

SSWH2: Identify the major achievements of Chinese and Indian societies to 500 CE/AD

Element A: Describe the development of Indian civilization, include: the rise and fall of the Maurya and Gupta Empires.

Mauryan Empire (324 – 184 BCE)

- ❑ The Maurya (324 BCE to 184 BCE) were the first empire to unify large areas of India.
- ❑ There is some evidence that the founding emperor Chandragupta Maurya may have been inspired by Alexander the Great whose death left a political vacuum in Northwest India that the Maurya filled.
- ❑ The empire was ruled by a hereditary monarch aided by an elaborate bureaucracy made up of relatives and close associates who governed ethnicity based regional provinces.
 - The central government was able to collect high taxes, issue a standard currency and maintain control of mining.
 - This was facilitated by an extensive network of spies that kept the central government aware of disloyalty.
 - Further, a powerful standing army that included elephant, chariot, and cavalry divisions helped secure this power.

Mauryan Empire (324 – 184 BCE)

- ❑ While agriculture remained the primary economic activity, an extensive network of roads and maritime connections to Southeast Asia and the Middle East foster both internal and international trade.
 - India profited from the export of cotton cloth, iron, and salt.

Ashoka “the Great” and Fall of the Mauryan Empire

- ❑ In 269 BCE the Emperor Ashoka came to power ushering in a period of religious pluralism and tolerance.
- ❑ As a young man, Ashoka engaged in violent wars of conquest.
- ❑ Guilt associated with this violence drove Ashoka to convert to Buddhism.
- ❑ As a Buddhist emperor, he made it state policy to promote Buddhism throughout his empire by erecting pillars that promoted the teachings of the Buddha.
 - This policy was an important factor in ensuring the longevity of Buddhism as a major world religion.
- ❑ The Mauryan Empire fell in 184 BCE as a result of dynastic disputes and invasions by outside enemies.



Gupta Empire (320 CE – 500s CE)

- ❑ Following a period of political disunity, the Gupta Empire came to power in 320 CE, ruling a portion of North Central India.
- ❑ The founder, Chandra Gupta modeled his rule on that of the Maurya.
 - While the Gupta were able to collect high taxes, demand labor from subjects for state projects, and control metal mining and salt production they were never able to maintain the level of central authority that the Maurya enjoyed.
 - Regional hereditary governors were only nominally under the control of the central government forcing the emperor to rely on diplomacy to maintain the unity of the empire.



Hinduism, Economics, & Intellectualism within the Gupta Empire, Gupta’s Fall

- ❑ Hinduism enjoyed a resurgence during the Gupta period leading to the strengthening of the Caste System and the intensification of patriarchy.
 - The tradition of sati, widows throwing themselves on the funeral pyre of their late husbands, became common.
- ❑ Internal and international trade continued to flourish and major advances in mathematics were realized, including the development of the decimal system, Arabic numerals (wrongly named because of their diffusion to Europe through the Middle East), and pi.
- ❑ The Gupta Empire fell in the 500s CE largely as a result of nomadic invaders from the northwest.


