



AP World History Classical Indian Civilizations

Maurya & Gupta Empires

The Mauryan and Gupta empires

321 B.C.E.-550 C.E.



Political Fragmentation in India

- “Political unity in India, on those rare occasions when it has been achieved, has not lasted long. A number of factors have contributed to India’s habitual political fragmentation. Different terrains called forth varied forms of organization and economic activity, and people occupying diverse zones differed in language and cultural practices. Perhaps the most significant barrier to political unity lay in the complex social hierarchy. Individuals identified themselves primarily in terms of their class and caste; allegiance to a higher political authority was secondary.” (Bulliet, p. 188)

India Before the Mauryan Dynasty

- Kingdom of Magadha – located in eastern India south of the Ganges began to rise to power as a result of wealth based on agriculture, iron mines and strategic location astride the trade routes of the eastern Ganges Basin
- 520 BCE Persian Emperor Darius conquers NW India
- Introduces Persian ruling pattern
- 327 Alexander of Macedon destroys Persian Empire in India
- Troops mutiny, departs after 2 years → Political power vacuum

Around 327 B.C.E., Alexander the Great conquered the Persian Empire and continued into India.

During this time, the Aryan culture and belief systems continued to spread throughout India.



Then, around 321 B.C.E., a new empire arose in India, one that would come to be the largest in that country to date.

The Maurya Empire



The Maurya Empire



Spanning from the Indus River Valley eastward through the Ganges River Valley and southward through the Deccan Plateau, the Mauryan Empire was founded by Chandragupta Maurya, who unified the smaller Aryan kingdoms into a civilization.

Chandragupta Maurya

Founder of Maurya Empire
Creates 1st unified Indian empire

- Took advantage of power vacuum left by Alexander
- Overthrew the Magadha rulers and created India's first centralized empire
- Unified northern India.
- Defeated the Persian/Greek general Seleucus.
- Followed in the lead of Alexander the Great by invading the Punjab while his successors Bindusara and Ashoka extended the empire throughout the entire subcontinent except the very southern tip



Chandragupta Maurya: 321 BCE-298 BCE

- Divided his empire into provinces, then districts for tax assessments and law enforcement.
- He feared assassination → food tasters, slept in different rooms, etc.
- 301 BCE → gave up his throne & became a Jain.
 - Jainism is an ancient Indian religion. Followers of Jainism are called "Jains", a word derived from the Sanskrit word jina who connotes the path of victory in crossing over life's stream of rebirths by destroying the karma through an ethical and spiritual life
- India would not be united in an empire this large again until the arrival of the Mughals.



Mauryan Government

- Close relatives and associates of the king governed administrative districts based on traditional ethnic boundaries
- Imperial Army with an infantry, cavalry and chariot divisions and the fearsome new element of war elephants helped to secure power and control
- Capital city of Pataliputra was governed by six committees with responsibility for manufacturing, trade, sales, taxes, the welfare of foreigners, and the registration of births and deaths

Mauryan Foreign Policy

- Arthashastra – a treatise (essay) on government said to be written by a Brahmin named Kautilya, an advisor to Chandragupta designed to help him in his conquests and consolidation of power
- Mandala theory of foreign policy – “MY ENEMY’S ENEMY IS MY FRIEND”
- Advocated increasing the collection of tax revenues and advocates the use of spies to keep watch on all within the kingdom

It would be Chandragupta's grandson, Ashoka Maurya, who would take the empire to its greatest heights.

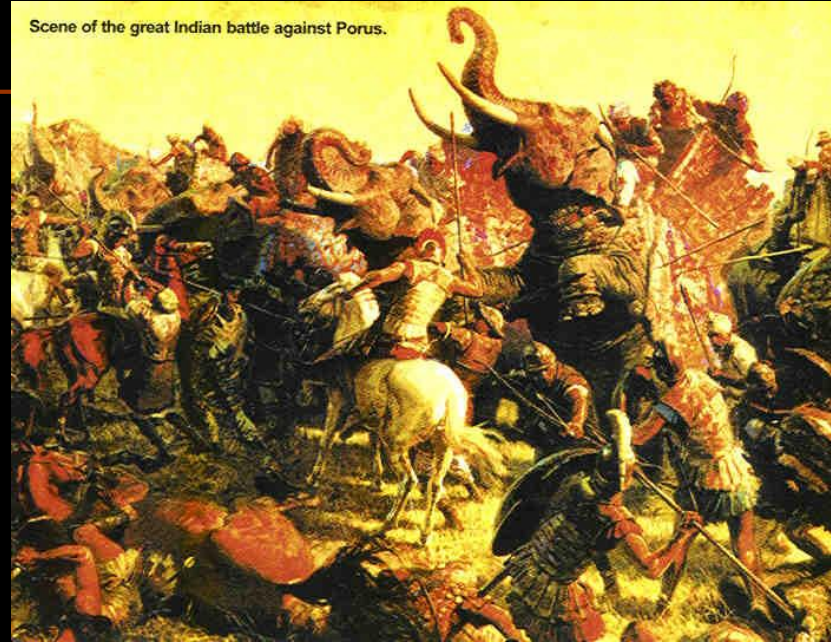
Ashoka

- Grandson of Chandragupta
- Engaged in military campaigns to extend the boundaries of the empire
- Became overwhelmed/disheartened by the heavy casualties and brutality of these wars and converted to Buddhism and embraced the idea of nonviolence, morality, moderation and religious toleration in both government and private life
- Warning – “the king, remorseful as he is, has the strength to punish the wrongdoers who do not repent”



Another reason was its powerful military. Interestingly, it was its military strength that eventually caused a dramatic change in the empire.

Stricken with disgust by, and filled with remorse for, a very violent and bloody victory his forces claimed over the Kalinga in southeast India, Ashoka converted to Buddhism.



For the rest of his reign, Ashoka preached nonviolence and moderation.

Due to an organized and peaceful empire the Mauryan Empire became so powerful and wealthy through trade.

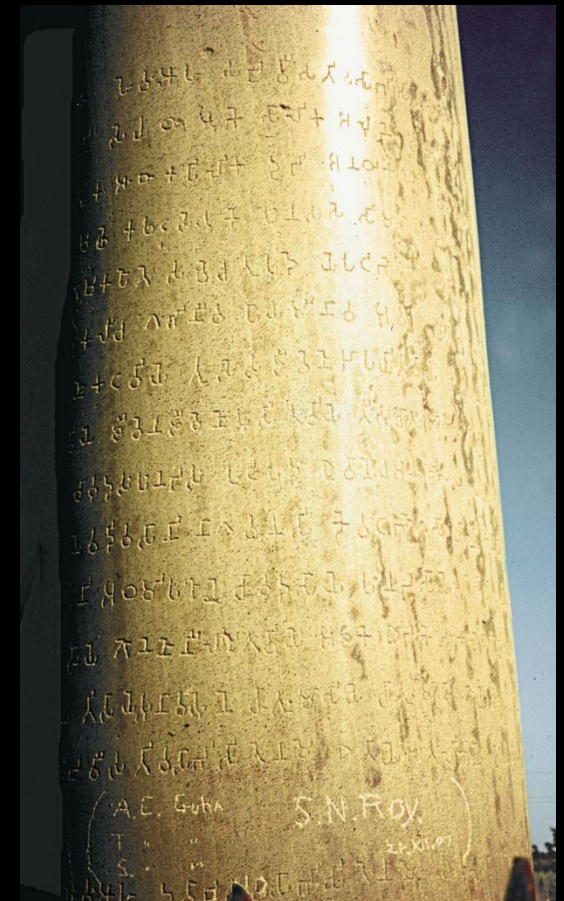


Indians merchants traded in silk, cotton, and elephants (among hundreds of other things) to Mesopotamia and the eastern Roman Empire.

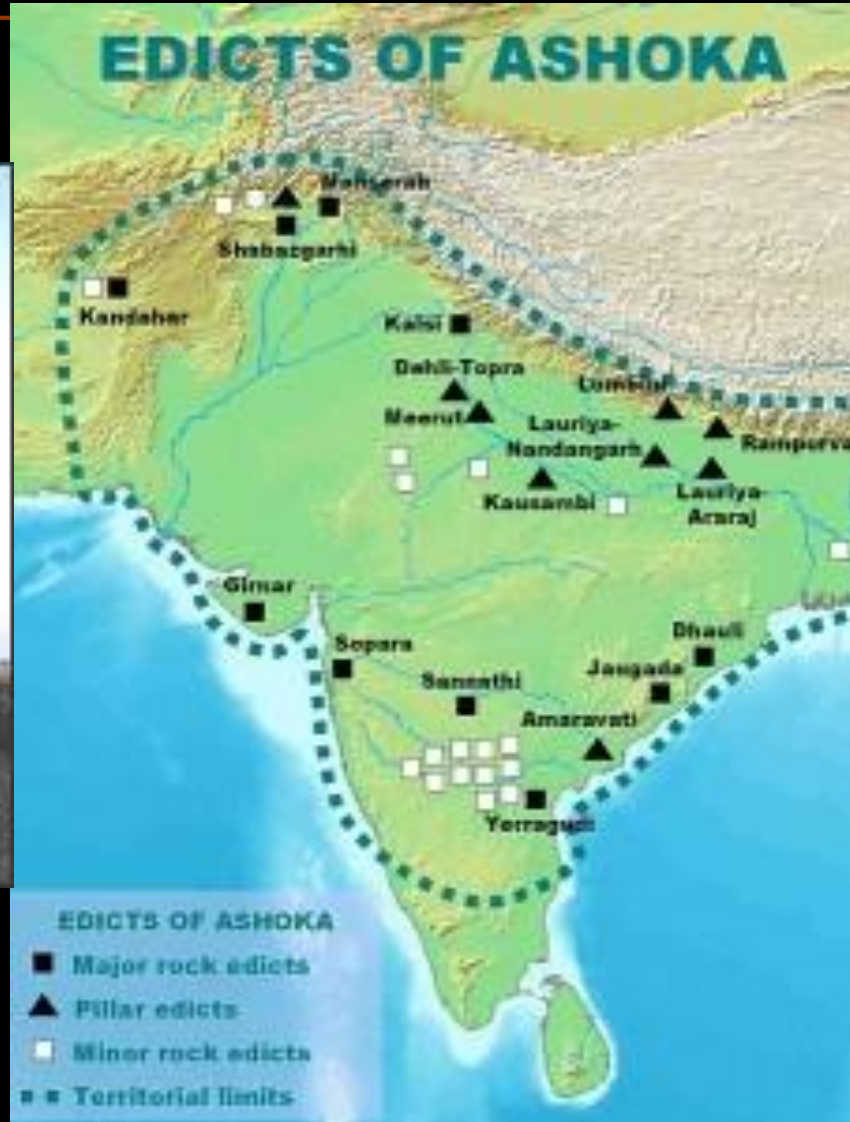
Mauryan Finances

- Taxes levied at a rate of $\frac{1}{4}$ of the harvest used to support the king and government
- Additional revenue raised from tolls on trade, government control and monopoly of mining, liquor sales and the manufacture of weapons
- Fees charged for the use of irrigation networks and systems
- Standard coinage used to pay government and military personnel (also encouraged and promoted trade)

Ashoka is also known for his Rock and Pillar Edicts, which were carved on rocks and pillars throughout the empire.



These edicts reminded Mauryans to live generous and righteous lives.



Collapse of the Mauryan Empire

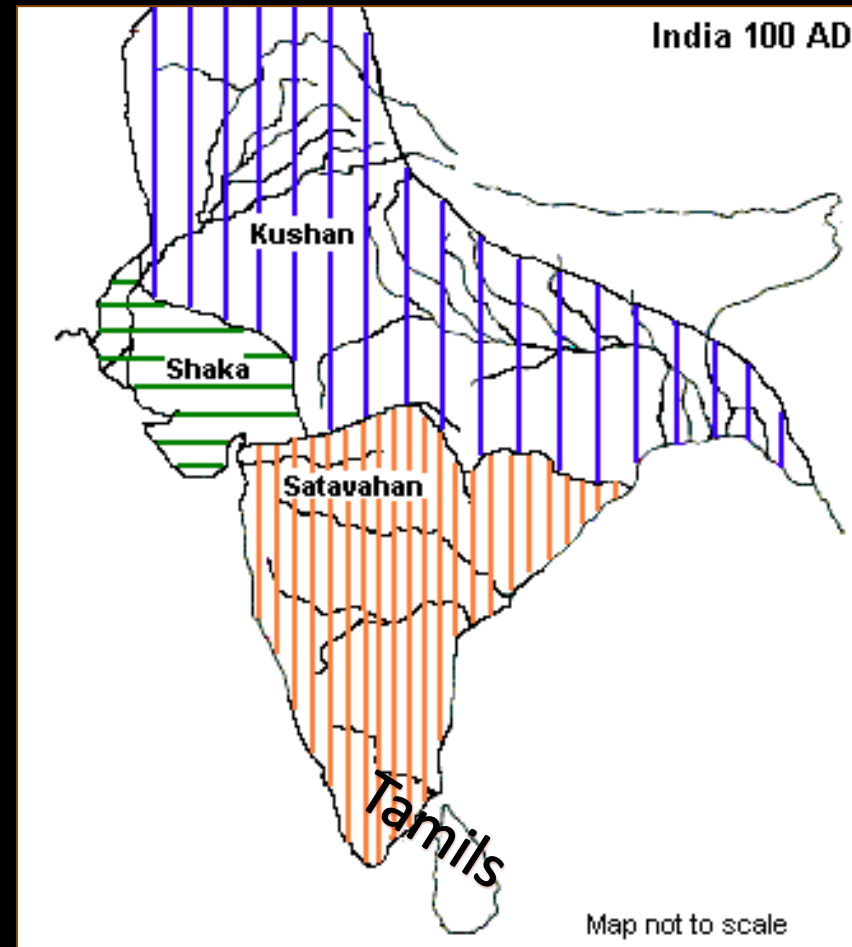
- After the death of Ashoka the subcontinent once again fragmented politically and became heavily influenced by outsiders
- Trade routes remained essential as India was still the heartland of the great Silk Roads as well as home to many sea trade routes
- Guilds of merchants and artisans became influential in this politically fragmented region
- Significant advancements and innovations in science and technology are rooted in this time period

Following Ashoka's conversion and commitment to Buddhism, the religion spread beyond India into many parts of Southeast Asia.



Turmoil & a Power Vacuum: 220 BCE – 320 CE

“The three Tamil Kingdoms of Cholas, Pandyas, and Cheras in the southernmost parts of the peninsula were in frequent conflict with one another and experienced periods of ascendancy and decline, but they persisted in one form or another for over two thousand years.”
(Bulliet, p. 191)



Divided into many kingdoms.

Gupta Empire, 320-550 C.E.

- Originated in the Ganges plain with its' capital at Pataliputra
- Founded by Chandra Gupta
- Enjoyed the benefit of sitting on sea and land trade routes just did the Mauryan empire
- Copied much of the revenue plans and administrative bureaucracy of the Mauryan empire
- A standing army with a strong cavalry skilled in the use of the bow and arrow maintained tight control of the empire and its' finances

Gupta “Theater State”

- Limited in its ability to control the outlying frontiers the empire relied on persuading loyalty with the splendor, beauty and orderliness of life at the capital and royal court
- Created and supported a constant round of solemn rituals, dramatic ceremonies, and cultural events as an advertisement promoting the benefits of association with the empire
- Redistributed luxury goods and profits garnered from control of trade routes to their dependents to secure favor and loyalty

Gupta Innovation & Technology

- Supported and financed astronomers, mathematicians, scientists, poets, and dramatists
- Concept of zero
- Arabic numerals
- Place value notation
- Compilation of law codes and grammatical texts

Gupta Women

- As in Mesopotamia, Greece and China, several factors including urbanization, more complex political and social structures and the emergence of a nonagricultural middle class that placed a high value on the acquisition and inheritance of property – led to a loss of women's rights and an increase in male control over women's behavior
- Could not own or inherit property
- Barred from religious ceremonies
- Obey first her father, then her husband, and finally her sons
- Arrange marriage at a young age
- Sati – a widow was expected to cremate herself on her husband's funeral pyre

Gupta Religion

- Mauryans were Buddhists
- Guptas were Hindus
- Reemergence of the caste system
- Designed, developed and built the classical style of Hindu temples
- Allowed for religious toleration

Gupta Decline

- Resulted from continual pressure and invasion by nomads from the steppes of Central Asia
- Local loyalty shifted to rich landholding Brahmins
- The region returned to a politically fragmented decentralized state