

Mauryan and Gupta Empires



The Mauryan Empire

- Many small kingdoms existed across India in 300s BC
- Each kingdom had own ruler; no central authority united them
- Magadha a dominant kingdom near Ganges
 - Strong leader, **Chandragupta Maurya** gained control
 - Began conquering surrounding kingdoms
 - Conquests led to founding of Mauryan empire

Rise of the Mauryan Empire

Alexander the Great

- Alexander conquered force in northwest India, 326 BC
- Did not remain in India long
- Battle-weary soldiers wanted to return home, soon left India

Mauryan army

- Chandragupta built immense army, 60,000 soldiers
- Chariots, war elephants
- Began conquering northern India

Alexander's legacy

- Alexander's conquest inspired Chandragupta Maurya
- Seized throne of kingdom of Magadha, 321 BC
- Began Mauryan empire

Extended empire

- Defeated Seleucus I, 305 BC
- Mauryan empire controlled northern India, 303 BC
- Also controlled much of what is now Afghanistan

Mauryan Rule

Strong government

- Like Qin, Han rulers, Chandragupta Maurya established centralized government to control empire, crush resistance
- Relied on brilliant adviser **Kautilya**, Brahmin, member of the priest caste

Arthashastra

- Manual for statecraft, thought to be written by Kautilya
- *Arthashastra* called for strict state control
- Also called for use of spies, even assassination

Empire divided

- Chandragupta divided empire into districts, appointed loyalists to rule them
- Organized bureaucracy ran government, spies monitored officials, gathered information, rooted out threats to state

The Mauryan Empire

Megasthenes

- Greek ambassador visited Mauryan Empire during Chandragupta's reign
- Wrote about his observations
- Described land of prosperity

Pataliputra

- Greatest city, Mauryan capital: magnificent palaces, temples, parks
- Government controlled economy
- Emperor owned land, rent money from farmers funded government

Rule under Ashoka

- Chandragupta gave up throne, 301 BC, became Jainist monk
- Son became emperor, followed by grandson **Ashoka**
- Mauryan empire reached height under Ashoka
- Through warfare empire expanded, included most of India

Kalinga campaign

- Violence of fighting at Kalinga appalled Ashoka
- Abandoned policy of conquest and converted to Buddhism
- Began to promote, spread policy of right conduct, Buddhism
- Supported Buddhist missionaries, worked to improve lives of his people

The Mauryan Empire

- Mauryan empire began to decline following death of Ashoka, 232 BC
- Sons battled for power, central control weakened
- Distant provinces began to slip away
- Last Mauryan emperor killed by one of generals, 184 BC
- Mauryan empire lasted 140 years, then collapsed

The Gupta Empire

India remained divided into small kingdoms for about 400 years. Then around AD 320, the Gupta dynasty took over northern India. Under the Gupta, northern India was reunited, Indian society prospered, and the religion of Hinduism grew in popularity.

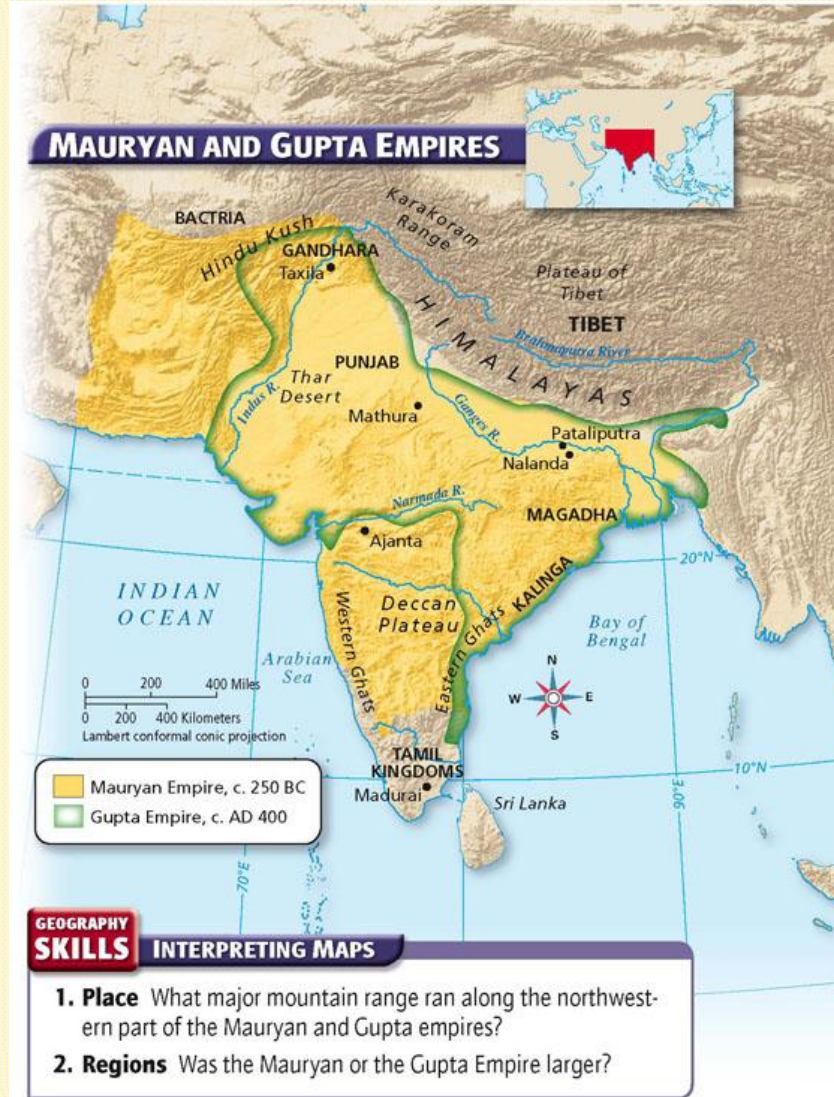
Rise of Gupta Empire

- Like Mauryan, Gupta dynasty rose to power in region of Magadha
- Founder was Chandra Gupta I
- From base in Magadha, Chandra conquered neighboring lands, brought much of northern India under Gupta control

India under Gupta Rule

- Gupta rule less centralized
- Divided main part of empire into units
- Royal officials governed each unit
- Governed through local rulers in distant conquered areas
- Local rulers had to pay tribute

Gupta power expanded under the heirs of Chandra Gupta I, and the empire reached its height under **Chandra Gupta II**.



The Gupta Empire

- Chandra Gupta II, ruled from AD 375 to 415
- Further expanded empire, strengthened economy
- Reign was period of prosperity, cultural achievement
- Chinese Buddhist monk, Faxian, traveled to India
- Described empire as rich, prosperous, and punishments fair

The Gupta Empire

Support of Hinduism

- Buddhism prospered, spread during period between Mauryan, Gupta empires
- Hinduism lost popularity during this period
- Under Guptas, Hinduism became main religion
- Rulers supported building Hindu temples, promoted revival of writings
- Buddhism began to lose influence during this period

End of Gupta Rule

- Began to weaken, late 400s
- Loose Gupta control allowed some parts of empire to break away
- Central Asian nomads, White Huns, began invading India

Weakened Empire

- Problems disrupted trade
- Gupta military efforts to defend empire drained treasury
- Gupta rule ended, 550
- Again India divided into small, regional kingdoms

Life in Gupta India

Growth of Trade

- Indian civilization flourished during Gupta empire
- Trade increased, economy strengthened, cities prospered
- Overland routes like the Silk Roads linked India to other markets
- Indian merchants traded ivory, cashmere, cotton, spices for Chinese silk, Roman ceramics

Sea Trade

- Gupta, Tamil kingdoms in southern India traded actively by sea
- Indian sailors used seasonal winds to reach foreign markets across Arabian Sea
- Sea trade also between India and Southeast Asia
- Played key role in cultural diffusion of Indian culture

Daily Life

- Growth of trade strengthened economy; Gupta Empire's cities reflected prosperity
- Use of money became more common; new group of bankers, moneylenders emerged
- Luxury, pleasure for urban rich; enjoyed music, poetry, art

Simple Lives

- Most Gupta people led simple lives in small villages
- Majority of village dwellers, farmers
- Most villages self-sufficient, but trade between villages occurred
- People from different villages got together for religious festivals, other events

Life in Gupta India

Social structure

- Most people in ancient India belonged to specific caste
- Castes determined jobs, interaction with others
- Number grew, developed rules

Gender

- Also shaped Indian society
- Men had more rights than women
- Patriarchal society, similar to China

Legal codes

- Legal codes also defined people's roles
- *Laws of Manu*, compiled between 200 BC, AD 200
- Defined proper behavior

Laws of Manu

- Female child subject to father, female youth to husband
- Men expected to treat women with respect
- Abused women could leave

A Gupta Golden Age

Like the Han period in China, the Gupta period was a golden age of cultural and scientific achievements.

Sanskrit Literature

- Many great works created during Gupta period
- One of greatest writers, **Kalidasa**
 - Poet, playwright
 - Wrote plays for royal court
 - *Sakuntala*, most famous
 - Play combines myth, humor, court life, lyric poetry

Science and Technology

Astronomy

- Indians identified seven planets in solar system
- Could predict eclipses of sun, moon
- **Aryabhata**, one of most famous Indian astronomers
 - Correctly argued that Earth rotates on axis, revolves around sun
 - Knew Earth was sphere, calculated circumference with remarkable accuracy