

KEY POINTS Chapter 3

Essential Question: *How did classical India with the lack of a strong political framework, create an enduring social system and cultural cohesiveness?*

Identify:

Rig-Veda – 1st Aryan epic, composed of 1028 hymns dedicated to the Aryan gods and composed by priests

Upanishads – mystical, religious epic poems, basis for later Hindu religion, idea of mystical contact with a divine essence

Jati - subgroups of basic castes, each has a distinctive occupation and tied to social station by birth

Siddhartha Gautama – c. 563-483 BCE, “**Buddha**” or “**enlightened one**”, asked why men must suffer

Mahabharata – India’s greatest epic poem, about real and mythical battles

Ramayana – epic poem about real and mythical battles **Autocratic** – having absolute or unlimited power

Chandragupta – autocratic ruler from 322-298 BCE, succeeded by grandson Ashoka, religious ascetic

Bhagavad Gita – classic sacred hymn of a warrior sent to battle his relatives; a god convinces him since their divine spirit will live on

Brahma – basic holy essence; many incarnations like Vishnu and Shiva, goal is to be one with Brahma, achieved thru reincarnations

Dharma – duty; guide to living in this world and pursuing higher, spiritual goals **Stupas** – spherical shrines to Buddha

Ashoka – grandson of Chandragupta, ruled from 269-232 BCE; converted to Buddhism, but sponsored Hindu shrines for worshippers

What general differences and similarities are there between classical China and classical India?

The restraint of Chinese art contrasted with the more dynamic styles of India. India had a primary religion with some minorities, but China had separate religions to serve different needs. India’s caste system was more rigid than the Chinese social hierarchy. India’s cultural emphasis on balance was more otherworldly than China’s despite the impact of Daoism. China preferred practical findings and India ventured further into mathematics. Both were agricultural societies with a large peasant class, organized in tight villages with much mutual cooperation. Political power rested on landlords. Both were patriarchal societies.

The Framework for Indian History: Geography and a Formative Period

What area of the globe did Indians have cultural contacts with? China, Middle East, Mediterranean Sea, Persia,

Describe the sub regions of India and explain how this affected India’s development.

Mountainous northern region (herding), southern coastal rim, Deccan plateau (trading and sea fare), agricultural region (Indus and Ganges rivers)

What group invaded India during the formative period and what distinctive ideas did these invaders bring?

The Aryans invaded India. They encouraged tight levels of village organization and made the Indian caste system. The Aryans created many of the literary epics and were written in Sanskrit. It was the 1st literary language of the culture. They also brought a polytheistic religion.

What Vedic Age writings became a source of info for historians about pre-classical India and what language is used in these writings? The *Rig-Veda* was written in Sanskrit.

What social castes evolved in India? Put them in order.

Brahmins (priests), Kshatriyas (warriors/politicians), Vaisyas (traders/farmers), Sudras (common laborers), and untouchables (unskilled workers, trash guys, etc.)

Patterns in Classical India

What two major empires formed during India's classical period and when?

322-232 BCE Mauryan Dynasty and 319-535 CE Gupta Empire

What type of ruler was Chandragupta and what advances did he make during his reign?

Chandragupta was an autocrat. He was one of the first rulers to unify much of the entire subcontinent. He had a large army with thousands of chariots and elephant-borne troops. He developed a bureaucracy and sponsored a postal service.

Describe the accomplishments of Ashoka.

Ashoka extended Mauryan conquests and gained control of most of the Indian subcontinent through fierce fighting. Later on, he converted to Buddhism. Ashoka sent Buddhist missionaries to Hellenistic kingdoms and Sri Lanka. He worked to improve trade and communication and sponsored an extensive road network with wells and rest stops for travelers.

When did the Gupta come to power and how did their territorial size compare to the Mauryan?

The Guptas came to power in 319 CE but their territory was ½ the size of the Mauryan's territory.

What eventually happened to end the Gupta dynasty? The Huns invaded in 535 CE.

Political Institutions

What was characteristic of classical India's political traditions and institutions?

One characteristic is regionalism and another is considerable diversity in political forms. It was an autocratic state.

Describe how the Gupta political system was organized.

The Guptas created a demanding taxation system. There was no extensive bureaucracy and allowed local rulers to have regional control. No single language was imposed even though Sanskrit was promoted.

What evidence suggests that the Gupta period was a Golden Age for India?

They spread uniform law codes and sponsored general services like road building. They were patrons of cultural activity.

How does classical Indian politics compare to that of China's?

India didn't develop the solid political traditions and institutions of Chinese civilization.

Describe the changes that occurred to the caste system.

The 5 main castes were divided into almost 300 Jati subcastes. It became almost impossible to move up the social ladder. There was a little flexibility. You could move down the ladder easily. The Brahmins replaced the Kshatriyas. Rulers might come from the merchant class like the Mauryans.

Why was slavery not outrightly practiced in classical India?

The untouchable caste was scorned, confined to poverty, and degrading work. They weren't owned by anybody like slaves.

Religion and Culture

What characteristics of Hinduism helped to promote its successful spread?

It had the ability to adapt to the different needs of various groups and to change with circumstance. There were many ways to worship. Hinduism was a very tolerant religion, which coexisted with several minority religions.

What opposing beliefs led to tension in the Hindu community?

The *Upanishads* attacked the conventional Brahmin view of what a religion should be: formal ceremonies or communion with the divine soul.

Describe what types of behavior would be considered proper for Hindus.

Each person must meet the obligations of life, serve the family, produce a livelihood, earn money, and serve the army

Explain how Buddhism is different from Hinduism.

It downplayed the polytheistic element and individuals could regulate their lives and aspirations towards nirvana without elaborate ceremonies. It attacked the priests and the Indian caste system.

How and where did Buddhism spread?

It was begun spreading as Ashoka converted to Buddhism and sent missionaries to the Middle East and Sri Lanka. Later, the Kushan emperors spread it to Southeast Asia, China, Korea, and Japan.

What cultural traditions were characteristic of classical Indian life?

Hindu thinkers wrote actively about various aspects of human life. There was a lot of legal writing as well. There was the *Kama-sutra* (law of love) and the *Panchatantra* (fairy tales). Indian drama had themes of romance like lovers separated then united.

What scientific accomplishments were made in classical India?

The Guptas supported a vast university center in Nalanda. It was one of the first universities. They calculated the length of the solar year, improved mathematical measurements, understood and calculated the daily rotation of the earth on its axis, predicted and explained eclipses, developed a theory of gravity, identified seven planets, made advances in bone setting and plastic surgery, introduced inoculation against smallpox, sterilized wounds, made the modern-day numbering system, invented the concept of zero, developed the decimal system, developed concept of negative numbers, calculated square roots and a table of sines, and computed the value of pi more accurately than the Greeks.

Economy and Society

What evidence supports the idea that classical Indian society was patriarchal?

One law code said a woman had to treat her husband like a god. Many epics stressed control of husband and father.

What evidence suggests that in reality Indian women had more status than Chinese women?

Many epics also recognized women's independent contributions. Husband and wife had mutual support for one another.

What functions did the family serve in classical India?

It supported the structure of society and its institutions and formed economic units.

What type of manufacturing developed in classical India? Steel, ironmaking, and textiles

What status did merchants have in Indian society? High caste status and flexibility of Hindu ethic

Describe the Indian economy and the emerging Indian Ocean complex.

They traded silks, cotton, dyes, drugs, gold, and ivory with the Middle East, Rome, and China. In exchange, they got pottery, wine, metals, some slaves, and gold. Merchants transported sophisticated manufactured goods to Malaysia and Indonesia. Caravan trade began with China.

In Depth

What behavior was stressed by all classical social systems? Family or caste affiliation

How do most societies promote the fixed social hierarchy?

Creation myths and religious beliefs that proclaimed their divine origins and the danger of punishment if challenged.

Indian Influence

What evidence supports the idea that Indian's did not try to conquer in SE Asia, but did spread cultural traditions?

Many Indian merchants married local royal families in Southeast Asia. Many travelers or settlers brought to the locals a persuasive way of life. Buddhism spread to SE Asia and Hinduism converted many high-class people in Indonesia.

What key characteristics of classical Indian origin lasted after the fall of the Guptas?

The religion, artistic and literary tradition, and complex social and family network gave this civilization the ability to survive.