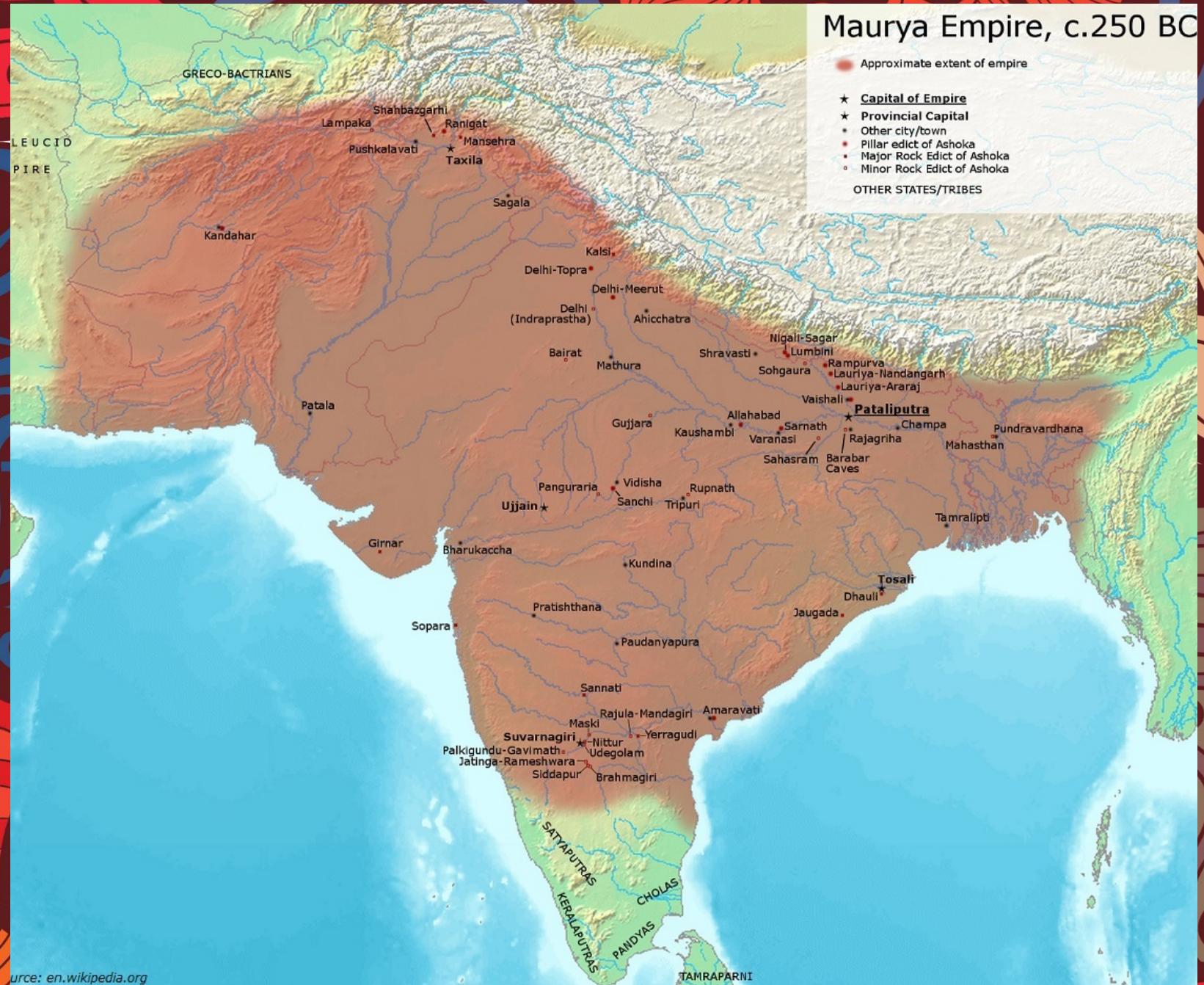


# ANCIENT INDIA: MAURYA DYNASTY

Sample Journal

Power  
Society  
Culture  
Religion



Maurya Empire, c.250 BC

The Mauryan Empire was the first largest empires that ever established on Indian soil till 324 B.C. Chandragupta Maurya was the first ruler who unified entire India under one political unit.

The epigraphical sources, literary sources, foreign accounts, and other materials obtained from the archaeological excavations describe the greatness of the Mauryan rulers and vast extensions of their empire.

The Mauryan Empire was spread from the valley of the Oxus (present Amu River) to the delta of Kaveri.



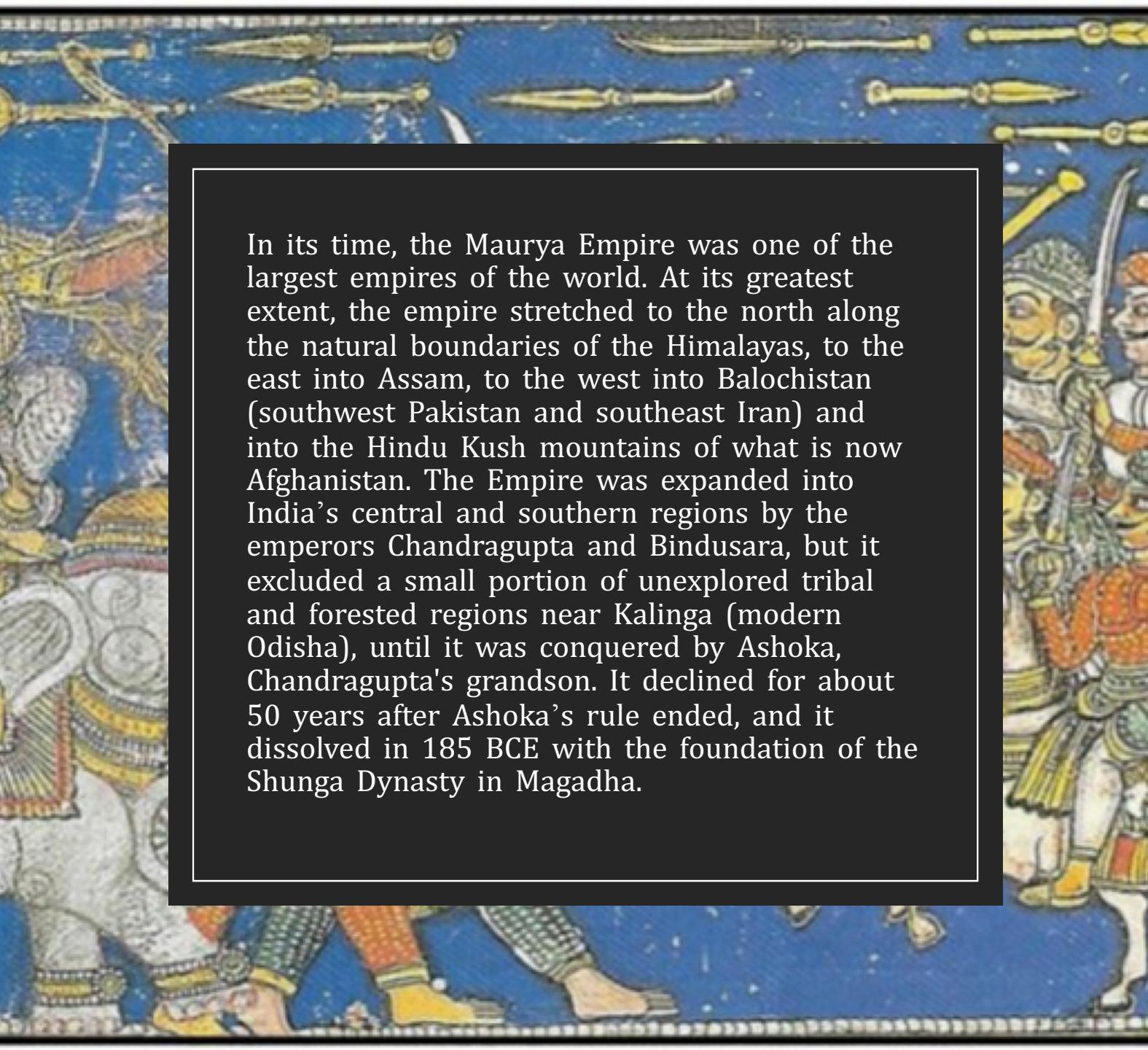
Chandragupta Maurya had overthrown the Nanda Dynasty and rapidly expanded his power westward across central and western India in order to take advantage of the disruptions of local powers in the wake of the withdrawal by Alexander the Great 's armies.

According to legend, the teacher Chanakya convinced his disciple, Chandragupta Maurya, to conquer the the kingdom of Magadha (the Nanda Empire) when he was insulted by its king Dhana Nanda.

Chandragupta Maurya expanded the Maurya Empire north and west as he conquered the Macedonian Satrapies and won the Seleucid-Mauryan war.

In its time, the Maurya Empire was one of the largest empires of the world.

**Image Reflection:** Chandragupta Maurya conquered the kingdom of Magadha to found the Maurya Empire in 321 BCE, at the age of 21.



In its time, the Maurya Empire was one of the largest empires of the world. At its greatest extent, the empire stretched to the north along the natural boundaries of the Himalayas, to the east into Assam, to the west into Balochistan (southwest Pakistan and southeast Iran) and into the Hindu Kush mountains of what is now Afghanistan. The Empire was expanded into India's central and southern regions by the emperors Chandragupta and Bindusara, but it excluded a small portion of unexplored tribal and forested regions near Kalinga (modern Odisha), until it was conquered by Ashoka, Chandragupta's grandson. It declined for about 50 years after Ashoka's rule ended, and it dissolved in 185 BCE with the foundation of the Shunga Dynasty in Magadha.

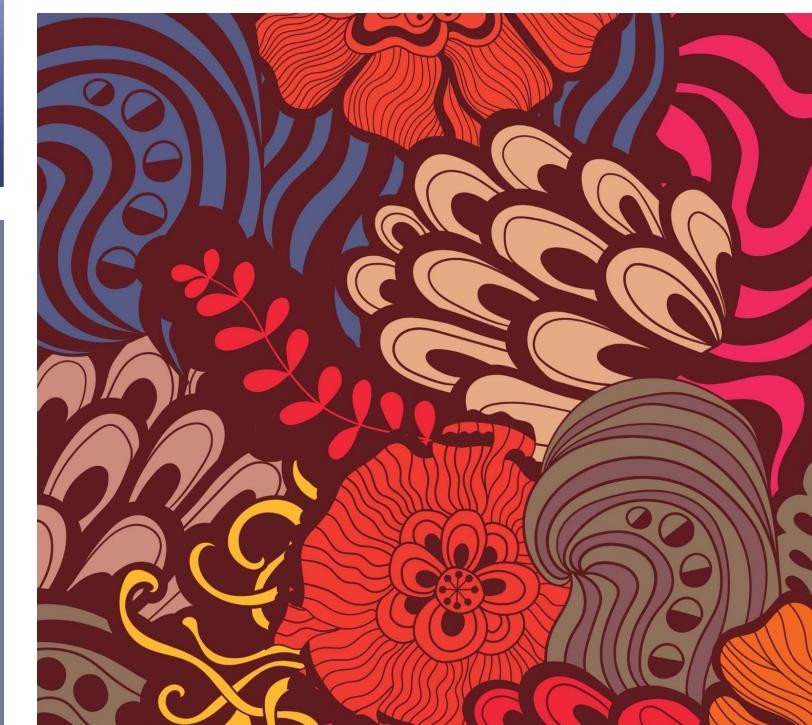
The Mauryas maintained a standing army. While Pliny gives the strength of the army as 9,000 elephants, 3,000 cavalry and 6,000 infantry; Plutarch says that the Mauryan army consisted of 6,000 elephants, 8,000 horses, 2,000 foot-soldiers and 8,000 war chariots. We are not sure of the strength of the army but can say that they maintained a sufficiently large army.

The army was divided into infantry, cavalry, elephants, chariots, transport; and navy of the fleet Kautilya refers only to Chaturangabala as the main components of the army. A commander was appointed over every branch. Kautilya refers to a medical corps attached to the army. There appears to be a hierarchy of military officers like Senapati, Nayaka, Mukhyas and Adhyakshas and the salary of the officer varied according to his rank.

**Image Reflection:** Maurya soldiers atop a war elephant in battle. I would imagine this was productive in battle by keeping the army off the ground & giving them a better view-point, but also not effective if the elephant was killed. Then it would seem pointless.



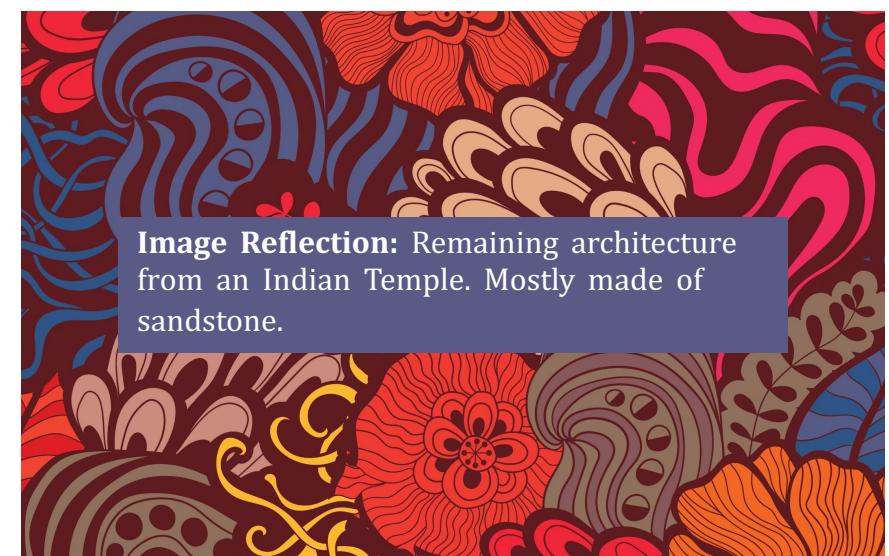
The most prominent leader of the Mauryan Empire, who was also the most influential, was Ashoka. At the beginning of his reign he was in the process of expanding the empire. As a result, the Maryann's faced off with the Kalingaians. Ashoka, after having seen the death and destruction this battle brought, converted into a Buddhist. This influenced the social structure of the Mauryan by making all the people equal. The Buddhist belief of bettering yourself and treating all others equally and fairly, broke the caste system that would later dominate in the Gupta Empire. People of almost all regions of the empire knew the Buddhist values though the several pillars Ashoka erected with the Buddhist values written on them. He built several Buddhist temples. People from all over the empire had the knowledge of Buddhist teachings.





Caste played a large role in shaping women's lives, as well as those of men. Women in both Mauryan and Gupta India were most often viewed in terms of their roles as wives and mothers. Property rights were restricted but women could maintain their bride gift from their families that was often added to by their husbands. Legal rights were also minimal and most upper-class Indian women were secluded in the home. As in many other societies both during this era and into the eighteenth century, courtesans were women who generally were the most educated, apart from some royal women, and who had some freedom of movement. However, the price for these freedoms and education was usually to be a sexual servant for wealthy men. Those in lower castes often had more freedom of movement since their work outside the home was essential for family survival. Many of these women worked in the textile industry and contributed to both the family and imperial economy. Their work generated revenue for their families and became export goods for the empire.

The Mauryan Empire was the first Empire in the world to use the forest and woods as a resource. The Mauryan people can use the wood for a fire and to build homes. They can use the forest as an advantage in battle and they can make weapons for their defense systems and military. They can grow food and eat, and they can use the water resources for multiple things. The people can domesticate animals and they can use them for trade, or they can use them for agricultural purposes. Pillars and Sandstones were made as well to practice their religion, their language, and their drawings to show and reflect on the different events in their lives, to show how the Mauryan people felt during times through art, and to write to and pray to their god. Some of these pillars and sandstones have been recovered by archeologists and writing edicts have been found on the pillars. The writings gave historians the thoughts, the language used, the way the world was back then and it the world worked at the time. Trade, even in today's different countries trade for food, materials, money, weapons, and animals. Trade was a necessity and still is a necessity; money is always involved, like the Silver punch mark coin with an elephant and a symbol of a wheel. Since the Mauryan Empire only had one type currency coin it was easier to trade with other Mauryan people and with other people from different empires. These are the simplest things to help the world and society, and still today we humans still use the forest as a resource, we trade with people, and we build things like pillars and sandstone.



**Image Reflection:** Remaining architecture from an Indian Temple. Mostly made of sandstone.



### The Villages of Maurya Empire:

Each village, besides its area under houses (vastu), had its full apparatus or agricultural life in its:

- (1) Kedara or fields sown with crops,
- (2) Pushpa-Vata, horticultural gardens
- (3) Phala-vata, orchards
- (4) Shanda, plantations of bananas, sugar-cane and the like; and
- (5) Mulavapa, fields for growing roots like ginger, turmeric and the like (ardrakdharidradi).

Thus grains, flowers, fruits, vegetables, spices, sugar-cane and bananas were all grown in the village.

THE MAURYAN EMPIRE PLAYED A KEY ROLE IN THE SPREAD OF BUDDHISM. IT IS QUITE POSSIBLE THAT IT WAS THE MAURYAN PERIOD WHICH SAW BUDDHISM'S ESTABLISHMENT AS A MAJOR RELIGION WITHIN ANCIENT INDIA – A DEVELOPMENT ENCOURAGED BY OFFICIAL POLICY UNDER ASHOKA. THIS WILL HAVE HELPED ESTABLISH THE SUB-CONTINENT AS A BASE FROM WHICH BUDDHISM COULD LATER SPREAD TO OTHER PARTS OF ASIA.

MOREOVER, THE MAURYA DIRECTLY PROMOTED BUDDHIST MISSIONS TO OTHER REGIONS, AND ALTHOUGH IN MOST CASES IT WAS ONLY LATER THAT THE PEOPLES OF MANY OF THESE COUNTRIES BECAME BUDDHIST TO ANY LARGE EXTENT, THESE MAURYA MISSIONS SEEM TO HAVE BEEN DIRECTLY RESPONSIBLE FOR THE CONVERSION OF THE RULING CLASS OF AT LEAST ONE COUNTRY, SRI LANKA. IN ANY CASE, THE FACT THAT CHINA, JAPAN, KOREA, VIETNAM, TIBET, BURMA, THAILAND, LAOS AND CAMBODIA ALL NOW HAVE LARGE BUDDHIST POPULATIONS IS IN SOME PART OWING TO THE GREAT MAURYA KING, ASHOKA.



Buddhism was founded by Siddartha Guatama(563-483 B.C.E.) or otherwise called the Buddha. He came from a Kshatriya family of Sakayas, a people in the foothills of the Himalayas. Siddartha was a prince and was sheltered from the poverty and ugliness around him. When he was 29, he began his search for the truth about human suffering. He first searched for the truth by studying with teachers of Hinduism but did not find any answers. He then went to live in a forest. He ate only weeds and berries for six years. He did not have clean clothes or any other comforts. He believed that self denial would bring wisdom. Finally he began to meditate until he found answers. He meditated under a tree for hours until he saw answers clearly. After that he was known as the Buddha. Buddhism is the belief that suffering is caused by desires and this suffering could be ended by searching for enlightenment through meditation, self discipline, and moderate living. The reward was nirvana, the release from reincarnation and perpetual tranquility. The four noble truths are the truths discovered by Buddha as he meditated. They are, life is filled with suffering, suffering is caused by desire of things that do not last, suffering can end by ending desire, and desire can be ended by following the eightfold path. The eightfold path is a guide to a good life and followers of it are freed from suffering to reach happiness. The steps are right understanding, thought, speech, action, work, effort, mindfulness, and meditation.



The Video Below shows more of how the elephants were trapped and used in battle.  
Although it seems kind of harsh, it is very interesting. I enjoyed it!

[HTTPS://WWW.YOUTUBE.COM/WATCH?V=WMYVDPY-H4U](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WMYVDPY-H4U)

The End