KAUTILYA

c. 350–275 BC

WHY HE MADE HISTORY  Kautilya was a philosopher, a statesman, and an adviser who lived in Northern India. His work had an enormous influence on early Indian kings.

As you read the biography below, think about how Kautilya’s contributions could be compared to other philosophers from history.

Kautilya was born in what is present-day Pakistan. There is very little record of his early life. It is believed that he was a member of the Brahmin caste. Some historians think that Kautilya studied both Greek and Persian culture, and perhaps even medicine.

As an adult, Kautilya earned a reputation as an intelligent man, well versed both in politics and philosophy. He was believed to be a “king maker,” and helped rulers come to power with his experience and advice. Kautilya was said to have found Candragupta Maurya when the boy was only 10 years old, and raised him to be one of India’s greatest emperors. Kautilya served as Candragupta’s adviser for many years, and helped him overthrow the Magadha kings.

Kautilya is best known for writing the Arthashastra. The title can be translated as “The Art of Well-Being” or “The Science of Material Gain.” Kautilya’s writing combined philosophy and politics. The Arthashastra acted as a kind of handbook to help leaders of India govern their kingdoms. The book had been lost for centuries, but was rediscovered in 1905.

VOCABULARY

Brahmin  the highest social class in India
The *Arthashastra* dealt with many issues. Kautilya described law, kingship, and diplomacy. He also described how an effective government should be run. Some of his opinions, however, were extreme. For example, Kautilya approved of spying and political assassination. But Kautilya’s book is still important because it described the time in which he lived, and this helps scholars understand the Mauryan Empire in India during this era.

Kautilya was said to have lived a very simple life. After he wrote the *Arthashastra*, Kautilya felt that he had served his purpose for India. He was not interested in holding a government position, and instead he chose to spend the rest of his life in contemplation and thought.

**WHAT DID YOU LEARN?**

1. What was the *Arthashastra* about?

2. **Make Inferences**  How do you think Kautilya’s political opinions might be received today?

**ACTIVITY**

Write a letter to Kautilya. Think of one thing that you have heard or learned about politics in the United States, and ask Kautilya for advice on this issue. Brainstorm possible answers that you might receive.
Biography Candragupta Maurya

WHAT DID YOU LEARN?
1. Maurya was said to have ruled India much like Alexander the Great.
2. Indica described what life was like in India during this time. It may have included details about civilian lives, legal and state doctrines, and even Mauryan’s practices.

ACTIVITY
Answers will vary.

Biography Kautilya

WHAT DID YOU LEARN?
1. The Arthashastra was a guidebook that discussed politics, and how to lead. It also dealt with philosophy.
2. Kautilya’s thoughts and opinions were probably applicable to life in the time in which he lived, however today things are very different. I do not think politicians would be able to follow the Arthashastra, as modern government is very different from what I have learned about history.

ACTIVITY
Answers will vary.

Biography Mahinda

WHAT DID YOU LEARN?
1. Mahinda spread Buddhism through India.
2. Mahinda was a monk who became enlightened, then traveled to Sri Lanka to convert the King to Buddhism. He then spread the teachings of Buddha. He died, and a memorial was erected where he was cremated.

ACTIVITY
Answers will vary.

Literature

CALL-OUT BOX

Similes (p. 12): misery will follow, as the wheel of a cart follows the foot of an ox; happiness will follow, like a shadow that never leaves.

ANALYZING LITERATURE
1. The consequences of good and evil
2. Both passages talk about the consequences of good and evil. The Buddhist passage uses comparisons and refers to happiness when one is good and sorrow when one is evil. The Hindu passage lists the traits of good and evil men. It refers to goodness leading to freedom and evil leading to suffering and bondage.

Primary Source The Story of Savitri from India’s Mahabharata

WHAT DID YOU LEARN?
1. Possible answers: intelligence, loyalty, devotion, lack of concern for riches, determination, concern for family members, more concerned for others than for herself
2. Answers will vary. Possible answers: She cares more about making other people happy than about her own happiness. She wants to trick Yama into continuing to grant her favors. She wants Yama to admire her and feel sympathy for her.
3. Accept any reasonable response.