

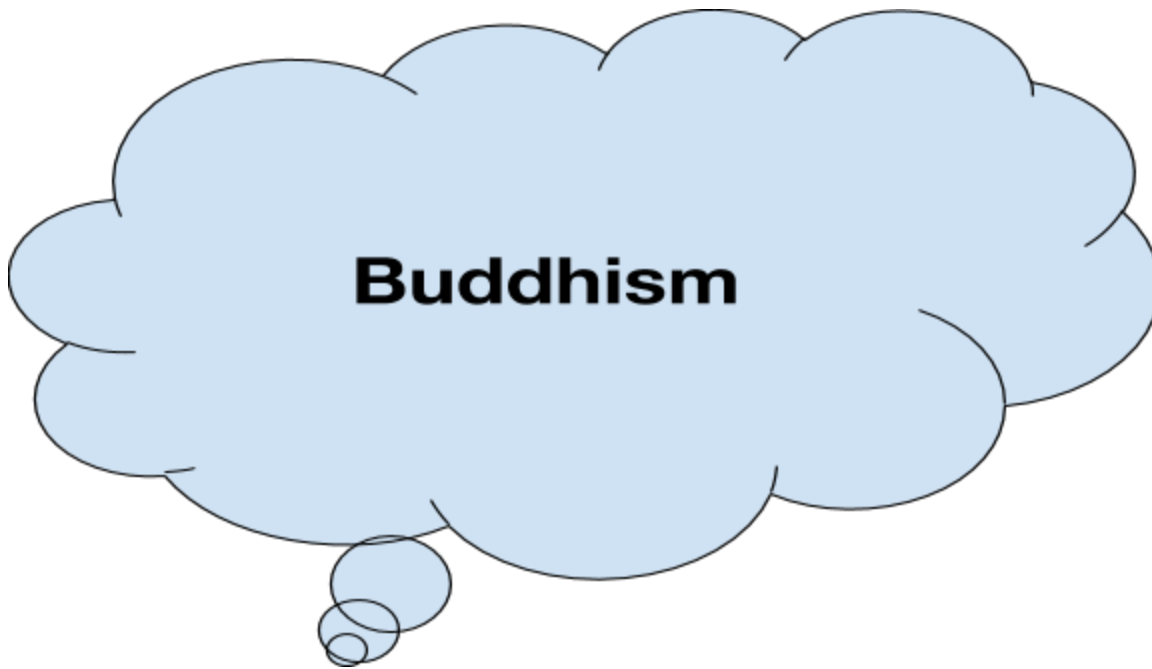
Objective:

How did the Mauryan Empire use their beliefs systems and philosophical ideas to gain, consolidate, and maintain power?

- **Explain** how Ashoka used Buddhism to gain, consolidate, and maintain the power of the Maurya Empire.

Introduction**Think**

Directions: Independently, in the thought bubble below, write anything you can remember about Buddhism.

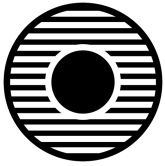
**Pair**

Directions: Pair up with a partner. Explain to your partner everything you wrote in the thought bubble above and how the words and phrases you wrote relate to Buddhism. Then, ask your partner to do the same. If your partner has anything in their bubble that you do not, add it to yours.

Share

Directions: With your partner, select the three most important facts for your classmates to know about Buddhism, then share them with the class. To prepare for sharing out, write out those three facts here:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____



Timeline of Indian History through the Classical Age



Contextualize



Watch the video [“Ashoka the Great” from Mocomi Kids](#) and read the text below then answer the questions that follow.

The **Mauryan Empire** ruled parts of India from 321 BCE until 185 BCE. In 269 B.C.E. **Ashoka Maurya** inherited the throne of the Mauryan Empire in India. His family created an empire by conquering other kingdoms in brutal wars. When Ashoka became the king he continued to fight wars and expand the empire. In his eighth year as the king, he went to war against the rulers of a section of India called Kalinga. Ashoka’s armies won the Kalinga War in which, according to historical sources, 100,000 people were killed and 150,000 people were forced to leave their homes. As he stated in one of his edicts, Ashoka “felt profound sorrow and regret” for the “slaughter, death, and deportation” his war caused. As a result, **Ashoka converted to the peaceful religion of Buddhism**. From that point onwards he based all of his government policies on Buddhist teachings. To inform the people he ruled, he had his new laws inscribed on rocks and stone pillars that were put up in public places throughout the empire. These policies are known as **Ashoka’s Rock and Pillar Edicts**. An edict is an official order.



The Maurya Empire ca. 250 BCE during Ashoka's Rule
Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Maurya_Empire_c.250_BCE_2.png

1. How did Ashoka expand his empire before he converted to Buddhism?

2. Why was the Battle of Kalinga important to Ashoka’s story?

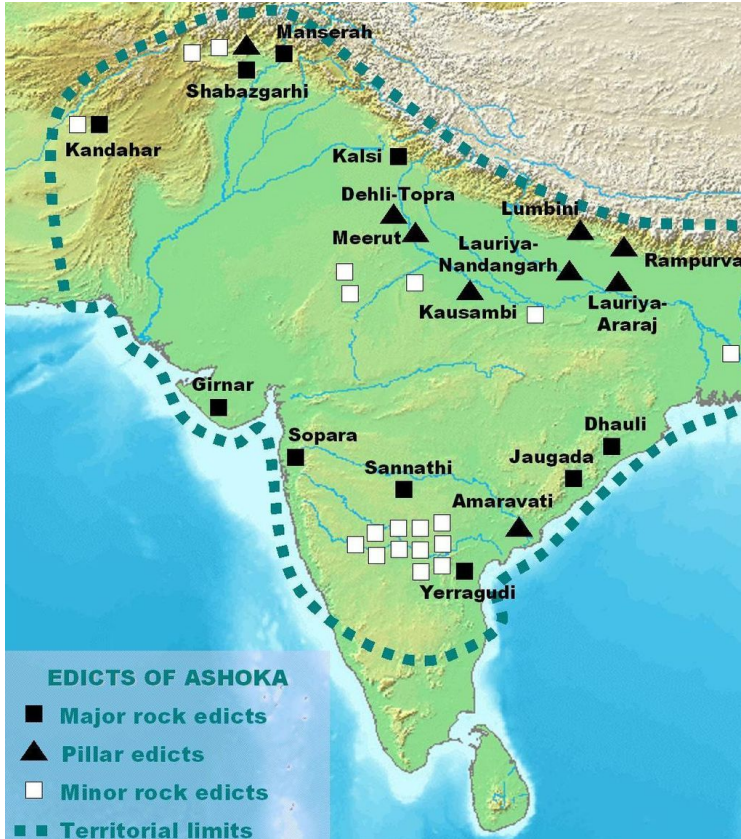
3. After his conversion to Buddhism, what actions did Ashoka take to improve the lives of the people in his empire? How might these actions have helped Ashoka gain, consolidate, and maintain his power?



Ashoka's Rock and Pillar Edicts

Sourcing

➡ Directions: Respond to the questions below using the text and images provided.



Source:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edicts_of_Ashoka#/media/File:EdictsOfAshoka.jpg



Source:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pillars_of_Ashoka#/media/File:Ashoka_pillar_at_Vaishali,_Bihar,_India.jpg

After the war of Kalinga, Ashoka controlled all the Indian subcontinent except for the extreme southern part and he could have easily controlled that remaining part as well, but he decided not to. Some versions say that Ashoka was sickened by the slaughter of the war and refused to keep on fighting. Whatever his reasons were, Ashoka stopped his expansion policy and India turned into a prosperous and peaceful place for the years to come.

Around 250 BC, Ashoka began to issue one of the most famous edicts in the history of government and instructed his officials to carve them on rocks and pillars, in line with the local dialects and in a very simple fashion. In the rock edicts, Ashoka talks about religious freedom and religious tolerance, he instructs his officials to help the poor and the elderly, establishes medical facilities for humans and animals, commands obedience to parents, respect for elders, generosity for all priests and ascetic orders no matter their creed, orders fruit and shade trees to be planted and also wells to be dug along the roads so travellers can benefit from them. To this day, only nineteen of the pillars survive, six of them with Ashoka's lion symbol on the top. They average between 40 and 50 feet in height.

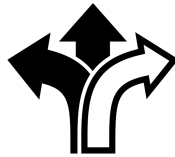
Source: <http://www.ancient.eu/Ashoka/>

Who wrote *Ashoka's Rock and Pillar Edicts*?

When was *Ashoka's Rock and Pillar Edicts* written? **Where** was *Ashoka's Rock and Pillar Edicts* located?

What type of source is *Ashoka's Rock and Pillar Edicts*?

Why was *Ashoka's Rock and Pillar Edicts* written?



Predict

How might *Ashoka's Rock and Pillar Edicts* be useful evidence in determining what life was like under the Mauryan empire in Mesopotamia? How might it be not useful?

In what ways do you predict that *Ashoka's Rock and Pillar Edicts* are similar to *The Code of Hammurabi*?



How did the Mauryan Empire use their beliefs systems and philosophical ideas to gain, consolidate, and maintain power?

Close Read

1 All men are my children. What I desire for my own children, and I desire their welfare and happiness
2 both in this world and the next, that I desire for all men.

3
4 [Y]our aim should be to act with impartiality [fairness; evenhandedness]. It is because of these things
5 -- envy, anger, cruelty, hate, indifference, laziness or tiredness -- that such a thing does not happen.
6 Therefore your aim should be: "May these things not be in me." And the root of this is non-anger and
7 patience...Failure in duty on your part will not please me. But done properly, it will win you heaven and
8 you will be discharging your debts to me.

9
10 Happiness in this world and the next is difficult to obtain without much love for the Dharma, much
11 self-examination, much respect, much fear (of evil), and much enthusiasm. But through my instruction
12 this regard for Dharma and love of Dharma has grown day by day, and will continue to grow. And my
13 officers of high, low and middle rank are practicing and conforming to Dharma, and are capable of
14 inspiring others to do the same. Mahamatras [Ashoka's officials responsible for making sure Dharma
15 was followed] in border areas are doing the same. And these are my instructions: to protect with
16 Dharma, to make happiness through Dharma and to guard with Dharma.

17
18 [King Ashoka] honors both ascetics [religious people] and the householders of all religions [...] By so
19 doing, one's own religion benefits, and so do other religions, while doing otherwise harms one's own
20 religion and the religions of others. Whoever praises his own religion, due to excessive devotion, and
21 condemns others with the thought "Let me glorify my own religion," only harms his own religion.
22 Therefore contact (between religions) is good. One should listen to and respect the doctrines
23 professed by others.

24
25 Whatever good deeds have been done by me, those the people accept and those they follow.
26 Therefore they have progressed and will continue to progress by being respectful to mother and
27 father, respectful to elders, by courtesy to the aged and proper behavior towards Brahmins and
28 ascetics, towards the poor and distressed, and even towards servants and employees.

29
30 There is no gift like the gift of the Dharma...One benefits in this world and gains great merit in the next
31 by giving the gift of the Dharma.

32
33 Therefore this Dharma edict has been written to last long and that my sons, grandsons and
34 great-grandsons might act in conformity with it for the welfare of the world. However, this is difficult to
35 do without great exertion.

Source: Ven. S. Dhammika, trans. "The Edicts of King Asoka: An English Rendering." Retrieved from:
<http://www.cs.colostate.edu/~malaiya/ashoka.html>. Please see notice on [copyright](#).

1. What does “the Dharma” mean in this document?

2. According to lines 11-16, how did Ashoka plan to spread “the Dharma?”

3. What is Ashoka’s policy on religions other than Buddhism (li 18-23)?

4. Based on lines 4-8 and lines 25-28, how does Ashoka want the people in his empire to act?

5. According to Ashoka, why should people act the way he suggests?

FA

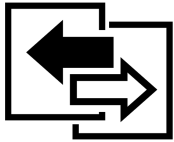
Supporting Question 9: How did the Mauryan Empire use their beliefs systems and philosophical ideas to gain, consolidate, and maintain power?

➡ **Directions:** Using evidence from the documents above, respond to the task below in the space provided.



Contextualize

How did the Mauryan Empire use their beliefs systems and philosophical ideas to gain, consolidate, and maintain power?



Corroborate

Ashoka's Rock and Pillar Edicts provide important context about life in the Mauryan Empire. However, like all primary sources, there are limitations and historians need to corroborate this piece of evidence with other pieces of evidence to have a clearer understanding of what life was like in the Mauryan Empire.

What other sources might help us to better understand what life was like for people living in the Maurya Empire while Ashoka was the king?

Would you want to live in the Mauryan Empire under *Ashoka's Rock and Pillar Edicts*? Explain.