

The

Gupta Empire of India (320-720)

The Kushans, an organized clan of Yue Qi nomads, made the northwest frontier of India part of their empire around 50 AD. The empire was wealthy, gaining substantial revenue by controlling most of the major Asian land trade routes. Very high quality coins made from gold earned by trading with the Roman Empire was used to pay for luxury goods such as spices, silk and metalwork.

Chandragupta I

In the later part of the third century, Kushan power declined. **Chandragupta I** was a princely ruler in the kingdom of **Magadha**. An advantageous marriage and political alliance with the Licchavis rulers brought **Chandragupta I** total control of the kingdom of Magadha, one of the most fertile and richest kingdoms in the heartland of the former Mauryan Empire.

Chandragupta I (r. 320-335) was succeeded by his son, **Samudragupta (r. 335-380)** who conquered the Kushans and other smaller kingdoms and greatly expanded the emerging **Gupta Empire**. **Chandragupta II (r. 380-414)**, the son of **Samudragupta**, expanded the Empire even further so that the **Gupta Empire** was almost as large as that of the ancient and powerful Mauryan Empire.

The Gupta Empire

During the time of the **Gupta Empire**, Indians enjoyed a Golden Age in the arts, sciences and religion. Hinduism flowered and expanded throughout India. The Hindu epic writings of the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* were completed and spread to all in the Empire. Hindu temples and shrines were built throughout the lands ruled by the Guptas. Sanskrit poetry, drama and art grew in importance, resulting in the Gupta period to be known as the classical age of Indian culture and arts. Major scientific advances were realized in the fields of astronomy, engineering and mathematics. The decimal system of numerals, which included the concept of zero, was developed. Later, Arab traders adopted this revolutionary concept and passed this mathematical system to the Europeans.

Wars of succession and invasions from the Hunas (Ephthalite or White Huns) resulted in the gradual decline of the **Gupta Empire**. The Empire split up but Gupta rulers continued to rule **Magadha** in a minor capacity until 720.

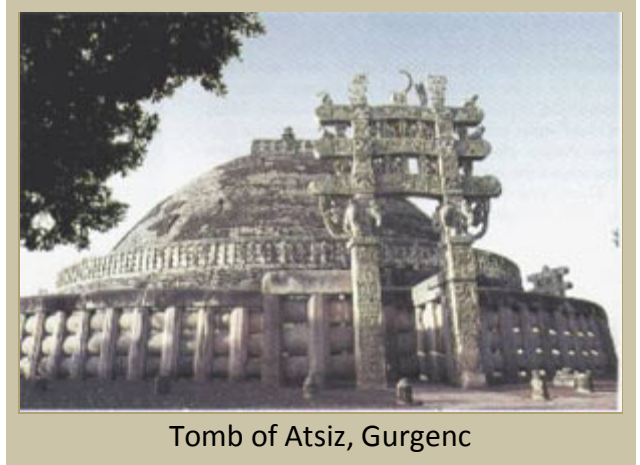
<http://www.historybits.com/gupta.htm>

THE MAURYAN EMPIRE

Category: South and Southeast Asia

Introduction

In the year 327 BC Alexander crossed the Hindu Kush. With great difficulty, he conquered pieces of land along the Indus and fought the famous king Poros at the river Hydaspes, where his army encountered elephants for the first time. Alexander won the battle and wanted to move on to the Ganges, the end of the known world. This was where the Okeanos was, the stream that surrounds the entire world. But his soldiers are tired of the strange climate, the battles and the marches, and thus Alexander returned to Babylon. Four years after the crossing of the Hindu Kush, Alexander the Great died and his Empire collapsed. His most important generals fought for it, Seleukos eventually acquiring the bigger piece of land, including the valley of the Indus. At the beginning of the era that will be known as Hellenistic Age, when Greek culture was spread over much of the known world, from the colonies in Spain to the rainforests of India, another mighty general arose, this time in India. He would be the first to unite most of the Indian subcontinent. His grandson would be known as a bringer of peace. The founder of this new dynasty was Chandragupta Maurya.



Tomb of Atsiz, Gurgenc

The Empire is Founded

In 324 BC. Chandragupta pushed the Macedonian garrisons in Punjab and Sindh out of India. Afterwards he attacked the kingdom of Magadha that controlled the Ganges and conquered it. His mighty army, that he used to conquer the Northern half of the subcontinent, was composed of infantry, cavalry, war elephants and chariots.

Under Chandragupta's rule trade flourished. The treasury was filled and the capital Pataliputra was one of the biggest and most beautiful cities in the world. Chandragupta used his wealth to build up a large governing body.

Just like the first ruler of united China one century later, the first Emperor of this new Empire had a very important advisor. His name was Kautilya. According to his teachings, the state should control everything. Therefore, the Empire was full of spies. However, there also was tolerance towards private enterprise and there was great local autonomy, bounded by the rules of the state. Even the monarch had his duties.

In 305 Seleukos Nikator invaded the Punjab. It is not known whether there was fighting or not, but it is certain that Chandragupta kept the Punjab and annexed three of the richest provinces of Seleukos. The border was moved to the western side of the Hindu Kush. In this way the young empire was secured.

As he got older, Chandragupta became interested in religion. According to Jain tradition, Chandragupta left his throne to his son Bindusara in 301 BC and slowly starved himself to in a Jain monastery.

Ashoka

Bindusara conquered the Deccan highland during his reign of 28 years. His wife (or wives) gave birth to seven sons, including one being rather ugly, called Ashoka.

After the death of his father, a struggle for power erupted within the Empire. After four years, Ashoka was victorious and became Emperor in the year 269 BC. It took him eight years to consolidate his power. Then it was time to launch a new campaign; Ashoka invaded the kingdom of Kalinga in southern India and conquered it after a long and y war.

The war was a turning point in Ashoka's life. He was so shocked by the horrors that the war had caused, that he converted to Buddhism in the tenth year of his rule. He rejected the old system of spies and started to rule his Empire in a moral way. Ashoka didn't really bother about the ancient system of castes and had good relations with Buddhists, Jainas and Hindu Brahmans. There were no troops within the Empire, but civil rulers were sent to the provinces so that the central rule was able to take into account local wishes. Laws were strict, but there was peace within the Empire.

To forge these different peoples into one nation, a common identity was required. Therefore, Prakrit was made the official language in the whole Empire with the exception of the utmost North-West, where Greek was an official language too. Ashoka spoke about the Indians as his children, made sure that free hospitals were built for both men and animals were built. During his reign, roads with halting-places were constructed. At the halting-places people could drink, sleep and read wise Buddhistic phrases and royal decrees that had been hewn into pillars.

The army was stationed in the North-West, where the Seleucid Empire was. Ashoka sent ambassadors to Hellenistic areas.

The arts flourished during Ashoka's reign. Beautiful palaces were built, and everywhere in the Empire monastries and stupas, domes where relics were kept or that marked sacred Buddhist or Jain holy places.

The great Emperor Ashoka died in 232 BC. After his civil war erupted and the economy became instable. However, the sons of Ashoka would remain on the throne for 48 years, until the last Emperor was killed by one of his officers. India was divided again. But the Mauryans had proved that unity was possible, and Indian dynasties to follow would try to achieve a unified subcontinent, just like the Mauryans had done.

http://www.allempires.com/article/index.php?q=mauryan_empire

The Mughal Empire



The Taj Mahal houses the jewelled tomb of Mumtaz Mahal, much loved wife of emperor Shah Jehan [©](#)

The Mughal (or Mogul) Empire ruled most of India and Pakistan in the 16th and 17th centuries.

It consolidated Islam in South Asia, and spread Muslim (and particularly Persian) arts and culture as well as the faith.

The Mughals were Muslims who ruled a country with a large [Hindu](#) majority. However for much of their empire they allowed Hindus to reach senior government or military positions.

The Mughals brought many changes to India:

- Centralised government that brought together many smaller kingdoms
- Delegated government with respect for human rights
- Persian art and culture
- Persian language mixed with Arabic and Hindi to create Urdu
- Periods of great religious tolerance
- A style of architecture (e.g. the Taj Mahal)
- A system of education that took account of pupils' needs and culture

Muslims in India

There had been Muslims in India long before the Mughals. The first Muslims arrived in the 8th century.



Ahmedabad's Jama Masjid (Grand Mosque) was built in the 15th century in Gujarat [©](#)

In the first half of the 10th century a Muslim ruler of Afghanistan invaded the Punjab 11 times, without much political success, but taking away a great deal of loot.

A more successful invasion came at the end of the 12th century. This eventually led to the formation of the Delhi Sultanate.

A later Muslim invasion in 1398 devastated the city of Delhi.

The Mughal Empire grew out of descendants of the Mongol Empire who were living in Turkestan in the 15th century. They had become Muslims and assimilated the culture of the Middle East, while keeping elements of their Far Eastern roots.

They also retained the great military skill and cunning of their Mongol ancestors, and were among the first Western military leaders to use guns.

Babur



Jewelled archway in Humayun's tumb in Delhi [©](#)

Babur the first Mughal Emperor, was a descendent of Genghis Khan and Tamerlaine.

Babur succeeded his father as ruler of the state of Farghana in Turkestan when he was only 12, although he was swiftly deposed by older relatives.

Babur moved into Afghanistan in 1504, and then moved on to India, apparently at the invitation of some Indian princes who wanted to dispose of their ruler. Babur disposed of the ruler, and decided to take over himself.

He captured the Turkic Ghur'iat Sultanate of Delhi in 1526, imposing his rule on most of Northern India.

The Empire he founded was a sophisticated civilisation based on religious toleration. It was a mixture of Persian, Mongol and Indian culture.

Under Babur Hinduism was tolerated and new Hindu temples were built with his permission.

Trade with the rest of the Islamic world, especially Persia and through Persia to Europe, was encouraged.

The importance of [slavery](#) in the Empire diminished and peace was made with the Hindu kingdoms of Southern India.

Babur brought a broad-minded, confident Islam from central Asia. His first act after conquering Delhi was to forbid the killing of cows because that was offensive to Hindus.

Babur may have been descended from brutal conquerors, but he was not a barbarian bent on loot and plunder. Instead he had great ideas about civilisation, architecture and administration.

He even wrote an autobiography, *The Babur - Namah*. The autobiography is candid, honest and at times even poetic.

Babur was followed by his son Humayun who was a bad emperor, a better poet, and a drug addict. He rapidly lost the empire. He did eventually recover the throne but died soon afterwards after breaking his neck falling downstairs.

While Humayan was certainly disastrous as a ruler, his love of poetry and culture heavily influenced his son Akbar, and helped to make the Mughal Empire an artistic power as well as a military one.

http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/islam/history/mughalempire_1.shtml