LORD RAMA:



**BIRTH**

**[Rama](https://www.worldhistory.org/Rama/)**  is the seventh avatar of the **[Hindu](https://www.worldhistory.org/hindu/)** god **[Vishnu](https://www.worldhistory.org/Vishnu/)**. His adventures, notably the slaying of the demon king **[Ravana](https://www.worldhistory.org/Ravana/)**, are recounted in the *Vana Parva* of the ***[Mahabharata](https://www.worldhistory.org/Mahabharata/)***and in the *Ramayana*, the oldest **[Sanskrit](https://www.worldhistory.org/Sanskrit/)** epic, written sometime in the 5th century BCE but with some later additions. Lord Rama, considered by many Hindus to be based on an historical figure, is perhaps the most virtuous hero from Hindu **[mythology](https://www.worldhistory.org/mythology/)** and he, along with his wife Sita, are a picture of purity and marital devotion. Further, the adventures of Rama illustrate above all the importance and rewards of fulfilling one's pious duty or *dharma*.

**RAMA MEETS SITA**

Rama's father is King Dasaratha, a prince of the solar race, and his mother is Queen Kausalya. Rama was born at the end of the Second Age or *Treta-yuga* and he came into the world specifically at the bidding of the gods to deal with the fearsome multi-headed demon Ravana, the king of Lanka (modern Sri Lanka). The great god Vishnu answered the gods' call and appeared in a sacrificial fire made by Dasaratha. The pious king was presented with a pot of nectar, and he gave half of it to Kausalya who produced half-divine Rama as a consequence. Rama had three half-brothers – Bharata, Lakshmana, and Shatrughna - all with some, albeit lesser, divine qualities. Rama's favourite brother and great companion was Laksmana, son of Sumitra, while his loyal servant was the monkey warrior **[Hanuman](https://www.worldhistory.org/Hanuman/)** (or Hanumat).

Rama's first adventure occurred when the sage Visvamitra asked for help in fighting a demon or *raksasa*. Rama and Laksmana, leaving their childhood home at Ayodhya capital of the northern kingdom of Koshala, followed Visvamitra to his home and there killed Taraka, a terrible female demon. In gratitude Rama was given divine weapons, and he set off for more adventures, ending up in Mithila. There Janaka the king of Videha hosted our hero, and he met the king's beautiful daughter Sita (also called Janaki or Maithili). The king had promised the princess in marriage to anyone who could manage to bend a huge bow which had once been the weapon of the great god **[Shiva](https://www.worldhistory.org/shiva/)**. Rama, with his divine strength, did more than just bend the bow but broke it in half and so won the hand of Sita, his first and most revered wife.

**RAMA'S EXILE:**

Rama's succession to the throne of Ayodhya was made difficult by his mother's hunchback slave Manthara. Jealous of Rama, she soured the opinion of Kaikeyi, Dasaratha's second wife, and convinced her to persuade her husband to instead make Bharata heir to the throne. On top of this slight Rama was exiled from the kingdom for fourteen years. So, accompanied by Sita and his ever faithful companion Laksmana, Rama went to live in the far south in Citrakuta, deep in the Dandaka forest. Meanwhile, Dasaratha died, but Bharata, seeing the injustice of Rama's treatment, decided not to become king but instead to search for and return Rama to his rightful home and birthright. When the two brothers met once again, Rama obstinately refused to return to Ayodhya until he had fulfilled his father's wishes and served out his fourteen years of exile. After much discussion, Bharata agreed to act as regent until that time, and to prove to his subjects Rama's decision, he took his brother's shoes as a symbol of Rama's royal status.

**RAMA AND RAVANA CLASH**

Rama did not stay still in the remainder of his exile but visited many sages. Eventually, he ended up at Pancavati along the river Godavari, an area plagued by demons. One in particular, Surpanakha, the sister of Ravana, fell in love with Rama, and when her advances were resisted, she attacked Sita in revenge. Laksmana was the first to react and cut off the ears and nose of Surpanakha. Not best pleased with this treatment, the enraged demoness gathered an army of demons to attack the trio. In an epic **[battle](https://www.worldhistory.org/battle/)** Rama defeated them all; however, Surpanakha was not finished with the matter and she persuaded Ravana that Sita was a girl worth fighting for. Accordingly, the demon king sought out Rama's home, and while Rama was distracted in the hunt for a deer (who was actually Ravana's magician Maricha in disguise), abducted Sita, taking her back to Lanka in his aerial **[chariot](https://www.worldhistory.org/chariot/)** to be kept captive in his beautiful **[Ashoka](https://www.worldhistory.org/Ashoka/)** garden.

Rama followed in hot pursuit but met several troublesome distractions along the way. The first was the headless monster Kabandha. Killing the creature, its departing soul proved more helpful and advised Rama that before confronting Ravana, our hero should enlist the help of Sugriva, king of the monkeys. Finding on their arrival at Sugriva's capital Kiskindha that the king had lost his throne to his brother Balin, Rama helped restore Sugriva to power. A grateful Sugriva gave Rama use of an army and enlisted the help of Hanuman, who besides being an able general was the son of the wind and able to leap huge distances and take any form he wished. It was he who magically transported Rama and his force to Lanka, crossing the rock bridge built by the skilled general Nala, son of Visvakarma, which became known as Rama's Bridge.

A series of titanic battles between Rama's forces and the demons followed, but eventually Ravana was slain, Lanka fell to Rama's army, and our hero was reunited with his wife. Rama was not entirely convinced that his wife had remained loyal to him during her abduction, but Sita determined to prove her honour by a test of fire, indeed the divine fire of **[Agni](https://www.worldhistory.org/Agni/)**, no less. Escaping the flames unscathed, Rama realized he had misjudged Sita, and the couple headed back for Ayodhya where Rama reclaimed his throne and began a golden era of government.

According to the *Uttara Kanda* the story continues with Rama still harbouring suspicions about his wife's virtue during her captivity with Ravana. Rama thus exiles Sita to live with the sage Valmiki, and it is there that she bears him twin sons, Kusa and Lava. Eventually the sons return to Ayodhya where Rama recognizes his offspring and, in a fit of remorse, recalls the wronged Sita. In the *Ramayana* everyone lives happily ever after at this point, but in the *Uttara Kanda*the tale is not quite finished. Still proclaiming her innocence, Sita now swears her virtue on the earth itself which then promptly swallows her by opening beneath her feet. Rama, now even more distraught, vows to follow his wife to heaven, but Time appears to him in the guise of an ascetic and calls for him to remain and fulfil his duty on earth. Nevertheless, Rama wades into the river Sarayu and from there is welcomed into heaven by **[Brahma](https://www.worldhistory.org/Brahma/)**.

**RAVANA:**

**[Ravana](https://www.worldhistory.org/Ravana/)** is the mythical multi-headed demon-king of Lanka in **[Hindu](https://www.worldhistory.org/hindu/)** **[mythology](https://www.worldhistory.org/mythology/)**. With ten heads and twenty arms, Ravana could change into any form he wished. Representing the very essence of evil, he famously fought and ultimately lost a series of epic battles against the hero **[Rama](https://www.worldhistory.org/Rama/)**, seventh avatar of **[Vishnu](https://www.worldhistory.org/Vishnu/)**.



**FAMILY:**

Ravana was a terrible demon (*raksasa*) who was the king of all demons and of the fortress island of Lanka (modern-day Sri Lanka). His father was Visravas (son of Pulastya, one of the creator Prajapati) and mother Nikasa, also a demon and mother of the cannibal demons, the Pisitasanas. Ravana acquired his throne through foul means when he expelled his half-brother Kubera, god of wealth, from the island. Rava had many sons, notably Aksa, who had three heads, symbolic of the three stages of fever (heat, cold, and sweating), and Indrajit (aka Meghanada), who could make himself invisible.

Ravana had a formidable appearance with his ten heads (and so he is also known as Dasakantha and Panktigriva) and twenty arms. His body was covered in scars, won in endless battles with the gods. Three wounds, in particular, were from the discus of Vishnu, the thunderbolt of **[Indra](https://www.worldhistory.org/Indra/)**, and the tusk of Airavata, the elephant of Indra. Through his devotion and penance to the great god **[Brahma](https://www.worldhistory.org/Brahma/)**, Ravana was made invincible and had the power to assume any form he wished from men to mountains to **[death](https://www.worldhistory.org/Death/)** itself. He was so powerful that he could cause earthquakes and storms. However, it was foretold that Ravana's end would come because of a woman, and so it would be.

**RAVANA AND NANDISA**

The ***[Ramayana](https://www.worldhistory.org/The_Ramayana/)*** is the oldest **[Sanskrit](https://www.worldhistory.org/Sanskrit/)** epic and was written sometime in the 5th century BCE with some later additions. Ravana's name is explained, therein, in a colourful myth where the demon-king challenges Nandisa (actually the great god **[Shiva](https://www.worldhistory.org/shiva/)** and also known as Nandisvara) and comes off worse. According to the story, one day Ravana met a dark dwarf with a monkey face while he was passing through the mountains of Sara-vana. The dwarf would not let Ravana pass because his master Shiva was busy hunting there and was not to be disturbed. Ravana questioned who this Shiva was and shook the mountain in rage. This disturbed Shiva and his wife Parvati, the latter trembled with fear as they sat upon the shaking peak but Shiva calmly placed his toe upon the ground and the whole mountain fell on top of Ravana's many arms. The demon let out such a shuddering cry of pain that Shiva named the demon Ravana after his cry (*rava*). Ravana was only released from his predicament after 1,000 years of pleading to the great god.

The *Ramayana* is really concerned with the story of the semi-divine Lord Rama, believed by many Hindus to be based on a historical figure. He is perhaps the most virtuous figure in all of Hindu mythology. His adventures illustrate above all the importance and rewards of fulfilling one's pious duty or *dharma,* and he had been born for one specific task - to answer the call of the gods and kill the fearsome multi-headed demon Ravana, terror of the earth.

Rama's troubles began when he was exiled from his father's kingdom, a victim of a conspiracy concocted by his mother's jealous hunchback slave, Manthara. On top of that, his brother Bharata was made heir in Rama's place. For 14 years Rama had to wander the earth, visit sages, and wait to fulfil his destiny.

**RAVANA BATTLES RAMA**

Rama, his wife Sita, and great friend Laksmana one day eventually ended up at Pancavati along the river Godavari, an area plagued by demons. One in particular, Surpanakha, the sister of Ravana, fell in love with Rama, and when her advances were resisted, she attacked Sita in revenge. Laksmana was the first to react and cut off the ears and nose of Surpanakha. Not best pleased with this treatment, the enraged demoness gathered an army of demons to attack the trio. In an epic **[battle](https://www.worldhistory.org/battle/)** Rama defeated them all; however, Surpanakha was not finished with the matter, and she persuaded Ravana that Sita was a girl worth fighting for. Accordingly, the demon king sought out Rama's home, and while Rama was distracted in the hunt for a deer (who was actually Ravana's magician Maricha in disguise), abducted Sita, taking her back to Lanka in his aerial **[chariot](https://www.worldhistory.org/chariot/)** to be kept captive in the beautiful **[Ashoka](https://www.worldhistory.org/Ashoka/)** garden of his **[palace](https://www.worldhistory.org/palace/)**.

Rama followed in hot pursuit. First he had to fight the monster Kabandha and assist the monkey king Sugriva, but as a reward for the latter, he gained the invaluable help of Sugriva's general **[Hanuman](https://www.worldhistory.org/Hanuman/)** and his army. Hanuman was also the son of the wind and able to leap huge distances, taking any form he wished. It was he who magically transported Rama and his force to Lanka, crossing the rock bridge built by the skilled general Nala, which became known as Rama's Bridge.

A series of titanic battles between Rama's forces and the demons followed, sometimes Ravana got the upper hand, at other times Rama. In one fight, Rama managed to cut off one of Ravana's heads with an arrow but another immediately grew to replace it. Finally, another of Rama's arrows was a direct hit on Ravana's chest. The arrow went straight through the demon, travelled over the seas and came straight back into Rama's quiver. Ravana was dead and the world rid of a terrible lawless force. Having been the son of a *brahmana* (priest), Ravana was given a proper funeral and his body burnt according to correct ritual. Lanka had, meanwhile, fallen to Rama's army, and the hero headed back home to reclaim his throne and begin a golden era of government.

**Lalitaditya Muktapida**

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The ever undefeated King of Kashmir who tasted victory everywhere he went; even the Chinese, the Turkish and the Tibetan legends referred to him as a great conqueror; the first Indian king who gave a befitting reply to the invading Arabs; one of the few Indian kings who was able to capture Central Asia; the Kashmiri King whose influence spread even to the South India and played an important role in the foundation of the Rashtrakuta empire there, which became one of the most powerful kingdoms to have ever existed in South India; the king who blasted the myth that Indians were never able to capture any foreign lands..

**ALEXANDER OF INDIA**

This great son of India who hailed from Kashmir was none other than Lalitaditya Muktapida of Karkota dynasty, the mightiest Indian king of his times and beyond. Believed to be the youngest of the three sons of Kashmiri king Durlabhaka (alias Pratapaditya), Lalitaditya ascended the throne in 724 AD at a time when Karkota dynasty ruled the present day Jammu & Kashmir, Punjab and Haryana. Lalitaditya not only stopped the Arabs from entering India but also conquered parts of Iran and extended his Kingdom upto Tibet and China. His successful efforts to protect Kashmir and India is something which the Indian nation can and should never forget. But it is really sad that the story of this greatest of Kings remains virtually dead and finds no place in history books of schools and colleges even in the post- independent India.

**INVASIONS ON FOREIGN LANDS**

Very early in his youth the great warrior king had understood that Kashmir was facing two enemies at the same time; one was the Arab caliphate which had captured Sindh after defeating Raja Dahir and the other was the Tibetan empire. It was getting difficult to ward off both the invasions at the same time. So, the strategist king allied with Yashovarman of Kannuj to defend India from the invasions of both Tibetans and Arabs.  
Legend has it that the Arab Caliphate had allied with Tibetans who were in perpetual conflict with the Chinese rulers represented at that time by the Tang dynasty. The alliance was also encroaching on the lands of Tang Empire even though it was regarded as a powerful regime around 7th century A.D. Lalitadatiya having found a natural ally in China, made a smart diplomatic move by aligning with the latter and took the advantage of the advanced Chinese military technologies that helped him in upgrading his own army.  
The famous Iranian scholar and historian Al Beruni records the victory of this newly formed alliance over the invading Arabs in a battle that was fought somewhere near Punjab. He even mentions that a festival was held on the second day of Chaitra (March) every year for centuries to celebrate the victory. Later, Yashovarman defeated the Tibetan king and wrestled kingdoms of the North-East and Bangal which were under the dominance of Tibetan rulers. Lalitaditya did not allow the Arabs to regroup and continued expanding his kingdom in Central Asia capturing parts of Afghanistan and Transoxiana which comprised the modern-day Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, southern Kyrgyzstan, and south-west Kazakhstan.  
Lalitaditya soon became wary of the increasing power of Yashovarman, who seemed to be getting afflicted with arrogance. This led to the breaking of the alliance. Consequently in a subsequent battle, Yashovarman also was defeated and he accepted the vassal status under Lalitaditya regime. Because of this new status Yashovarman was obliged to later support Lalitaditya in defeating the latter’s arch rivals – the Later Guptas who controlled the Bengal region. It is believed that the queen regent of Deccan had approached Lalitaditya for help when her brother-in- law was trying to usurp the throne. Lalitaditya helped her in restoring her kingdom and sat her son Dantidurga on the throne. Dantidurga is said to have gone on to establish one of the biggest empires of South India known as Rashtrakutas.

**BATTLES:**

The battles Lalitaditya fought have been described by the renowned Kashmiri historian Kalhana in his classic history of Kashmir, the `Rajataringini’ (River of Kings) in which he says “The king, who carried his prowess, abandoned his (war-like) fury (only) when the (opposing) kings discretely folded their palms at his victorious onset. At the sound of his drums (beaten) in attack, the dwellings of his enemies were diverted by the (frightened) inhabitants and thus resembled women dropping in fright the burden of their wombs.”  
On the development front Laliditya was a great builder. He reportedly cleared the silting of Vitasta (the present day Jhelum) river to prevent flooding and directed the water through canals to far-flung regions. He even reclaimed swamps to boost agriculture. He is also said to have founded many present-day cities of Kashmir. Throughout his empires, he built the temples of many gods including Buddha which shows his respect for other faiths. But sadly again, there is nothing that remains of these grand temples today owing to the barbarity ushered in by the Muslim invaders. However the grandeur of these temples could be gauged even today by having an in-depth look at the ruins of the rare Martand Sun Temple and scores of other temples which were pulled down around 15th century AD.  
Ironically, as in life so in death, Lalityadita’s death remains a mystery. There are two versions relating to the death of this bravest son of India and Kashmir, both. One version is that he perished during a military campaign in Aryanaka (Eastern Iran) due to heavy snowfall which occurred out of season. The other version, which is unlikely of a brave warrior of his stature, is that he committed suicide after being separated from his army on a difficult mountain

**Chandragupta Maurya**

Chandragupta Maurya was the founder of the Maurya Empire in ancient India. He is credited with bringing together the small fragmented kingdoms of the country and combining them into a single large empire. During his reign, the Maurya Empire stretched from Bengal and Assam in the East, to Afghanistan and Balochistan in the West, to Kashmir and Nepal in the North and to the Deccan Plateau in the South. Chandragupta Maurya, along with his mentor Chanakya, was responsible in bringing an end to the Nanda Empire. After a successful reign of around 23 years, Chandragupta Maurya renounced all the worldly pleasures and turned himself into a Jain monk. It is said that he performed ‘Sallekhana’, a ritual of fasting until death, and therefore willfully ended his own life.



**ORIGINS:**

There are many views when it comes to the lineage of Chandragupta Maurya. Most of the information about his ancestry comes from ancient texts of the Greek, Jains, Buddhist and ancient Hindu known as Brahmanism. There have been many research and studies conducted on the origins of Chandragupta Maurya. Some of the historians believe that he was an illegitimate child of a Nanda prince and his maid, Mura. Others believe that Chandragupta belonged to Moriyas, a Kshatriya (warrior) clan of a little ancient republic of Pippalivana, situated between Rummindei (Nepali Tarai) and Kasia (Gorakhpur district of Uttar Pradesh). Two other views suggest that he belonged either to the Muras (or Mors) or to the Kshatriyas of the Indo-Scythian lineage. Last but not the least, it is also claimed that Chandragupta Mauryawas abandoned by his parents and that he came from a humble background. According to the legend, he was raised by a pastoral family and then was later sheltered by Chanakya, who taught him the rules of administration and everything else that is required for one to become a successful emperor.

**EMPIRE:**

As per various records, Chanakya was on the lookout for a suitable person to end the reign of a Nanda king and possibly the Empire as well. During this time, a young Chandragupta who was playing along with his friends in the Magadha kingdom was spotted by Chanakya. Impressed with Chandragupta’s leadership skills, Chanakya is said to have adopted Chandragupta before training him on various levels. Thereafter, Chanakya brought Chandragupta to Takshashila, where he turned all his pre-amassed wealth into a huge army in an attempt to dethrone the Nanda king.

Around 324 BC, Alexander the Great and his soldiers had decided to retreat to Greece. However, he had left behind a legacy of Greek rulers who were now ruling parts of ancient India. During this period, Chandragupta and Chanakya formed alliances with local rulers and started defeating the armies of the Greek rulers. This led to the expansion of their territory until finally the establishment of the Maurya Empire.

**MAURYA EMPIRE:**

Chanakya finally had the opportunity to bring an end to the Nanda Empire. In fact, he helped Chandragupta establish the Maurya Empire with the sole aim of destroying the Nanda Empire. So, Chandragupta, according to the advice of Chanakya, formed an alliance with King Parvatka, the ruler of the Himalayan region of ancient India. With the combined forces of Chandragupta and Parvatka, the Nanda Empire was brought to an end around 322 BC.

Chandragupta Maurya defeated the Macedonian satrapies in the northwest of the Indian subcontinent. He then waged a war against Seleucus, a Greek ruler who had in control most of the Indian territories which were earlier captured by Alexander the Great. Seleucus however, offered his daughter’s hand in marriage to Chandragupta Maurya and entered into an alliance with him. With the help of Seleucus, Chandragupta started acquiring many regions and expanded his empire as far as South Asia. Thanks to this massive expansion, Chandragupta Maurya’s empire was said to be the most extensive in the whole of Asia, second only to the empire of Alexander in this region. It is to be noted that these regions were acquired from Seleucus who gave them up as a friendly gesture.

After acquiring the provinces west of river Indus from Seleucus, Chandragupta's empire stretched across the northern parts of Southern Asia. Thereafter, began his conquests in south, beyond the Vindhya Range and into the Southern parts of India. Except parts of present day Tamil Nadu and Kerala, Chandragupta had managed to establish his empire throughout India.

**FOUR PROVINCES:**

Based on the advice of Chanakya, his Chief Minister, Chandragupta Maurya divided his empire into four provinces. He had established a superior central administration where his capital Pataliputra was located. The administration was organized with the appointment of king's representatives, who managed their respective province. It was a sophisticated administration which operated like a well-oiled machine as described in Chanakya’s collection of texts called the Arthashastra.

Chandragupta Maurya's son Bindusara succeeded him to the throne. Bindusara fathered a son, Ashoka, who went on to become one of the most powerful kings of the Indian subcontinent. In fact, it was under Ashoka that the Maurya Empire saw its complete glory. The empire went on to become one of the largest in the entire world. The empire flourished across generations for more than 130 years. Chandragupta Maurya was also responsible in uniting the most of present day India. Until the establishment of the Maurya Empire, this great country was ruled over by many Greek and Persian kings, forming their own territories. Till date, Chandragupta Maurya remains to be one of the most important and influential emperors of ancient India.

**ASHOKA**

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**BIRTH AND GROWTH:**

**[Ashoka the Great](https://www.worldhistory.org/Ashoka_the_Great/)** (r. 268-232 BCE) was the third king of the **[Mauryan Empire](https://www.worldhistory.org/Mauryan_Empire/)** (322-185 BCE) best known for his renunciation of **[war](https://www.worldhistory.org/war/)**, development of the concept of *dhamma* (pious social conduct), and promotion of **[Buddhism](https://www.worldhistory.org/buddhism/)** as well as his effective reign of a nearly **[pan](https://www.worldhistory.org/Pan/)**-Indian political entity. At its height, under **[Ashoka](https://www.worldhistory.org/Ashoka/)**, the Mauryan **[Empire](https://www.worldhistory.org/empire/)** stretched from modern-day Iran through almost the entirety of the Indian subcontinent. Ashoka was able to rule this vast empire initially through the precepts of the political treatise known as the ***[Arthashastra](https://www.worldhistory.org/Arthashastra/)***, attributed to the Prime Minister **[Chanakya](https://www.worldhistory.org/Chanakya/)** (also known as **[Kautilya](https://www.worldhistory.org/Kautilya/)** and Vishnugupta, l. c. 350-275 BCE) who served under Ashoka's grandfather **[Chandragupta](https://www.worldhistory.org/Chandragupta/)** (r. c. 321-c.297 BCE) who founded the empire.

*Ashoka* means “without sorrow” which was most likely his given name. He is referred to in his edicts, carved in stone, as Devanampiya Piyadassi which, according to scholar John Keay (and agreed upon by scholarly consensus) means “Beloved of the Gods” and “gracious of mien” (89). He is said to have been particularly ruthless early in his reign until he launched a campaign against the Kingdom of Kalinga in c. 260 BCE which resulted in such carnage, destruction, and **[death](https://www.worldhistory.org/Death/)** that Ashoka renounced war and, in time, converted to Buddhism, devoting himself to peace as exemplified in his concept of *dhamma*. Most of what is known of him, outside of his edicts, comes from **[Buddhist](https://www.worldhistory.org/buddhist/)** texts which treat him as a model of conversion and virtuous behavior.

**POPULARITY:**

The empire he and his family built did not last even 50 years after his death. Although he was the greatest of the kings of one of the largest and most powerful empires in antiquity, his name was lost to history until he was identified by the British scholar and orientalist James Prinsep (l. 1799-1840 CE) in 1837 CE. Since then, Ashoka has come to be recognized as one of the most fascinating ancient monarchs for his decision to renounce war, his insistence on religious tolerance, and his peaceful efforts in establishing Buddhism as a major world **[religion](https://www.worldhistory.org/religion/)**.

Although Ashoka's name appears in the *Puranas* (encyclopedic **[literature](https://www.worldhistory.org/literature/)** of **[India](https://www.worldhistory.org/india/)** dealing with kings, heroes, legends, and gods), no information on his life is given there. The details of his youth, rise to power, and renunciation of violence following the Kalinga campaign come from Buddhist sources which are considered, in many respects, more legendary than historical.

His birthdate is unknown, and he is said to have been one of a hundred sons of his father Bindusara's (r. 297-c.273 BCE) wives. His mother's name is given as Subhadrangi in one text but as Dharma in another. She is also depicted as the daughter of a Brahmin (the highest caste) and Bindusara's principal wife in some texts while a woman of lower status and minor wife in others. The story of the 100 sons of Bindusara is dismissed by most scholars who believe Ashoka was the second son of four. His older brother, Susima, was the heir apparent and crown prince and Ashoka's chances of ever assuming power were therefore slim and even slimmer because his father disliked him.

**SKILLS AND ACHEIVEMENTS:**

He was highly educated at court, trained in martial arts, and was no doubt instructed in the precepts of the *Artashastra* – even if he was not considered a candidate for the throne – simply as one of the royal sons. The *Artashastra* is a treatise covering many different subjects related to society but, primarily, is a manual on political **[science](https://www.worldhistory.org/science/)** providing instruction on how to rule effectively. It is attributed to Chanakya, Chandragupta's prime minister, who chose and trained Chandragupta to become king. When Chandragupta abdicated in favor of Bindusara, the latter is said to have been trained in the *Arthashastra* and so, almost certainly, would have been his sons.

When Ashoka was around the age of 18, he was sent from the capital **[city](https://www.worldhistory.org/city/)** of Pataliputra to Takshashila (**[Taxila](https://www.worldhistory.org/taxila/)**) to put down a revolt. According to one legend, Bindusara provided his son with an army but no weapons; the weapons were provided later by supernatural means. This same legend claims that Ashoka was merciful to the people who lay down their arms upon his arrival. No historical account survives of Ashoka's campaign at Taxila; it is accepted as historical fact based on suggestions from inscriptions and place names but the details are unknown.

Having succeeded at Taxila, Bindusara next sent his son to govern the commercial center of Ujjain which he also succeeded in. No details are available on how Ashoka performed his duties at Ujjain because, as Keay notes, “what was thought most worthy of note by Buddhist chroniclers was his love affair with the daughter of a local merchant” (90).

**RELIGION**

According to some legends, Devi first introduced Ashoka to Buddhism, but it has also been suggested that Ashoka was already a nominal Buddhist when he met Devi and may have shared the teachings with her. Buddhism was a minor philosophical-religious sect in India at this time, one of the many heterodox schools of thought (along with Ajivika, **[Jainism](https://www.worldhistory.org/jainism/)**, and **[Charvaka](https://www.worldhistory.org/Charvaka/)**) vying for acceptance alongside the orthodox belief system of *Sanatan Dharma* (“Eternal Order”), better known as **[Hinduism](https://www.worldhistory.org/hinduism/)**. The focus of the later chronicles on Ashoka's affair with the beautiful Buddhist Devi, rather than on his administrative accomplishments, can be explained as an effort to highlight the future king's early association with the religion he would make famous.

Ashoka was still at Ujjain when Taxila rebelled again and Bindusara this time sent Susima. Susima was still engaged in the campaign when Bindusara fell ill and ordered his eldest son's recall. The king's ministers, however, favored Ashoka as successor and so he was sent for and was crowned (or, according to some legends crowned himself) king upon Bindusara's death. Afterwards, he had Susima executed (or his ministers did) by throwing him into a charcoal pit where he burned to death. Legends also claim he then executed his other 99 brothers but scholars maintain he killed only two and that the youngest, one Vitashoka, renounced all claim to rule and became a Buddhist monk.

**KING CHOLA**



King Raja Raja Chola is one of the most powerful kings of the Chola dynasty and his life along with his reign is one of the most documented as he inscribed everything. Here we share almost everything about the king who is revered for his bravery even today including his life **[history](http://www.nationalviews.com/tag/history" \t "_blank)** and death.

**BIRTH AND GROWTH:**

Raja Raja Chola (985 – c. 1014 CE) was born in 947. His birth name was Arulmozhivarman. He was the third child of Parantaka Chola II also known as Sundara Chola and Vanavan Maha Devi of the Velir Malayaman dynasty.  Arulmozhivarman’s elder brother was Aditya Karikalan and his elder sister’s name was Kundavai.

Aditya Karikalan was the crown prince and was supposed to sit on the throne but in 969 he was assassinated in suspicious circumstances. Post his death, Sundara Chola announced Uttama Chola (his cousin brother) as his successor.

Uttama Chola was the son of Gandaraditya, a Chola King however, when Gandaraditya died, Uttama was very small. So, the kingship passed on to Gandaraditya’s younger brother Arinjaya who was Sundara Chola’s father and Raja Raja’s grandfather.

However, post the death of Uttama Chola, it was Arulmozhi varman who ascended the throne in 985. According to the Thiruvalangadu copper-plate inscriptions, Arulmozhi varman aka Raja Raja was rightfully elected by a democratic process that was followed by the Cholas.

Post becoming the King, Arulmozhi varman adopted the name of Raja Raja which means “King of Kings”. Being a Shiv bhakt, he was also known as Rajaraja Sivapada Sekhara (he who has the feet of Shiva as his crown). During his reign, his elder sister Kundavai Pirāttiyār helped him in administration and also in the management of temples.

## ****His Reign****

Raja Raja Chola was a renowned king of southern India. During his tenure as the Chola King, he expanded his kingdom beyond South India into the domain of Sri Lanka and could even capture Kalinga in the north. His naval campaigns helped him in capturing of the Malabar Coast as well as the Maldives.

Throughout his reign, he carried out various conquest.

* In 994, in the Kandalur War, Rajaraja destroyed the fleet of the Chera king Bhaskara Ravi Varman Thiruvadi (c. 978–1036) successfully.
* He even defeated the Pandya king Amarabhujanga and captured the port of Virinam.
* In the year 1008, Rajendra Chola I led the Chola army and Rajaraja could capture Udagai from Cheras.
* Raja raja invaded the norther part of Sri Lanka in 993.
* In 998, Rajaraja captured the regions of Nolambapadi, Gangapadi and Tadigaipadi (present day Karnataka)

To commemorate these south India conquests, he assumed the powerful title of Mummudi Chola. This tutle was used by Tamil kings who ruled the three kingdoms of Cholas, Cheras and Pandyas.

Due to his interest in recording his achievements, he recorded everything in his inscription. Being a Shivaite, he built the famous Brihadisvara Temple in Thanjavur. It is a UNESCO World Heritage now. In 2010, it completed 1000 years. During his reign, he also introduced new type of coins.

## PERSONAL LIFE:

He had 4 queens including Thiripuvānamādēviyār and Ōlōkamādēviyār. Going by the records, he had a son Rajendra (from his wife Thiripuvānamādēviyār) three daughters –  Kundavai, Mathevalzagal and Ģangamādevī. His son Rajendra Chola I was also his co-regeant (1012) and went on to become his succesor.

Kundavai married Chalukya prince Vimaladithan and became the queen of the eastern Chalukya. She shared her name with her aunt. She waselder to her brother Rajendra.

Although here are lots of inscriptions about Raja Raja Chola’s work, conquests and life including how he captured territories, how he built temples and even how when he was born, there is no information about his death. Nobody really know how and when he died or where he was cremated/buried.

Regarding his death there are two theories – one, that he died a natural death at the age of 67 and second, that he was killed by a Sri Lankan woman which is why Rajendra Chola captured the whole of Sri Lanka to seek the revenge of his father’s death.

**Chatrapati Shivaji Maharaj**

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Chatrapati Shivaji Maharaj was the founder of the Maratha Empire in western India. He is considered to be one of the greatest warriors of his time and even today, stories of his exploits are narrated as a part of the folklore. With his valor and great administrative skills, Shivaji carved out an enclave from the declining Adilshahi sultanate of Bijapur. It eventually became the genesis of the Maratha Empire. After establishing his rule, Shivaji implemented a competent and progressive administration with the help of a disciplined military and well-established administrative set-up. Shivaji is well-known for his innovative military tactics that centered around non-conventional methods leveraging strategic factors like geography, speed, and surprise to defeat his more powerful enemies.

**BIRTH AND GROWTH:**

Shivaji Bhosle was born on February 19, 1630 to Shahaji Bhosle and Jijabai in the fort of Shivneri, near the city of Junnar of the Pune district. Shivaji’s father Shahaji was in service of the Bijapuri Sultanate - a tripartite association between Bijapur, Ahmednagar, and Golconda, as a general. He also owned a Jaigirdari near Pune. Shivaji’s mother Jijabai was the daughter of Sindkhed leader Lakhujirao Jadhav and a deeply religious woman. Shivaji was especially close to his mother who instilled in him a strict sense of right and wrong. Since Shahaji spent most of his time outside of Pune, the responsibility of overseeing Shivaji’s education rested on the shoulders of a small council of ministers which included a Peshwa (Shamrao Nilkanth),a Mazumdar (Balkrishna Pant), a Sabnis (Raghunath Ballal), a Dabir (Sonopant) and a chief teacher (Dadoji Konddeo). Kanhoji Jedhe and Baji Pasalkar were appointed to train Shivaji in military and martial arts. Shivaji was married to Saibai Nimbalkar in 1640.

Shivaji turned out to be a born leader from a very young age. An active outdoorsman, he explored the Sahayadri Mountains surrounding the Shivneri forts and came to know the area like the back of his hands. By the time he was 15, he had accumulated a band of faithful soldiers from the Maval region who later aided in his early conquests.

**BATTLES AND CONQUESTS:**

By 1645, Shivaji acquired control of several strategic from under the Bijapur Sultanate around Pune – Torna from Inayat Khan, Chakan from FirangojiNarsala, Kondana from Adil Shahi Governor, along with Singhagarh and Purandar. Following his success, he had emerged as a threat for Mohammed Adil Shah who gave the order to imprison Shahaji in 1648. Shahaji was released on condition that Shivaji kept a low profile and kept from further conquests. Shivaji resumed his conquests after Shahaji’s death in 1665 by acquiring the valley of Javali from Chandrarao More, a Bijapuri jaigirdaar. Mohammed Adil Shah sent Afzal Khan, a powerful general in his employ to subdue Shivaji.

The two met in a private rendezvous on November 10, 1659 to discuss terms of negotiation. Shivaji anticipated it to be a trap and he arrived prepared wearing armor and concealing a metal tiger claw.  When Afzal Khan attacked Shivaji with a dagger, he was saved by his armour and Shivaji retaliated by attacking Afzal Khan with the tiger’s claw, mortally injuring him. He ordered his forces to launch an assault on the leaderless Bijapuri contingents. Victory was easy for Shivaji in the Battle of Pratapgarh, where around 3000 Bijapuri soldiers were killed by the Maratha forces. Mohammed Adil Shah next sent a larger army under the command of General Rustam Zaman who faced Shivaji in the Battle of Kolhapur. Shivaji secured victory in a strategic battle causing the general to flee for his life. Mohammed Adil Shah finally saw victory when his general Siddi Jauhar successfully sieged the fort of Panhala on September 22, 1660. Shivaji recaptured the Fort of Panhal later in 1673.

**SUPREME SOVEREIGN – MARATHA EMPIRE:**

Under his reign, the Maratha administration was established where Chhatrapati was the supreme sovereign and a team of eight ministers were appointed to oversee the proper enforcement of various policies. These eight ministers reported directly to Shivaji and were given a lot of power in terms of execution of policies formulated by the King. These eight ministers were –

(1) The Peshwa or Prime Minister, who was head of general administration and represented the king in his absence.

(2) The Majumder or the Auditor was responsible for maintain the financial health of the kingdom

(3) The PanditRao or Chief Spiritual Head was responsible for overseeing the spiritual well-being of the kindom, fix dates for religious ceremonies and oversee charitable programs undertaken by the king.

(4) The Dabir or Foreign Secretary was entrusted with the responsibility of advising the king on matters of foreign policies.

(5) The Senapati or Military General was in charge of overseeing every aspect of the military including organization, recruitment and training of soldiers. He also was the strategic advisor of the king in the time of a war.

(6) The Nyayadhish or Chief Justice saw formulations of law and their subsequent enforcement, civil, judicial as well as military.

(7) The Mantri or Chronicler was responsible for keeping elaborate records of everything the king did in his daily life.

(8) The Sachiv or Superintendant was in charge of royal correspondence.

**LANGUAGE:**

Shivaji vigorously promoted the use of Marathi and Sanskrit in his court instead of Persian, the existing Royal language. He even changed the names of the forts under his control to Sanskrit names to accent his Hindu rule. Although Shivaji himself was a devout Hindu, he promoted tolerance for all religion under his rule. His administrative policies were subject-friendly and humane, and he encouraged liberty of women in his rule.He was strictly against caste discrimination and employed people from all caste in his court. He introduced the Ryotwari system eliminating the need for middlemen between farmers and the state and collecting revenues directly from the manufacturers and producers. Shivaji introduced the collection of two taxes called the Chauth and Sardeshmukhi. He divided his kingdom into four provinces, each headed by a Mamlatdar. Village was the smallest unit of administration and the head was titled as Deshpande, who headed the Village Panchayat. Shivaji maintained a strong military force, built several strategic forts to secure his borders and developed a strong naval presence along the Konkan and Goan coasts.

**VIKRAMADITYA**

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**BIRTH AND GROWTH**

**[Chandragupta II](https://www.worldhistory.org/Chandragupta_II/)** (c. 375 CE - 413/14 CE)also known as vikramaditya was the next great **[Gupta](https://www.worldhistory.org/gupta/)** emperor after his father **[Samudragupta](https://www.worldhistory.org/Samudragupta/)** (335/350 - 370/380 CE). He proved to be an able ruler and conqueror with many achievements to his credit. He came to be known by his title Vikramaditya ([Sanskrit](https://www.worldhistory.org/Sanskrit/): "Sun of Power"). He carried on the legacy of Samudragupta and contributed his share towards sustaining an extensive [empire](https://www.worldhistory.org/empire/) that carved out a place for itself in history.

**[Chandragupta](https://www.worldhistory.org/Chandragupta/)**'s accession to the throne was not smooth, as he had to depose his brother Ramagupta. Samudragupta had been succeeded by his eldest son Ramagupta (370-375 CE). The existence of coins and inscriptions recording the installation of images in a Jaina **[temple](https://www.worldhistory.org/temple/)** in central **[India](https://www.worldhistory.org/india/)** by Maharajadhiraja (Sanskrit: "Lord of Great Kings") Ramagupta attest to the existence of this king. The Gupta inscriptions do not mention Ramagupta, for the simple reason that going by the tradition of ancient Indian genealogies, deposed kings are hardly mentioned as the focus is on the king who deposed him and his successors. Thus, "since the succession passed to Chandragupta and his sons, Ramagupta is ignored" (Singh, 479).

**EMPIRE**

There is no historical evidence discovered as yet as to how and why Chandragupta followed his brother on the throne. The sole mention of it occurs only in literary sources, with the foremost being the Sanskrit play *Devichandraguptam* (*"****[Devi](https://www.worldhistory.org/Devi/)****and Chandragupta"*) written by the celebrated playwright Vishakhadatta sometime between the 4th and 8th centuries CE. According to the story in the play, Ramagupta was a weak and immoral king. Unable to face the might of the Shaka (**[Scythian](https://www.worldhistory.org/scythian/)**) king, he agreed to the terms of surrender which included also the surrender of his wife, the Chief Queen Dhruvadevi (Devi or Dhruvasvamini) to the enemy king. His younger brother Chandragupta could not stand this disgrace. Disguising himself as the Queen, he reached the enemy camp and killed the Shaka king in his sleep. Ramagupta was petrified at this incident and greatly feared a heavy Shaka backlash. Disgusted by his brother's cowardice, Chandragupta eventually deposed and killed him. He then married Dhruvadevi and ascended the throne.

**FALL OF DYNASTY**

Many historians maintain that it is not known as to "how far the story embodies genuine historical tradition" (Majumdar, 141). Nonetheless, the events as stated by the play continued to find reverberations in later literary texts including the *Harshacharita* or the biography of Emperor Harshavardhana or **[Harsha](https://www.worldhistory.org/Harsha/)** (606 – 647 CE) of the **[Pushyabhuti Dynasty](https://www.worldhistory.org/Pushyabhuti_Dynasty/)**, written by his court poet Banabhatta or Bana (c. 7th century CE). Bana writes, "In his enemy's **[city](https://www.worldhistory.org/city/)** the king of the Shakas, while courting another's wife, was butchered by Chandragupta concealed in his mistress's dress" (Banabhatta, 194).

The inscriptions of the **[Rashtrakuta Dynasty](https://www.worldhistory.org/Rashtrakuta_Dynasty/)** (8th-10th century CE) of southern India also cite these happenings (mentions are made of a Gupta prince who killed his elder brother, and then seized his kingdom, marrying his queen), thus showing that these events or their knowledge was well part of public memory even in the 9th and 10th centuries CE. Historian RK Mookerji says that "the original story mentioned by Bana received additions and embellishments in later texts, literary and epigraphic" (Mookerji, 67).  Chandragupta, historically, did have a queen named Dhruvadevi, who was the mother of his successor, Kumaragupta I (414-455 CE). Thus, it is quite probable that Vishakhadatta built up his plot around historical persons, based on what was known (or supposed) of them at his time, which perhaps included recollection of some enduring animosity between the two brothers over the throne, or possibly even over Dhruvadevi.

The historical importance of this play, however, lies in the establishment of the identity of Ramagupta - otherwise so completely dismissed by the official Gupta records - both as an actual person and as the successor of Samudragupta. This has helped historians view any inscriptions or other evidence associated with this name very closely, and try to figure out what had really happened in his reign. Most of the details are yet to be known.