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Film Response: Gupta Empire

This week's film highlighted many of the lesser known innovations and strengths of the Gupta Empire, which emerged in the early 4th century after the fall of the Roman Empire. What may be the most interesting thing about this period is how it relates to the current state of India in the modern world; where we do not see India as a nation that is "thriving" in our current era, even by today's standards the Gupta Empire was flourishing exponentially.

In the film we are introduced to Chandra Gupta who was the first to establish India under one whole, functioning authoritarian group. Under the reign of him and his successors, creativity, ingenuity, and unity were greatly encouraged. One main way that this is seen is in religion.

In the Gupta Empire, the two major religions of the region were understood to be harmonious and no conflict surrounded them. Although both Hinduism and Buddhism had some shared ideals, there were certainly areas where they departed. However, this was not an issue for the people of this time. In fact, much of its art depicted this harmony between the two religions: imagery of Buddha in the positions or poses of some of the Hindu deities was not uncommon to see.

With their imagery and creativity, it seems that the medium of choice was metallurgy. The people of this era were exceptional metallurgists, who were extremely innovative. They

were skilled in creating detailed coins, statues, and other depictions out of bronze and iron. These metallurgists even developed a new method of welding iron by pummeling lumps of stacked, hot iron into large columns. This style of metallurgy was the first of its kind; these decorative and commemorative pillars of iron are characteristic to the Gupta Empire.

Lastly, there were many amazing astronomers and mathematicians in this era from the Gupta Empire, whose findings are still revered today. One prominent finding was that of Aryabhata: using mathematics and ancient astronomical tools, he correctly hypothesized that the solar system revolves around the sun. This is astounding to scientists today, because of the limitations of scientific study at that time. Aryabhata (and many other Gupta scientists) were thousands of years ahead of their time in their discoveries and hypotheses.

Overall, we see that the great Gupta Empire contributed much to the history of India. Even moreso, they are a pristine example of a benevolent ancient culture and social system. Of course, it had its own downfall – as all kingdoms do – but we stand to recognize the wonders of this Empire.