

# Classical Empires: India

## Pre-Classical Era

- Sanskrit
  - o Writing style adopted during Vedic period
    - United Indian people under common language
- Hindu
  - o Gods and goddesses brought in by Aryans
  - o India developed complex and rigorous religious system around them
    - Caste System
      - Allowed religion to survive in period when most polytheistic religions started being replaced by monotheistic religion
    - Created a mystical spirituality and holiness around itself
      - Desire to seek union
- Prior Rulers
  - o Magadha
    - Powerful state beginning to push towards unification of sub-continent
  - o Alexander the Great
    - 327 B.C.E.
    - Established Northwest corner as province of Bactria
      - Eastern provinces proved difficult to hold
        - o Ended up abandoning some

## Maurya Empire (321-185 B.C.E.)

### Chandragupta Maurya

- 322 B.C.E. Chandragupta Maurya establishes self on Ganges River
  - o Known as Sandracotta by Greeks
  - o Assumed anything a European could do an Indian could do better
  - o Seleucus
    - Macedonian successor to Alexander in Eastern empire
    - Fought with Chandragupta to regain eastern provinces
      - Fight inconclusive
      - Sign treaty of friendship recognizing each other as empires
        - o Established Mauryan Empire and Seleucid Empire
    - Allowed Chandragupta to turn attention to developing empire
- Built up capital of Pataliputra
  - o 64 Gates and 570 towers
  - o Said to rival the splendor of Persian cities
- Military State
  - o Highly Autocratic
    - Led to resentment and necessity for substantial security measures
  - o Maintained large army
  - o Substantial Bureaucracy
- Effective rule through prime minister Kautilya
  - o Author of *Arthashastra*
    - Treatise on power



----- Approximate greatest extent of the Mauryan Empire.

- Similar to Legalism
- Chose son Bindusara as successor and abdicated
  - 297 B.C.E.
  - Converted to Jainism
  - Died as an ascetic

### Bindusara

- Extended borders in Central and Southern India
- 297-272 B.C.E.
- Mostly a mystery
- Maintained contacts with Seleucid empire

### Ashoka

- 272-232 B.C.E.
- Began reign as great conqueror
  - Controlled most of Indian Sub-Continent
    - Except extreme south
  - Converts to Buddhism after Kalinga campaign
- Presided prosperous era of Mauryan Empire
  - Passionately believed in Dharma
    - *The Rule of Law*
  - Softened laws established by Chandragupta and Bindusara
  - Ahimsa
    - Non-Violence
    - Religious tolerance
    - Respect for elders and teachers
  - Redesigned castes
    - Allowed for new *jati*
      - Livings
    - Allowed for foreigners
    - Allowed for some mobility in upper classes
    - More rigid and structured
      - Ex. Rules for who you could eat with
  - Built road system
    - Complete with wells and rest stops
  - Process of conquer through conversion
    - Sent Buddhist missionaries out
    - Founded monasteries
    - Erected Stupas
      - Commemorate the life of Buddha and preserve Buddhist relics
      - 84k+
    - Ashoka Columns
      - Pillars erected in northern india
      - Contained edicts of Ashoka
        - Tangible evidence of Buddhism
- Failed to establish last empire
  - Fell within 50 years of Ashoka's death to Kushans
    - Ruled till 220 C.E.
    - Collapsed and area fell into political instability



## Gupta Empire (320-535 C.E.)

### Government

- Not so much of a king's kingdom
  - o Chandra Gupta established kingdom
  - o Samudragupta – Napoleon of India
- Used Hinduism to secure position
  - o Claimed to have been appointed by gods to rule
  - o Used Hinduism because Buddhism did not have proper gods
- Heavily taxed empire
  - o Up to 1/6 of agricultural production
- Did not use extensive bureaucracy
  - o Allowed local leaders to rule
  - o Deferred to Gupta Supremacy

### Golden Age

- Uniform law codes
- Building projects
  - o Roads
- Patronage of Scholastic Achievements
  - o Funded universities
    - Nalanda
      - Most Famous
      - Focused on Science and mathematics
      - Religion, philosophy, medicine, architecture, agriculture
      - Brought in people from across Asia
    - Achievements in Science and math
      - Astronomy calculations
      - Steel was best in the world
      - Developed number system we use today
        - o Idea of 0, negative numbers, and decimals
  - o Art and Literature
    - Legal writings
    - Dramas
    - Epics
      - Sometimes secular, sometimes included gods
    - Love
      - *Kamasutra*
        - o Laws of love
- Economy
  - o Primarily Agriculture based
  - o Wealth restricted to limited few
  - o Rising Merchant Class
    - Traded across east Asia, middle east, and even with Rome



### Impacts of Gupta

- Heavily influenced culture of Southeast Asia
  - o Religion
  - o Education
- Connection with outside cultures
  - o Trade relationships
- Overthrown by Huns 535 C.E.