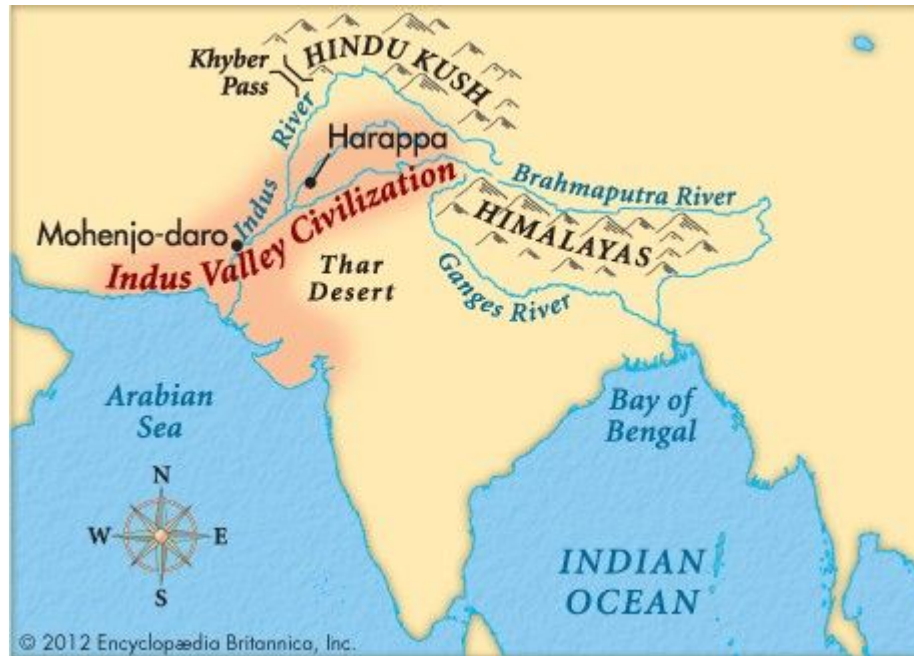


CLASSICAL INDIA

Gupta and Mauryan
empires
500 BCE-500 CE

Recall: INDUS RIVER VALLEY CIVILIZATION

- What do you remember about the Indus River Valley Civilization?
- Lasted about 1000 years, from ~2500 BCE-1500 BCE

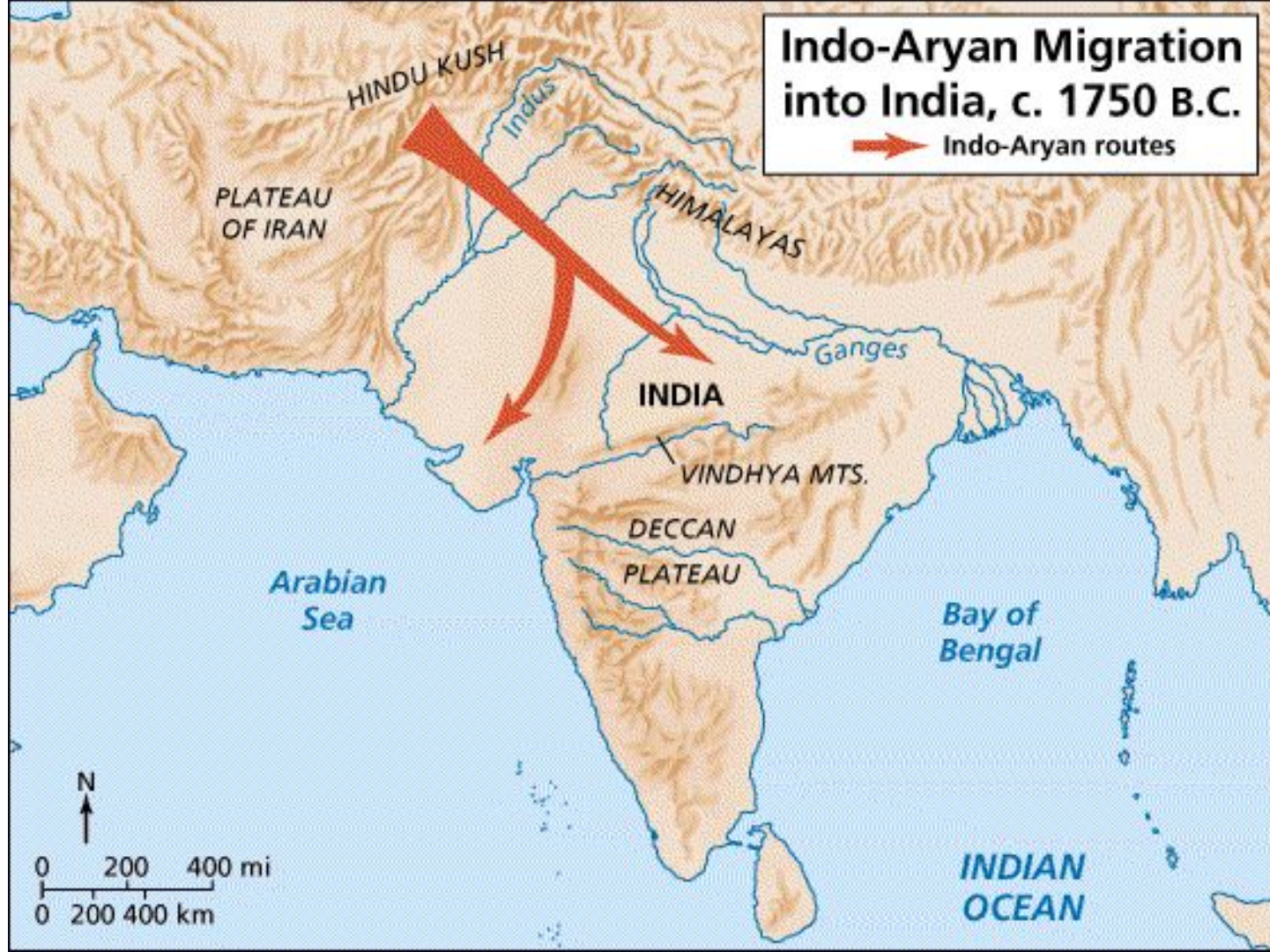


The Aryans

- The **Aryans**, an **Indo-European** group, migrated into India by about 2000 BCE.
- Their sacred literature, the **Vedas**, are four collections of prayers, hymns, mantras, instructions for performing rituals, as well as spells and incantations.
- The Vedas are the oldest **Hindu** scriptures.
- Most important Veda is the Rig Veda- contains 1,028 hymns to Aryan gods.
- Passed down orally for years- not written until much later.

Indo-Aryan Migration into India, c. 1750 B.C.

➔ Indo-Aryan routes



Vedas

Handwritten text in Devanagari script on the left side of the manuscript page.



A colorful illustration of Lord Krishna playing a flute, with a peacock and other figures around him.

Handwritten text in Devanagari script on the left side of the manuscript page.



An illustration of four figures sitting on the ground, possibly engaged in a musical or scholarly activity.

Handwritten text in Devanagari script on the left side of the manuscript page.



An illustration of Lord Krishna playing a flute, with a peacock and other figures around him.

Handwritten text in Devanagari script on the left side of the manuscript page.



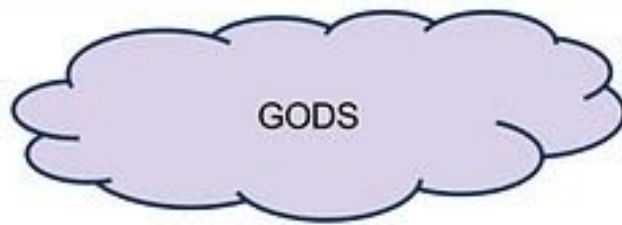
An illustration of Lord Krishna playing a flute, with a peacock and other figures around him.

The Aryans

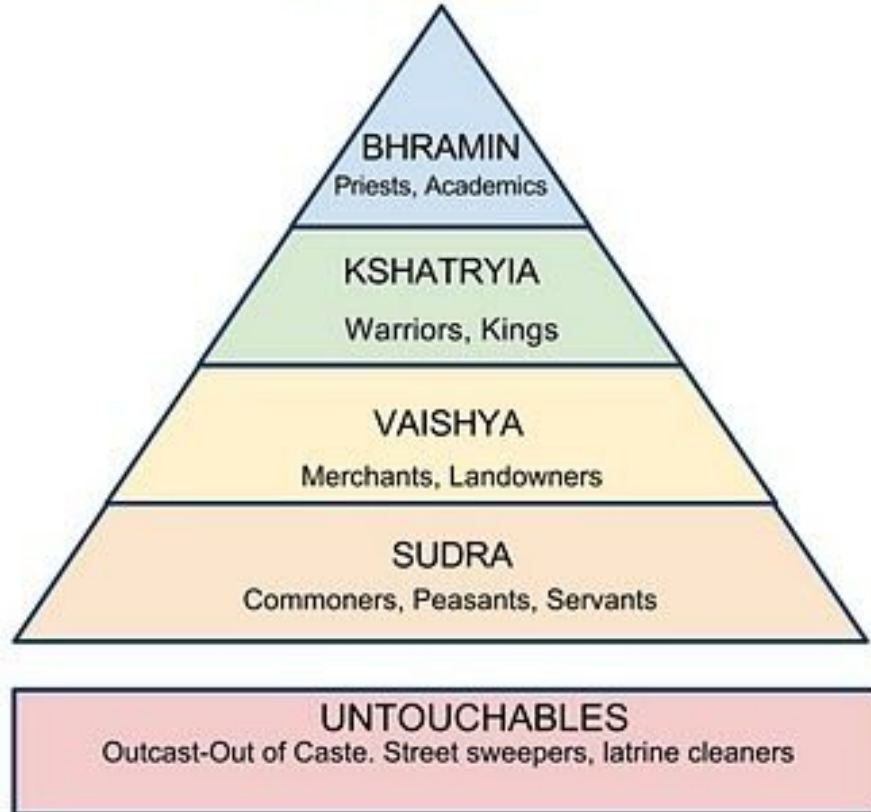
- According to the Rig Veda, Ancient Indian society was divided into four groups called **varnas**. When the Portuguese came to India in the 1500s, they'd call these groups **castes**:
 - **Brahmins**- priests and teachers
 - **Kshatriyas**- warriors and rulers
 - **Vaishyas**- traders, farmers, and herders
 - **Shudras**- laborers and peasants

The Aryans

- Varnas were initially flexible, then became more structured and based on birth. Later, varna would determine the kind of work people did, whom they could marry, and with whom they could eat.
- Cleanliness and purity became all-important: those considered most impure were called **untouchables** because of the work they did (collecting trash, cleaning toilets)
- According to a passage in the Rig Veda, the people of the four varnas were created from the body of a single being.



The Caste System

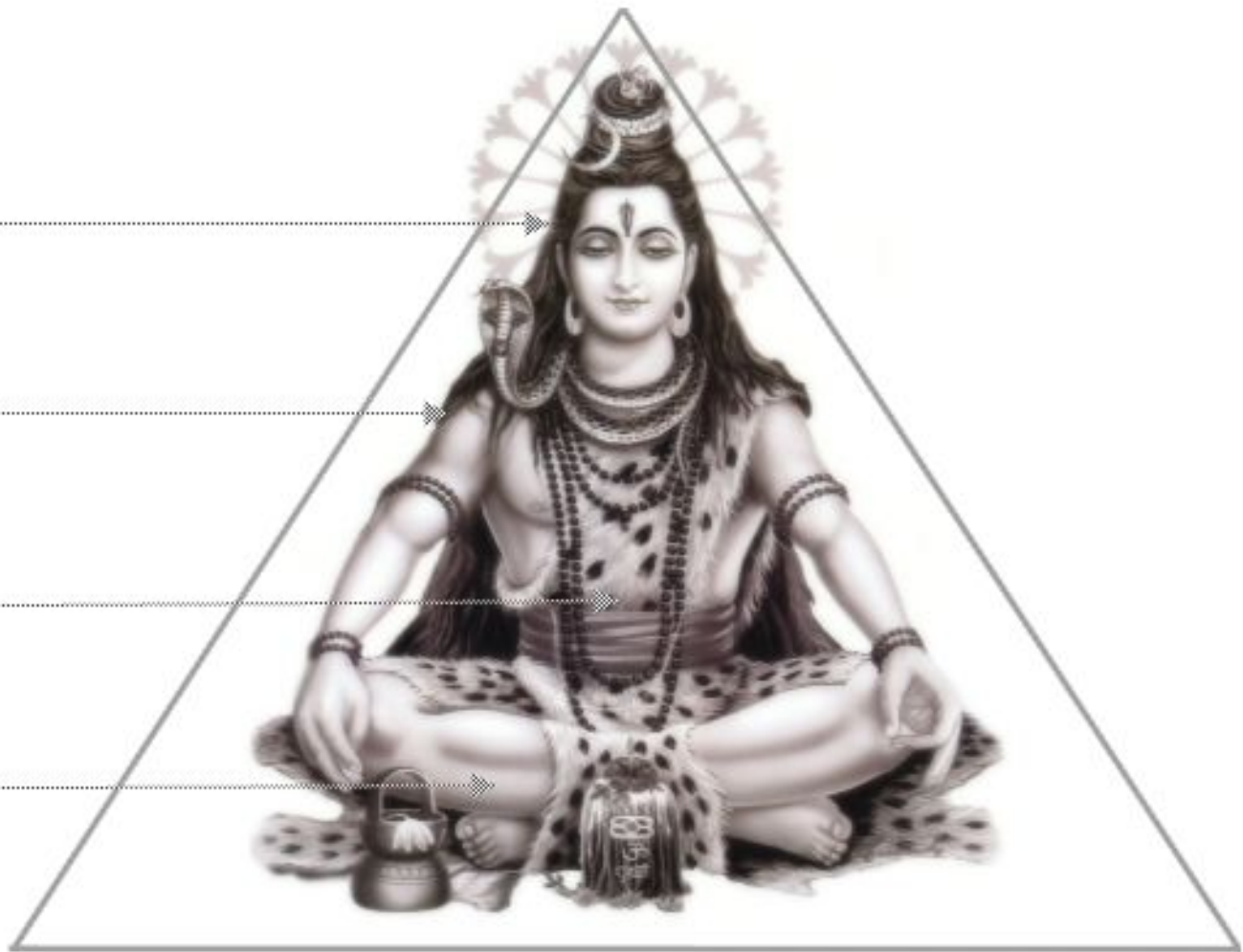


Brahman
Knowledge

Kshatriya
Defense

Vaishya
Sustenance

Shudra
Service



Aryan Kingdoms Begin

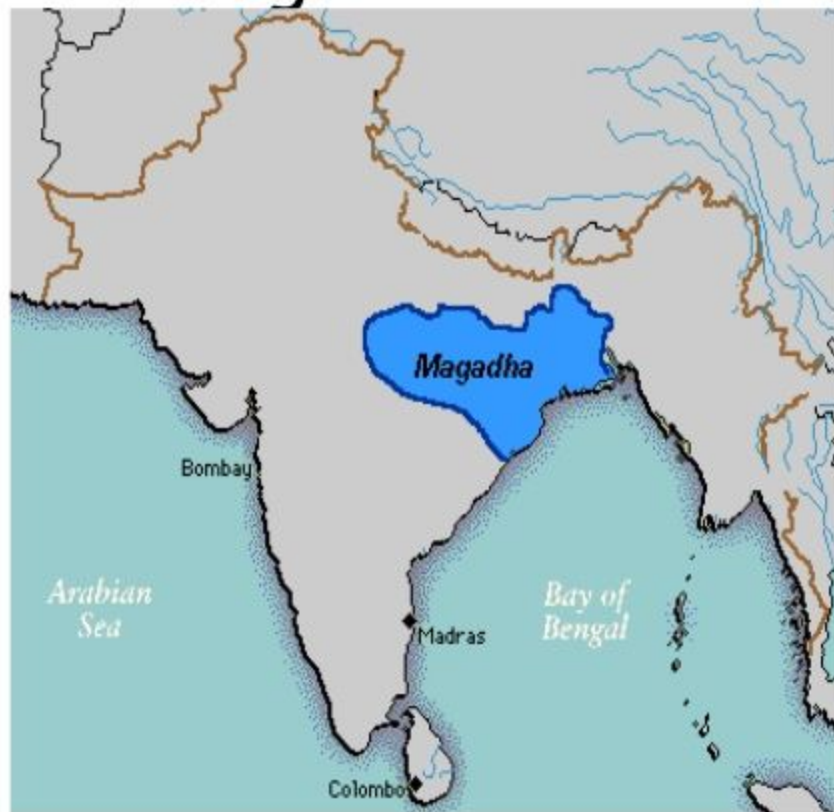
- Aryans extended their settlements east along the **Ganges River**
- Initially, chiefs were elected by the entire tribe.
- Around 1000 BCE, minor kings who wanted to set up territorial kingdoms arose- they struggled with one another for land and power. Out of this emerged a major kingdom: **Magadha**.
- Magadha expanded to occupy almost all of the subcontinent by 100 BCE.
- The ***Mahabharata***, one of the great epics of India, reflects the struggles as Aryan leaders fought for control of Indian lands.

The Mahabharata

Translated by
Kisari Mohan Ganguli



Magadha 5 B.C



ALEXANDER THE GREAT AND THE HELLENISTIC WORLD

- Recall that **Alexander the Great** brought the Indus Valley in NW India under Macedonian control in 326 BCE. This spread Greek cultural elements as far as India, and featured cultural blending to produce **Hellenistic culture**.
- Greek control of the Indus Valley did not last long.



MAURYAN EMPIRE (321 BCE-232 BCE)

- **Chandragupta Maurya** may have been born in Magadha, a powerful kingdom.
- 321 BCE: Chandragupta Maurya gathered an army, killed the unpopular Nanda king, and claimed the throne, beginning the **Mauryan Empire**.



MAURYAN EMPIRE (321 BCE-232 BCE)

- Expansion:
 - Seized all land from Magadha to Indus
 - Defeated **Seleucus**, one of Alexander's generals, ridding the Greeks from India
 - By 303 BCE, northern India was united politically for the first time.
 - Raised huge armies of infantry (foot soldiers), cavalry (soldiers on horseback), and elephants. Levied high taxes to clothe, feed, and pay troops (farmers had to give half of the value of their crops to the king)

Maurya Empire, 260 B.C.



270 B.C.
— TOTAL WAR —



MAURYAN EMPIRE (321 BCE-232 BCE)

- Consolidating the Empire:
 - Chandragupta relied on an adviser named **Kautilya**, who wrote a ruler's handbook called the **Arthashastra**. The book proposed tough policies to hold the empire together, including spying and political assassination.
 - Created a highly **bureaucratic government**- empire was divided into four provinces, each headed by a prince. Each province was then divided into local districts, which assessed taxes and enforced laws.

Kautilya advising Chandragupta



MAURYAN EMPIRE (321 BCE-232 BCE)

- Chandragupta Maurya's grandson, **Ashoka**, brought the Mauryan Empire to its greatest heights. He ruled from 269 BCE-232 BCE.
- Saddened by a military battle that resulted in the deaths of many of his soldiers, Ashoka studied **Buddhism** and decided to rule by Buddha's teaching of "peace to all beings."
- Ashoka had huge stone pillars erected throughout the empire that were inscribed with his new policies. Some said that Ashoka would treat subjects fairly and humanely; others preached nonviolence. Others urged religious tolerance.







The “wheel,” or Ashoka chakra, appears on the modern flag of India



MAURYAN EMPIRE (321 BCE-232 BCE)

- Ashoka softened Chandragupta Maurya's harsher policies (for instance, instead of spies, he sent officials to look out for subjects' welfare).
- He kept an army, but sought to rule humanely.
- He also sent **missionaries** to SE Asia to spread Buddhism.
- He had extensive roads built, and improved conditions along these roads. Every nine miles there were wells and rest houses
(what does this tell us about Ashoka?)

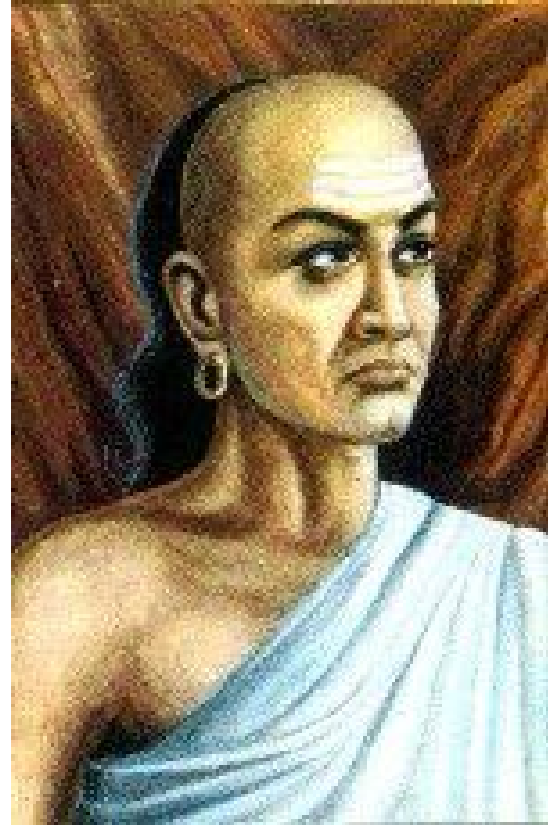


PERIOD OF TURMOIL (232 BCE-320 CE)

- Ashoka's death left a power vacuum in India- regional kings began challenging the imperial government
- Kingdoms of central India regained Independence- the **Andhra Dynasty** dominated the region for years, flourishing off of the **Silk Road** trade
- Southern India, which had not been conquered by the Mauryan Empire, was home to three kingdoms called the **Tamil kingdoms**. They were often at war with one another and with other states.

GUPTA EMPIRE (320 CE-535 CE)

- **Chandra Gupta** (no relation to Chandragupta Maurya) came to power in the northern state of Magadha through marrying the daughter of an influential royal family.
- 320 CE: Chandra Gupta took the title “Great King of Kings”

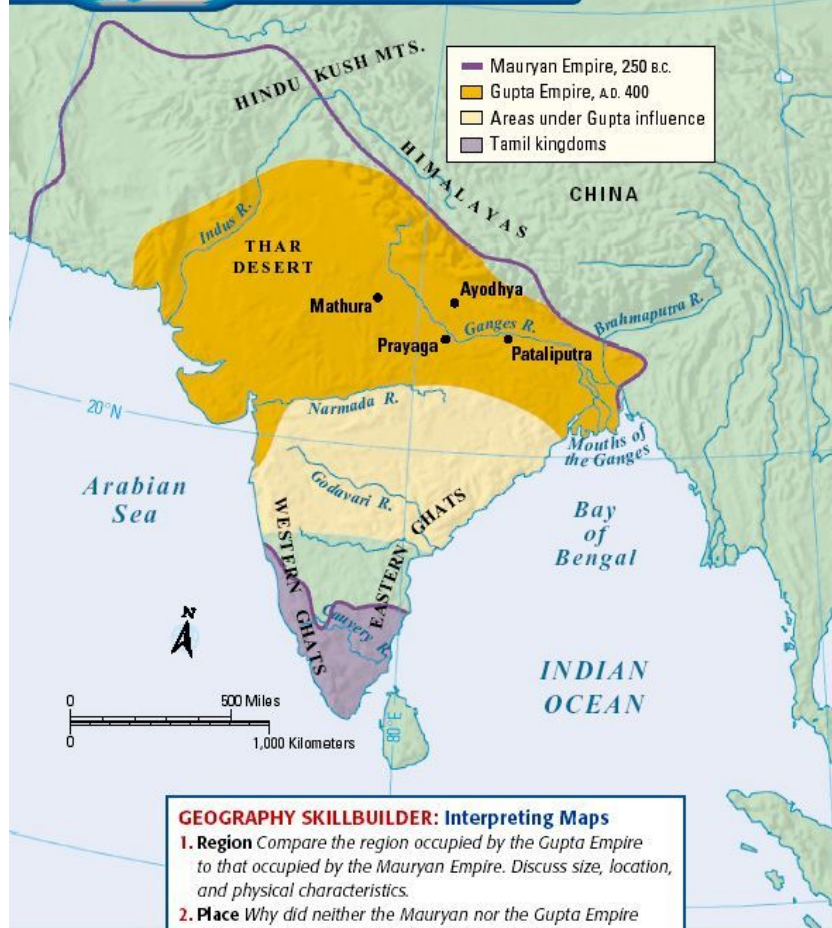


GUPTA EMPIRE (320 CE-535 CE)

- Gupta Empire's power base was mainly along the Ganges River
- Chandra Gupta's son, **Samudra Gupta**, became king in 335 CE and expanded the empire through 40 years of conquest.



Indian Empires, 250 B.C.–A.D. 400



GEOGRAPHY SKILLBUILDER: Interpreting Maps

- 1. Region** Compare the region occupied by the Gupta Empire to that occupied by the Mauryan Empire. Discuss size, location, and physical characteristics.
- 2. Place** Why did neither the Mauryan nor the Gupta Empire expand to the northeast? Olympics in ancient Greece?

GUPTA EMPIRE (320 CE-535 CE)

- Traditional life in the Gupta Empire:
 - Most Indians lived in small villages
 - Most were farmers, who owed a large part of their crop yield to the king
 - Craftspeople and merchants lived in specific districts in towns
 - Most Indian families were patriarchal (this contrasts with some Tamil groups, which were matriarchal)
 - The extended family lived and worked together
 - Farmers had to irrigate crops- drought was common
 - Each month, people had to give a day's worth of labor for public works (to maintain wells, irrigation ditches, dams, etc.)

GUPTA EMPIRE (320 CE-535 CE)

- **Chandra Gupta II** (375-415 CE) oversaw a time of excitement and growth:
 - Profitable trade with the Mediterranean world
 - Strengthened the empire through diplomatic and marriage alliances

- The reign of the first three Gupta kings is seen as a **golden age of India**, as there were many achievements in the arts, religious thought, and science.

GUPTA EMPIRE (320 CE-535 CE)

- **THE GOLDEN AGE OF INDIA:**

- LITERATURE: **Kalidasa** was one of India's greatest writers; his plays have been admired by generations of Indians because they are skillfully written and emotionally stirring. Southern India began writing academies- many Tamil poems from this period still exist.
- DRAMA: Traveling troupes of actors put on performances in southern India. These shows combined drama and dance.

GUPTA EMPIRE (320 CE-535 CE)

- **THE GOLDEN AGE OF INDIA:**

- SCIENCE: Expansion of trade spurred the advance of science:
 - Knowledge of astronomy increased- navigation using the stars; also, Indian scientists proved the earth was round by observing a lunar eclipse
 - Indians adapted Western methods of keeping time from Greeks
 - Developed a calendar based on the sun instead of moon
 - Adopted a 7-day week divided into hours
 - Medical books compiled, and surgery was performed

GUPTA EMPIRE (320 CE-535 CE)

- **THE GOLDEN AGE OF INDIA:**
 - MATHEMATICS:
 - Modern numerals, the zero, and the decimal system were invented in India
 - Pi was calculated to four decimal places
 - Solar year was calculated to 365 days

GUPTA EMPIRE (320 CE-535 CE)

- **THE GOLDEN AGE OF INDIA:**
 - TECHNOLOGY:
 - Indian soldiers had steel bows
 - New war machines such as catapults
 - Highly advanced metallurgy (metalworking)

GUPTA EMPIRE (320 CE-535 CE)

- Trade really took off during this period along both overland routes (the **Silk Road**) and sea routes (**Indian Ocean trade** and **Mediterranean sea lanes**)
- India had many valuable trade items to offer, including: spices, diamonds, sapphires, gold, pearls, and beautiful woods.
- Indians acted as middlemen along the Silk Roads between China and Rome- stationed along **oasis towns**
- Increased trade brought wealth to India, also the rise of banking institutions and cultural exchange.



GUPTA EMPIRE (320 CE-535 CE)

- After Chandra Gupta II died in 415 CE, new invaders threatened northern India. They were called the **Hunas**, and were related to the **Huns** that invaded Rome.
- Over the next 100 years, the Gupta Empire broke into small kingdoms. Many were overrun by the Hunas and other Central Asian nomads.
- The Gupta Empire ended by 535 CE.