Indian Empires: Mauryan and Gupta

After a civilization falls, what impact does it have on history?

How do belief systems unite or divide people?
Geography

- Deccan Plateau, dry, sparsely populated

- Mountains (Himalayas and Hindu Kush) protect from foreign invaders
Geography

- Rivers (**Indus** and **Ganges**) provided water and fertile soil
- Coastal plains allowed for farming, fishing, and trading
Indus River Valley

Geography

• The Indus River Valley is located in the modern nation of **Pakistan**

• Mountains to the north and northwest limit India’s contact with other cultures

• **Monsoons** bring rain every summer
  – Monsoons are very important for growing crops
  – Monsoons can also be deadly if it rains too much
Indus

Cities

• Two main cities are named Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro

• Cities cover a large area and are well-planned
  – Streets are in a grid pattern
  – Large granaries stored crops
  – Houses were made of bricks
    • Had plumbing with baths and sewers
Indus
Indus

Invaders

- Around 1750 B.C. the Indus Valley civilization began to decline
- In about 1500 B.C. nomadic warriors called Aryans may have conquered the Indus Valley
Aryans (1500-500 BC)

- Aryans were Indo-European warriors who moved into India from Europe and Asia in search of food.
- What we know of them comes from the Vedas (a collection of sacred writings).

- Aryans mingled with the people they conquered and a new Indian civilization emerged → Hinduism develops out of this mixing of cultures.
Aryans (1500-500 BC)
Aryans and the Development of Hinduism

- Hinduism is one of the oldest religions in the world and has no single founder
- Caste System develops
  - Starts with four castes
Mauryan Empire (321-185 BC)
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• Chandragupta Maurya started the Mauryan dynasty after conquering rival kingdoms in northern India
  – Chandragupta was a harsh ruler and used a brutal secret police to control his empire
Mauryan Empire: Government

- first to bring a centralized and unified government to the Indian subcontinent
- Like other classical civilizations, Mauryans had a bureaucracy
  - **Bureaucracy** = system of managing government through departments run by appointed officials
    - Collect taxes
    - Maintain order
    - Oversee trade
    - Built roads
Mauryan Empire: Government

- Asoka
  - Chandragupta’s grandson
  - Starts as a conqueror and then changes his ways
  - Turned Buddhist, but tolerant of other beliefs

- Wants to rule by moral example rather than violence and conquest
Mauryan Empire: Government

- Brought peace, prosperity, and unity
- Builds roads, hospitals, Buddhist shrines
- Pillars of Asoka = tall stone pillars built throughout India that were inscribed with laws and Buddhist teachings
- Empire declined after his death
Mauryan: Contributions

• United India for first time

• Trade flourished
  – Trade cotton and spices with Rome

• Pataliputra one of the largest and riches cities of its time—schools, libraries, advanced learning

• **Buddhist** religion spread through missionary activity
Gupta Dynasty (320-550 AD)
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Golden Age

In 320, Chandragupta I from Magadha founded the famous Gupta Empire.

Indian mathematicians developed the decimal system of numbers and the concept of zero.

Gupta rulers were patrons of arts, sciences, and religion. Hinduism reached its golden age.

Weakened from invasions by Ephthalite Huns, the Gupta dynasty ended in 720.
Gupta: Government

- **Centralized government** based in Pataliputra
- Adopts and actively promotes **Hinduism**
  - Affected social life through the **caste system**
  - Regulated society—everyone has a role
  - Expanded from 4 basic groups to include many more
Gupta: Beliefs and Society

- Village Life is center of Gupta society
  - Governed by caste rules and traditions- stable society
  - Untouchables- outcasts who lived harsh lives- had “impure” jobs (cleaning streets, digging graves)
Gupta: Beliefs and Society

• Local loyalties important in this diverse society

• Family life in villages
  – **Joint families**- common home shared with parents, children, grandparents, uncles, etc
  – **Patriarchal**- father or oldest male as head of household
  – **Arranged marriages**- marry only within their caste
Gupta Contributions: Math

- Experienced a **Golden Age**
- concept of zero (0)
- the **decimal system**
- **Arabic numerals**—system of writing numerals still used today that the Arabs brought from India to Europe
Gupta Contributions: Medicine

• herbs and other remedies
• set bones
• plastic surgery
• vaccinations against smallpox
Gupta Contributions: Literature

• Fables and folk tales in **Sanskrit** were recorded
• Kalidasa- poet and playwright
Gupta Contributions: Ajanta Caves

- Buddhist artwork
  (paintings and sculpture)
Gupta: End of Empire

- Weak rulers
- Foreign invasions (White Huns from Central Asia)
- India breaks into small kingdoms
- Gupta and Mauryan only civilizations able to **unite** the subcontinent