

Name:

Date:

**Introducing.... Chandragupta!**

**Read the excerpt and writes notes in the margins. Then answer the questions that follow.**

**CHANDRAGUPTA MAURYA** (reigned 321-296 B.C.), known to the Greeks as Sandracottus, founder of the Maurya empire and first paramount ruler of India, was the son of a king of Magadha by a woman of humble origin, whose caste he took, and whose name, Mura, is said to have been the origin of that of Maurya assumed by his dynasty. As a youth he was driven into exile by his kinsman, the reigning king of Magadha. In the course of his wanderings he met Alexander the Great, and, according to Plutarch (*Alexander*, cap. 62), encouraged him to invade the Ganges kingdom by enlarging on the extreme unpopularity of the reigning monarch. During his exile he collected a large force of the warlike clans of the north-west frontier, and on the death of Alexander attacked the Macedonian garrisons and conquered the Punjab. He next attacked Magadha, dethroned and slew the king, his enemy, with every member of his family, and established himself on the throne (321). The great army acquired from his predecessor he increased until it reached the total of 30,000 cavalry, 9000 elephants, and 600,000 infantry; and with this huge force he overran all northern India, establishing his empire from the Arabian Sea to the Bay of Bengal. In 305 Seleucus Nicator crossed the Indus, but was defeated by Chandragupta and forced to a humiliating peace (303), by which the empire of the latter was still farther extended in the north. About six years later Chandragupta died, leaving his empire to his son Bindusura.

An excellent account of the court and administrative system of Chandragupta has been preserved in the fragments of Megasthenes, who came to Pataliputra as the envoy of Seleucus shortly after 303. The government was, of course, autocratic and even tyrannous, but it was organized on an elaborate system, army and civil service being administered by a series of boards, while the cities were governed by municipal commissioners responsible for public order and the upkeep of public works. Chandragupta himself is described as living in barbaric splendour, appearing in public only to hear causes, offer sacrifice, or to go on military and hunting expeditions, and withal so fearful of assassination that he never slept two nights running in the same room.

1. What lens is used to tell the story of Chandragupta?
2. Who was Chandragupta?
3. How do you think he is remembered in India?
4. Do you think he was a “good guy” or “bad guy”? Why?

