Indian Empires

Maurya and Gupta Empires
• Focus

- The Mauryas and Guptas created powerful empires that united most of India. After their rise and height, common factors contributed to their fall.
The Maurya Empire

• India was hard to unite because of diverse geography
• May rival kingdoms existed across the northern plains
• Chandragupta Maurya
  – Used his army to conquer northern India
  – United N. India under his rule
    • Maurya Empire
Maurya Empire

• Had a well-organized government
  – Strong central government
  – Collected taxes
  – Built roads and harbors to increase trade

• Chandragupta crushed any opposition to his rule
  – Feared assassination by his enemies
  – Secret police to report on dissention in his empire
Maurya Empire

- **Ashoka (asoka)**
  - Grandson of Chandragupta
  - Becomes emperor
  - Converts to Buddhism after bloody battle to conquer the Deccan Plateau
    - Horrified by the brutality of war
    - Stops attempts to expand the empire
Maurya Empire

- **Asoka’s rule**
  - Rejects violence
  - Sets up pillars inscribed with the empire’s laws
    - Influenced by Buddhist teaching
  - Tolerant of other beliefs
  - Built Buddhist Stupas
  - Sent Buddhist missionaries out to spread faith

- **Effects**
  - India was united
  - Peace and prosperity
  - Spread of Buddhism

He was a strong leader and ran the empire well
Maurya Decline

• Leadership issues: Empire began to decline after the death of Asoka. His sons and grandsons that ruled after him were weaker leaders and could not hold the empire together.

• Empire divided into separate kingdoms.

• It was too large and could not remain functioning under the rule of a weak king. If the king was good, the empire was successful.
Other Causes for the Decline of the Mauryan Empire

- Economic issues:
  - Crisis follows death of Ashoka
  - High costs of bureaucracy, not enough tax money to pay the military
  - Frequent devaluations of currency to pay salaries (inflation, money not worth as much)
  - Rulers after Asoka charged heavy taxes and seized large portions of crops grown by peasants
Maurya Decline

- **Military issues:**
  - The north west frontier of India was always exposed.
  - This left their empire vulnerable to foreign invaders.
Maurya Decline

- **Social issues:**
  - *Internal revolt* - led by the chief of the Maurya army, General Pushyamitra in 185 BC. This general held a parade of the army and then killed the king on the spot with his army's support.
Gupta Empire

- **Gupta dynasty begins in 320 AD**
- **United the subcontinent under their rule**
- **Strong central government**
  - Allowed for local governments to have power
    - local leaders to be elected by merchants and artisans
    - Villages were led by headman and councils
- **Promoted Hindu concepts but were tolerant of other beliefs**
- **Peace and prosperity led to India’s Golden Age**
Gupta Advances

• **Astronomy**
  – Identified planets
  – Earth’s revolution
  – Circumference of the Earth

• **Math**
  – Concept of zero
  – The decimal system

• **Medicine**
  – Vaccinations against small pox
  – Surgeons set broken bones and performed basic plastic surgery
  – C-sections
Gupta Advances

• Extensive trade networks
Gupta Advances

- **Arts**
  - Literature and poetry
  - Use of Sanskrit to write stories
  - Buddhist cave paintings at Ajanta

- **Architecture**
  - Built large Hindu temples
  - Buddhist stuppas
    - Influenced construction of pagodas in China
EVOLUTION OF BUDDHIST ARCHITECTURE.

a. Early Indian stupa. 3rd century to early 1st centuries B.C.
b. Later Indian Stupa. 2nd century A.D.
c. Chinese pagoda. 5th–7th centuries.
d. Japanese pagoda. 7th century.
Gupta Decline

- Empire lasted for 200 years
- Reasons for decline
  - Invasions by Nomadic Huns from central Asia
  - Weak rulers
Turmoil & a Power Vacuum: 220 BCE – 320 CE

The Maurya Empire is divided into many kingdoms.
The Gupta Dynasty

- Based in Magadha
- Founded by Chandra Gupta (no relation to Chandragupta Maurya), c. 320 CE
- Slightly smaller than Mauryan Empire
- Highly decentralized leadership
- Foundations for studies in natural sciences and mathematics
Gupta Achievements

- Medicine
  - Printed medicinal guides
  - 1000 diseases classified
  - 500 healing plants identified
  - Inoculations
  - C-sections performed

- Mathematics
  - Decimal System
  - PI = 3.1416
  - Concept of Zero

- Literature
  - Kalidasa

- Astronomy
  - Solar Calendar
  - The earth is round

Gupta India
Gupta Decline

- Frequent invasions of White Huns, 5th c. CE
- Gupta Dynasty disintegrates along regional fault lines
- Smaller local kingdoms dominate until Mughal Empire founded in 16th c.
Closure

• How did the Gupta rule their empire?
• Why was the period of Gupta rule known as the golden age of India?
Maurya and Gupta Empires

Extent of Maurya Empire about 260 B.C.
Extent of Gupta Empire about A.D. 400