
Chapter – 11 History

New Empires and Kingdoms

- After the downfall of Mauryas, many new empires emerged. In 3rd century AD, a new powerful kingdom called the Gupta dynasty emerged.
 - **The Gupta Age:**
 - (i) The period between 320-540 AD is known as Gupta Age.
 - (ii) It is also called the golden age of Indian history when rapid development took place in the field of art, architecture, literature, philosophy, trade, science and agriculture.
 - (iii) The sources of knowing about Guptas are archaeological and literary sources.
 - (iv) Archaeological sources of Guptas include the rock-cut temples of Ajanta, Prayaga Prashasti pillar inscription at Allahabad or by court poet Harisena, etc.
 - (v) Coins and literary sources from the other source of information. These include gold and silver coins issued by Samudragupta and other rulers and accounts of writers like Fa-Xian. Some other sources are the works of Kalidasa, Raguvansha, Meghadoota and Abhijnana Shakuntalam.
 - **Rulers of Gupta Empire:**
 - (i) Sri Gupta is supposed to be the founder of the Gupta dynasty.
 - (ii) The first powerful ruler was Chandragupta I who ascended the throne in 320 AD. His matrimonial alliance with Lichchhavi Princess was a turning point in the history of Gupta empire.
 - (iii) The next powerful ruler was his son Samudragupta whose glory and conquest is described in the Allahabad pillar inscribed by his court poet, Harisena.
 - (iv) The next powerful ruler was Chandragupta Vikramaditya who expanded and strengthened the Gupta empire. He occupied Saka territories. Fa-Hien visited India in his rule.
 - **Gupta Administration:**
 - (i) The central government was headed by a king who was assisted by the ministers.
 - (ii) The Gupta empire had several Desas or provinces headed by Uparika.
 - (iii) The lowest level of administration was a district or a group of villages. Each village was headed by Gramadhyaksha.
 - **Military System:**
 - (i) The military system was developed on scientific lines like the Mauryas.
 - (ii) The Mahasenapatis played an important role in heading the contingents of cavalry and elephants.
 - (iii) Several other ranks in the army called Mahasandhivigrahika also existed.
 - **Social Conditions:**
 - (i) The society was divided on the basis of four varnas.
 - (ii) Butchers and executioners lived in dwellings outside the city.
 - (iii) The Brahmins received the greatest respect. The Kshatriyas were also held in high esteem because of the power and prestige they enjoyed.
 - (iv) Slavery was prevalent while joint family system continued to be a feature of Hindu private life.
 - (v) Customs of polygamy and sati also started developing.
 - **Science and Technology:**
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- (i) The study of science made great progress.
 - (ii) Notable astronomers and mathematicians like Aryabhata, Varahamihira wrote their works.
 - (iii) Indian surgeons were well versed in dissection and plastic surgery.
 - **Art and Architecture:**
 - (i) Temples dedicated to Vishnu, Shiva and Paravati were built.
 - (ii) Some famous temples include the Dasavtara temple at Jhansi, Vishnu temple at Tigawa, Shiva temple at Bhumara etc.
 - **Paintings:**
 - (i) The art of painting reached its height.
 - (ii) The Buddhist caves in Ajanta and Bagh caves at Gwalior belong to this period and represent the excellent of Indian art.
 - **Trade and Religion:**
 - (i) India had brisk trade relations with west through Persian Gulf and Red Sea.
 - (ii) Some famous ports were Kalyani, Broach, Kambay and Tamralipti.
 - (iii) Ship building industry was at its peak.
 - (iv) Buddhism and Hinduism flourished under the Guptas.
 - (v) Donations were made for maintenance of temples.
 - (vi) Sanskrit language reached its perfection.
 - (vii) After 468 AD Gupta empire started declining and collapsed by the middle of 6th century AD.
 - **Harshavardhana:**
 - (i) After the decline of Gupta empire, many small kingdoms arose. One such kingdom was near Thaneshwara ruled by Vardhana dynasty.
 - (ii) The greatest ruler of this dynasty was Harshavardhana.
 - (iii) Chinese traveler Hiuen Tsang praised his rule.
 - (iv) Harshavardhana had tried to cross river Narmada but was defeated by the Chalukyan king, Pulakeshin II.
 - (v) He was a follower of Shiva and his administration was efficient.
 - **Southern Kingdoms:**
 - (i) After the decline of Satavahanas, Chalukyas and Pallavas came into prominence.
 - (ii) Chalukyas extended from South of Vindhya till river Krishna. Their most powerful king was Pulakshin II. They had good trade relations with Arabia, Iran and South-East Asia.
 - (iii) Far deep in the South was the Kingdom of Pallavas who rule in Kanchi. The greatest ruler was Mahendravarman I.
 - (iv) The South Indian kingdoms had an efficient administration.
 - (v) Assemblies were also frequent in Southern kingdom. These included Ur or a village assembly and nagaram which was an organization of merchants.
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