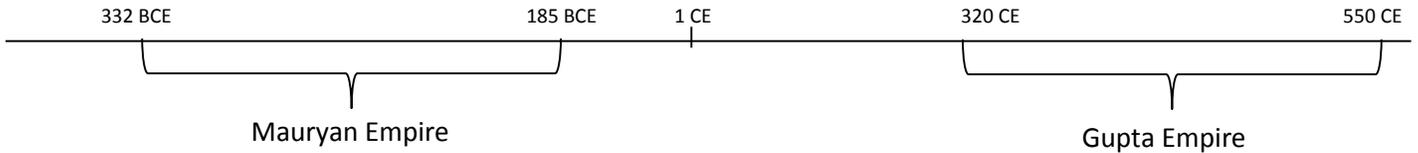


Mauryan Empire and Gupta Empire



Directions: As you read about the Mauryan and Gupta Empires of India on the right side, highlight important aspects. When you finish reading the entire selection, use the left column to write down questions or key points from the reading. (You should have at least 7-14 key points or questions written in that left column.)

Key Points:

Mauryan Empire

Chandragupta Maurya Unifies North India

Emperor Chandragupta moved northwest, seizing all the land from Magadha to the Indus. Around 305 B.C., Chandragupta began to battle Seleucus I, one of Alexander the Great's generals. Seleucus had inherited part of Alexander's empire. He wanted to reestablish Macedonian control over the Indus Valley. After several years of fighting, however, Chandragupta defeated Seleucus. By 303 B.C., the Mauryan Empire stretched more than 2,000 miles, uniting north India politically for the first time.

To win his wars of conquest, Chandragupta raised a vast army: 600,000 soldiers on foot, 30,000 soldiers on horseback, and 9,000 elephants. To clothe, feed, and pay these troops, the government levied high taxes. For example, farmers had to pay up to one-half the value of their crops to the king.

Running the Empire

Chandragupta relied on an adviser named Kautilya (kow•TIHL•yuh), a member of the priestly caste. Kautilya wrote a ruler's handbook called the Arthashastra (AHR•thuh•SHAHS•truh). This book proposed toughminded policies to hold an empire together, including spying on the people and employing political assassination. Following Kautilya's advice, Chandragupta created a highly bureaucratic government. He divided the empire into four provinces, each headed by a royal prince. Each province was then divided into local districts, whose officials assessed taxes and enforced the law.

Asoka Promotes Buddhism

Chandragupta's grandson, Asoka (uh•SOH•kuh), brought the Mauryan Empire to its greatest heights. Asoka became king of the Mauryan Empire in 269 B.C. At first, he followed in Chandragupta's footsteps, waging war to expand his empire. During a bloody war against the neighboring state of Kalinga, 100,000 soldiers were slain, and even more civilians perished. Although victorious, Asoka felt sorrow over the slaughter at Kalinga. As a result, he studied Buddhism and decided to rule by the Buddha's teaching of "peace to all beings."

Throughout the empire, Asoka erected huge stone pillars inscribed with his new policies. Some edicts guaranteed that Asoka would treat his subjects fairly and humanely. Others preached nonviolence. Still others urged religious toleration—acceptance of people who held different religious beliefs.

One of Asoka's edicts states, "If one hundredth part or one thousandth of those who died in Kalinga . . . should now suffer similar fate, [that] would be a matter of pain to His Majesty." Even though Asoka wanted to be a loving, peaceful ruler, he had to control a huge empire. He had to balance Kautilya's methods of keeping power and Buddha's urgings to be unselfish. Asoka softened Chandragupta's harsher policies. Instead of spies, he employed officials to look out for his subjects' welfare. He kept his army but sought to rule humanely. In addition, Asoka sent missionaries to Southeast Asia to spread Buddhism.

Asoka had extensive roads built so that he could visit the far corners of India. He also improved conditions along these roads to make travel easier for his officials and to improve communication in the vast empire. For example, every nine miles he had wells dug and rest houses built. This allowed travelers to stop and refresh themselves. Such actions demonstrated Asoka's concern for his subjects' well-being. Noble as his policies of toleration and nonviolence were, they failed to hold the empire together after Asoka died in 232 B.C.

Gupta Empire

After 500 years of invasion and turmoil, a strong leader again arose in the northern state of Magadha. His name was Chandra Gupta (GUP•tuh), but he was no relation to India's first emperor, Chandragupta Maurya. India's second empire, the Gupta Empire, oversaw a great flowering of Indian civilization, especially Hindu culture.

The first Gupta emperor came to power not through battle but by marrying a daughter of an influential royal family. After his marriage, Chandra Gupta I took the title "Great King of Kings" in A.D. 320. His empire included Magadha and the area north of it, with his power base along the Ganges River. His son, Samudra (suh•MU•druh) Gupta, became king in A.D. 335. Although a lover of the arts, Samudra had a warlike side. He expanded the empire through 40 years of conquest.

Trade Expands

In addition to knowledge, India has always been rich in precious resources. Spices, diamonds, sapphires, gold, pearls, and beautiful woods—including ebony, teak, and fragrant sandalwood—have been valuable items of exchange. Trade between India and regions as distant as Africa and Sumeria began more than 4,000 years ago. Trade expanded even after the Mauryan Empire ended around 185 B.C.

Once Indians learned of the Silk Roads, they realized that they could make great profits by acting as middlemen. Middlemen are go-betweens in business transactions. For example, Indian traders would buy Chinese goods and sell them to traders traveling to Rome. To aid their role as middlemen, Indians built trading stations along the Silk Roads. They were located at oases, which are fertile spots in desert areas.

Sea trade also increased. Traders used coastal routes around the rim of the Arabian Sea and up the Persian Gulf to bring goods from India to Rome. In addition, traders from southern India would sail to Southeast Asia to collect spices. They brought the spices back to India and sold them to merchants from Rome.

Increased trade led to the rise of banking in India. Commerce was quite profitable.

Bankers were willing to lend money to merchants and charge them interest on the loans.

Beck, Roger B. *World History: Patterns of Interaction*. Evanston, IL: McDougal Littell, 2005. Print.

