guidance and together they planned the **destruction of Dhana Nanda**. In the war, Chandragupta faced off against Bhadrasala commander of Dhana Nanda's armies.

He was eventually **able to defeat Bhadrasala and Dhana Nanda** in a series of battles, ending with the siege of the capital city Kusumapura and the conquest of the Nanda Empire around 321 BC, thus **founding the powerful Maurya Empire in Northern India by the time he was about 20 years old.**

The Mauryan empire, which Chandragupta founded, owes its name to the house of the Mauryas, under whose rule the Indian subcontinent saw, for the first time in history, a considerable degree of political unity. The empire lasted until 187 BC. **The Mauryan Empire was very strong and independent** because it had some kind of political unity. Everything starts at the Mauryan capital. The Mauryan **capital** was at **Pataliputra (present day Patna)**, the chief city of the old kingdom of Magadha.

The economy, in all its important aspects, was controlled by the state, and mines, forests, large farms, munitions, and spinning industries were state owned and managed. **The people were divided into seven endogamous groups--philosophers, peasants, herdsmen, traders, soldiers, government officials, and councilors.** The army was composed of the four traditional Indian divisions: forces mounted on elephants, on chariots, cavalry, and infantry, and tended to be large (Chandragupta's forces reputedly numbered 600,000 men). The religious life of the empire may perhaps best be characterized as pluralistic. The general religious policy of the Mauryas was to encourage tolerance. In modern times the Maurya Empire is **remembered as one of the golden ages of Indian history, a time when the country was united and independent.**

## **Death**

Chandragupta Maurya **renounced his throne to his son, Bindusara**, who became the new Mauryan Emperor. Chandragupta then became an ascetic under the Jain saint Bhadrabahu Swami, migrating south with him and **ending his days in self-starvation** at Shravanabelagola, in present day Karnataka.