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# Gupta Empire

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## Gupta Empire

### Background and Political Context

After the decline of the **Mauryan Empire**, India witnessed political fragmentation. The **Kushanas** in the north and the **Satavahanas** in the Deccan provided temporary political unity and prosperity (1st–3rd century CE).

- Their **disintegration in the late 3rd century CE** led to the rise of several regional powers.
- Among them, the **Guptas** emerged as the most powerful, laying the foundation of the **second great empire in ancient India**.

### Origin and Homeland

The **Guptas possibly originated from the region of Magadha**, covering **modern Bihar and eastern Uttar Pradesh**. Early coins and inscriptions are found mainly in **Uttar Pradesh**, indicating their original base in the **Madhyadesha** region.



- Some scholars suggest a **Bengal origin**, while others identify **Prayaga (Allahabad)** as their power centre.
- The Guptas were likely **Vaishyas** (trading class) or **Brahmins**, who gradually became **landed chiefs** and later **sovereign rulers**.
- Their **state emblem** was the **Garuda**, symbolising divine legitimacy and association with Vishnu.

### Foundation and Early Rulers

Ruler	Period (approx.)	Title	Significance
<b>Shri Gupta</b>	c. 240–280 CE	<i>Maharaja</i>	Founder of the dynasty; described as <i>Adiraja</i> in Poona Copper Plate Inscription of Prabhavati Gupta.
<b>Ghatotkacha</b>	c. 280–319 CE	<i>Maharaja</i>	Continued consolidation; father of Chandragupta I.
<b>Chandragupta I</b>	c. 319–335 CE	<i>Maharajadhira</i>	First imperial ruler; expanded the kingdom through conquest and strategic marriage alliance with Licchavi princess <i>Kumradevi</i> ; marked the beginning of Gupta Era (320 CE).

### Rise and Expansion

- Chandragupta I's reign marked the **real foundation of the Gupta Empire**.
- The **Licchavi alliance** strengthened political and economic influence in northern India.
- The Guptas gradually unified **northern India**, replicating the political unity achieved earlier under the Mauryas.
- Their empire eventually covered **northern, central, and parts of southern India**.

### Nature of the Empire

- The Gupta Empire maintained **strong central authority** while allowing local autonomy.
- It represented the **beginning of a classical era**—marked by stability, prosperity, and cultural efflorescence.
- Historians regard the Gupta period as the **“Golden Age” of ancient India** for its achievements in:
  - Sanskrit literature
  - Art and architecture
  - Science and mathematics
  - Philosophy and religion



## Sources of the Gupta Empire

The history of the Gupta Empire is reconstructed from **literary, inscriptional, and numismatic** evidence.

Category	Source / Author	Key Information / Description	Significance / Contribution
(a) Religious Texts & Puranas	<i>Vayu Purana, Vishnu Purana, Matsya Purana, Skanda Purana, Markandeya Purana</i>	Contain genealogies of Gupta kings and sequence of dynastic succession.	Help reconstruct Gupta chronology and lineage.
(b) Dramatic & Historical Works	<i>Devi Chandraguptam</i> and <i>Mudrarakshasa</i> by Vishakhadatta	Depict the rise of the Guptas and political atmosphere of early Gupta rule.	Provide insight into Gupta statecraft and power consolidation.
(c) Sanskrit Literature	Works of Kalidasa — <i>Abhijnanasakuntalam, Meghadutam, Kumarasambhavam</i>	Describe courtly life, social customs, governance, religious beliefs, and cultural ideals.	Reflect the literary and cultural zenith of the Gupta Age (Golden Age).
(d) Foreign Accounts	<i>Fa-Hien (Faxian)</i> — Chinese Buddhist pilgrim (visited c. 399–414 CE, during Chandragupta II)	In his <i>Record of Buddhist Kingdoms</i> , described peaceful governance, prosperity, and religious tolerance.	Provides firsthand account of Gupta-era society, administration, and Buddhism.

## Epigraphic (Inscriptions) Sources

- Inscriptions offer direct and authentic political data.
- Early Guptas' origins are obscure, but inscriptions confirm their **landed and wealthy background** in Magadha.

Inscription	Issued By	Significance
Allahabad Pillar Inscription	<i>Samudragupta</i> (composed by Harisena)	Details Samudragupta's conquests, administration, and personality. Major source for Gupta political history.
Junagarh Rock Inscription	<i>Skandagupta</i>	Mentions his restoration of the <i>Sudarsana Lake</i> and victories against the



		<i>Pushyamitras and Huns.</i>
<b>Poona Copper Plate Inscription</b>	<i>Prabhavati Gupta</i> (daughter of Chandragupta II)	Mentions her Gupta lineage and titles of early Guptas (Srigupta as <i>Adiraja</i> ).

### Numismatic Evidence

- Gupta coinage represents a **high level of artistic and metallurgical excellence**.
- Coins serve as important records of **political authority, religion, and economy**.
- **Gold coins (Dinars)** were most common, indicating prosperity and trade.
- **Kumaradevi-type coins of Chandragupta I:**
  - Show portraits of Chandragupta and his queen *Kumaradevi* together.
  - Symbolize political alliance and dynastic legitimacy.
- Coins of *Samudragupta* and *Chandragupta II* show deities and legends, reflecting **Vaishnavite faith** and imperial ideology.

## Rulers of the Gupta Dynasty — Contributions & Achievements

### I. Founder & Early Kings

Ruler	Reign	Key Contributions
<b>Sri Gupta</b>	Late 3rd century CE	Founder of Gupta dynasty; a vassal of Kushanas; established the lineage.
<b>Ghatotkacha</b>	c. 280–319 CE	Continued Gupta ascendancy but was not fully sovereign; expanded influence in the Gangetic plain.

### Chandragupta I (c. 319/320 – 335/336 CE)

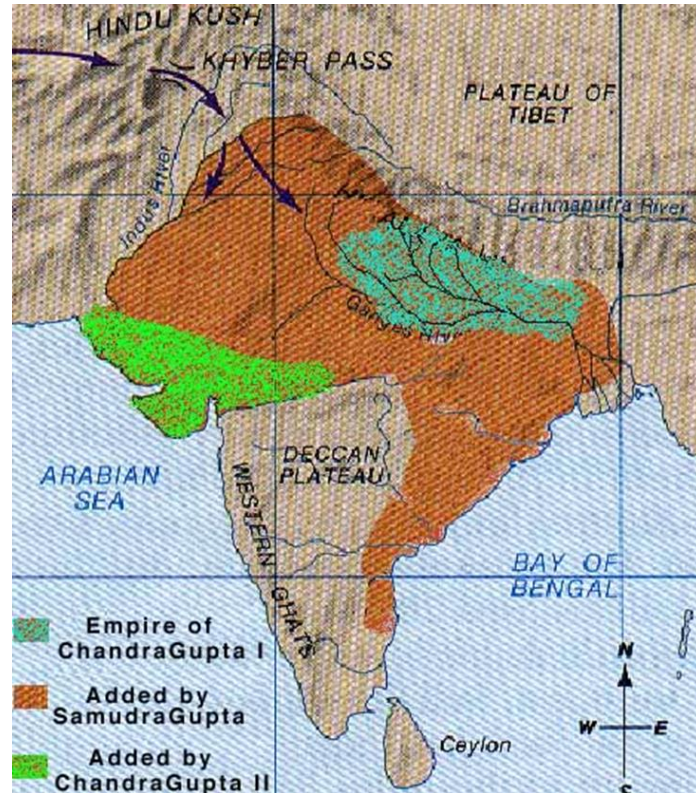
- **Significance:** The **first sovereign king** and the real founder of the Gupta Empire.
- **Accession:** Started the **Gupta Samvat** era in 319-320 CE, marking his accession.
- **Political Consolidation:**
  - Married **Kumaradevi**, a princess of the powerful **Lichchhavi clan** of Nepal. This matrimonial alliance granted him prestige, political legitimacy, and strength.
  - Expanded his kingdom to include Magadha, Saket (Ayodhya), and Prayag.





- **Titles & Symbols:**

- Assumed the title **Maharajadhiraja** (King of Kings).
- Issued **gold coins** in the joint names of himself, his queen, and the Lichchhavi nation.

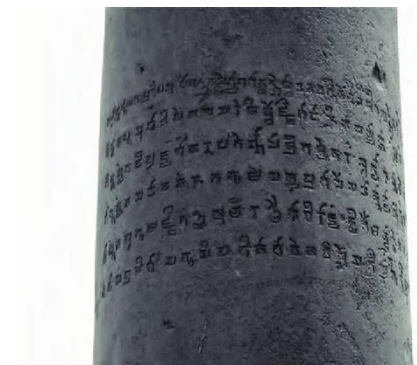


### Samudragupta (c. 335–375 CE)

**Titles:** Maharajadhiraja, Kaviraja, Lichchhavi-dauhitra.

**Key Achievements:**

- **Expansion of Empire:**
  - Direct control: Ganga-Yamuna doab, Magadha, Bengal, central India.
  - Indirect control: South India (Pallavas, kingdoms up to Kanchi), frontier kingdoms, republics of Punjab, Eastern Himalayan states.
- **Allahabad Pillar Inscription (Prayaga-Prashasti):** Main source for his military and political career — authored by court poet and minister Harisena.
- **Policy:** Combined warfare with political conciliation — annexed strategically important



*Allahabad Pillar Inscription of Samudragupta*



regions, reinstated defeated kings as tributaries.

### Military Campaigns (as per Prashasti):

Region / Campaign	Details of Conquest / Action	Outcome / Policy
<b>Aryavarta (North India)</b>	Defeated and annexed <b>9 kings</b> of the Ganga–Yamuna doab (including <b>Nagas</b> ).	Territories <b>annexed</b> .
<b>Forest Kingdoms (Atavika Rajyas)</b>	Subdued <b>tribal states</b> in the <b>Vindhya region</b> .	Brought under Gupta control.
<b>Dakshinapatha (South India)</b>	Defeated <b>12 rulers</b> , including <b>Vishnugopa of Kanchi</b> .	Followed <b>policy of conciliation</b> – reinstated rulers as <b>tributary kings</b> .
<b>Frontier &amp; Republican States</b>	Subdued rulers of <b>Assam, Bengal, Nepal</b> , and <b>republican clans of Punjab</b> .	Made them <b>tributary allies</b> paying tribute.
<b>Foreign Relations</b>	Received homage from <b>Shakas</b> and <b>Kushans</b> ; <b>embassy from Sri Lankan King Meghavarman</b> to build monastery at <b>Bodh Gaya</b> .	Demonstrated <b>diplomatic prestige and influence</b> .

- **Religion & Culture:**
  - Patron of arts, literature, and learning.
  - Performed *Ashvamedha sacrifice*; commemorated with coins (Ashvamedha type) also adopted title **Ashvamedha-parakramah**.
  - Devotee of Vishnu; issued Garuda-type coins.
  - Promoted Sanskrit and Hindu cultural revival.
  - A devout Hindu (Vaishnavite) but patronized Buddhism also (e.g., granted permission for the Sri Lankan monastery)
- **Coinage:**
  - Archer type, Tiger-Slayer type, Lyrist type coins depicting conquest and art patronage.

## Mid-Gupta Period — Zenith of the Empire

### Ramagupta (c. 375–380 CE)

- Mentioned in Sanskrit play *Devichandraguptam* by Vishakhadatta).
- Depicted as a weak ruler who surrendered to Shaka invaders; later overthrown by Chandragupta II.
- Coins attributed to him found in Central India.





## Chandragupta II 'Vikramaditya' (c. 380–415 CE)

**Titles:** Vikramaditya, Simhavikrama.

**Key Achievements:**

- **Territorial Expansion:**
  - Defeated Shaka Kshatras in western India (Malwa, Gujarat, Broach, Sopara, Cambay); secured western sea coast → enhanced trade.
  - Matrimonial alliance: Daughter Prabhavati married Rudrasena II (*Vakataka dynasty*) → indirect control over Deccan.
- **Administration:** Established second capital at Ujjain for strategic governance.
- **Cultural Patronage:**
  - Court known for *Navaratnas* ("Nine Gems") — celebrated scholars:

Name	Field / Expertise	Famous Works / Contributions
Kalidasa	Classical Sanskrit Poet	<i>Abhijnanashakuntalam</i> , <i>Meghadutam</i>
Varahamihira	Astronomer & Astrologer	<i>Pancha Siddhantika</i> , <i>Brihat Samhita</i>
Amarasimha	Sanskrit Lexicographer	<i>Amarakosha</i>
Dhanvantri	Ayurveda Physician	Pioneer in medical science (Ayurveda)
Ghatakarapara	Sculpture Expert	Known for expertise in sculpture and art
Shanku	Architect	<i>Shilpa Shastra</i> (Treatise on architecture)
Kahapanaka	Astrologer	<i>Jyotishya Shastra</i>
Vararuchi	Grammarian	<i>Prakrit Prakasha</i>
Vetala Bhatta	Author on Mantras	Writings on <i>Mantra Shastra</i> (sacred incantations)

- **Religion:** Patron of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism; encouraged religious harmony.
- **Numismatics:** Introduced silver coins (*Rupaka*), copper coins, and continued gold *dinara* issue.
- **Inscriptions:**
  - Udayagiri caves: glorification of his *Digvijaya*.
  - Mehrauli Iron Pillar: his conquest and glory.
- **Foreign Relations:** Chinese pilgrim *Fa-Hien* visited India; recorded prosperity and culture of Gupta period.

## Later Gupta Kings — Administration & Decline

### Kumaragupta I (c. 415 – 455 CE)

- **Significance:** He maintained the vast empire and focused on consolidation.
- **Titles & Religion:** Adopted titles like **Shakraditya** and **Mahendraditya**. He was a worshipper of Karttikeya.



- **Key Contributions:**
  - Performed the **Ashvamedha sacrifice** and issued corresponding coins.
  - Founded the **Nalanda Mahavihara** (Nalanda University), which became a world-renowned center of learning.
- **Inscriptions:** The **Bilsad inscription** is the oldest record of his reign. Others include the Karandanda and Mandsor inscriptions.
- **Challenge:** The first major **Huna (Hephthalite) invasions** began towards the end of his reign, which were repulsed by his son, Skandagupta.

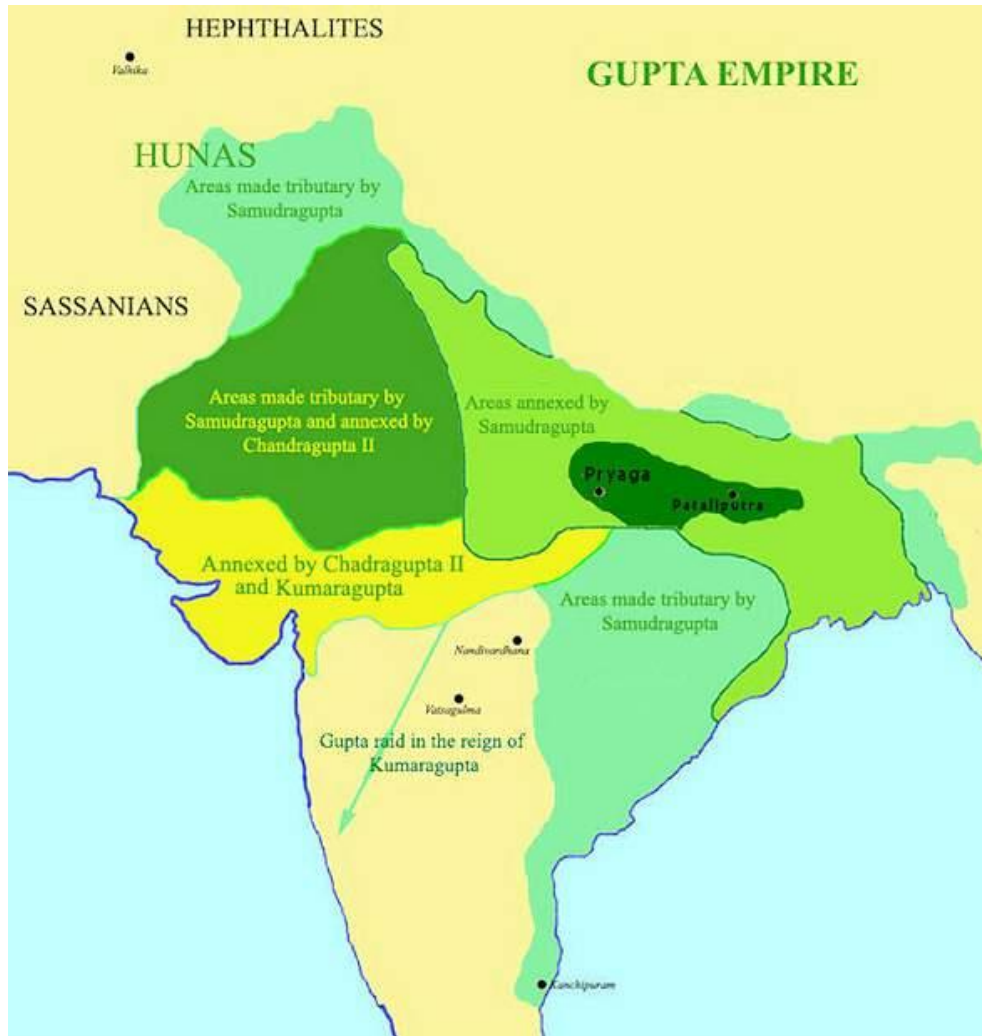
### Skandagupta (c. 455 – 467 CE)

- **Significance:** The **last great Gupta ruler**, known for his valiant defense of the empire.
- **Crisis Management:**
  - Successfully repulsed the **Huna invasions** in the northwest, as mentioned in the **Bhitari Pillar inscription**.
  - His **Junagarh/Girnar inscription** records that his governor, **Parnadatta**, repaired the **Sudarshana Lake** (built originally by Chandragupta Maurya) after a breach in 455 AD.
- **Titles:** Assumed the title **Vikramaditya**.
- **Legacy:** Despite his efforts, the financial strain of continuous wars weakened the empire. After his death, the Gupta Empire entered a period of irreversible decline.

### Later Gupta Rulers

- **Purugupta, Kumaragupta II, Budhagupta, Narasimhagupta, Kumaragupta III, Vishnugupta.**
- Unable to stop Hun invasions → fragmentation of empire.
- Final disintegration of Gupta political control by late 6th century CE.
- **Reasons for Decline:**
  1. Continuous and intense **Huna invasions**.
  2. Financial exhaustion from prolonged warfare.
  3. The rise of independent feudatories and regional powers (like the Yashodharman of Malwa).
  4. Internal administrative weakness and succession conflicts.





## Gupta Administration

### Centralised Monarchy with Feudal Tendencies

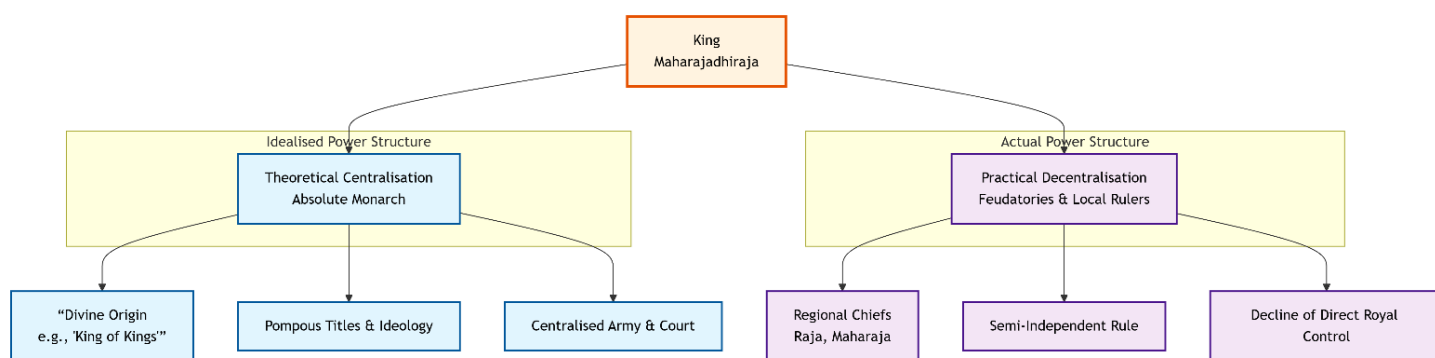
- **Legitimacy and Succession:**
  - Used **matrimonial alliances** to strengthen rule (e.g., Chandragupta I with Lichhavis, Chandragupta II with Vakatakas)
  - Succession generally followed **primogeniture** (eldest son inherits), but it was not rigid, leading to conflicts (e.g., Ramagupta vs. Chandragupta II).

### Central Administration

- **The King:**
  - Head of the state, chief of the army, and the supreme judge.
  - Formulated policies for war and peace, appointed key officials.
- **Council of Ministers:**
  - Less elaborate than the Mauryan bureaucracy.



- Important ministers were often recruited from the **Kumaramatyas** cadre.



### Important Central Officials:

Official Designation	Role / Department
<b>Kumaramatyas</b>	High-ranking officials, source for top appointments
<b>Mahamatya</b>	Chief Minister / Secretary
<b>Mahadandanayaka</b>	Chief Judicial Officer
<b>Mahanyayadhis</b>	Chief Justice
<b>Mahasenapati / Mahabaladhikrita</b>	Commander-in-Chief
<b>Mahasandhivigrahaka</b>	Minister for War and Peace (Foreign Affairs)
<b>Mahapratihara</b>	Chief of the Royal Palace Guard / In-charge of maintenance
<b>Mahashvapati</b>	Controller of Cavalry
<b>Mahamahipilapati</b>	Controller of Elephantry
<b>Mahapakshapatatik</b>	Head of the Account Department
<b>Bhandagaradhikrita</b>	Head of the Royal Treasury
<b>Sarva-dhyaksha</b>	Inspector of all Central Departments
<b>Akshapataladhikrita</b>	Keeper of Records and Accounts
<b>Dandapashika</b>	Head of the Police Department
<b>Khadyat Pakika</b>	Inspector of the Royal Kitchen
<b>Dutaka</b>	Official who executed land grants (messenger)
<b>Vinayasthitisansthapak</b>	Head of Education Department
<b>Ranabhandagarika</b>	Officer in charge of military supplies and welfare of soldiers
<b>Vinayapura</b>	Officer responsible for presenting gifts in royal court.





- **Key Features of Central Bureaucracy:**

- **Hereditary & Combined Posts:** Administrative posts became hereditary (e.g., Harisena and his son). Multiple offices were often combined in the hands of one person (e.g., Harisena was both *Mahadandanayaka* and *Mahasandhivigrahaka*). This weakened royal control.
- **Payment:** Higher officials were likely paid in **cash** (evidenced by abundance of gold coins), but many also received **land grants**, introducing feudal elements.

### Provincial and Local Administration

Level	Administrative Unit	Head / Officials	Features
Province	<i>Bhukti / Desha / Rashtra</i>	<b>Uparika</b> (royal appointee or viceroy, often crown prince)	Administered provinces; appointed heads of districts and boards.
District	<i>Vishaya / Pradesha</i>	<b>Vishayapati</b>	Head of district administration; assisted by board ( <i>Adhikarana</i> ).
Sub-district	<i>Vithi / Sthaniya / Petha</i>	<b>Sthanika</b>	Managed group of villages.
Village	<i>Gram</i>	<b>Gramika / Gramadhyaksha / Gramapati</b>	Village head assisted by elders; land transactions required his consent.
Urban Unit	<i>Adhishtana (city/town)</i>	<b>Nagara-sresthin</b> (chief merchant) + <b>Council of Guild Representatives</b>	Town administration included corporate guilds and professional bodies.

### Unique Features of Local Governance

- **Role of Local Bodies and Guilds:**

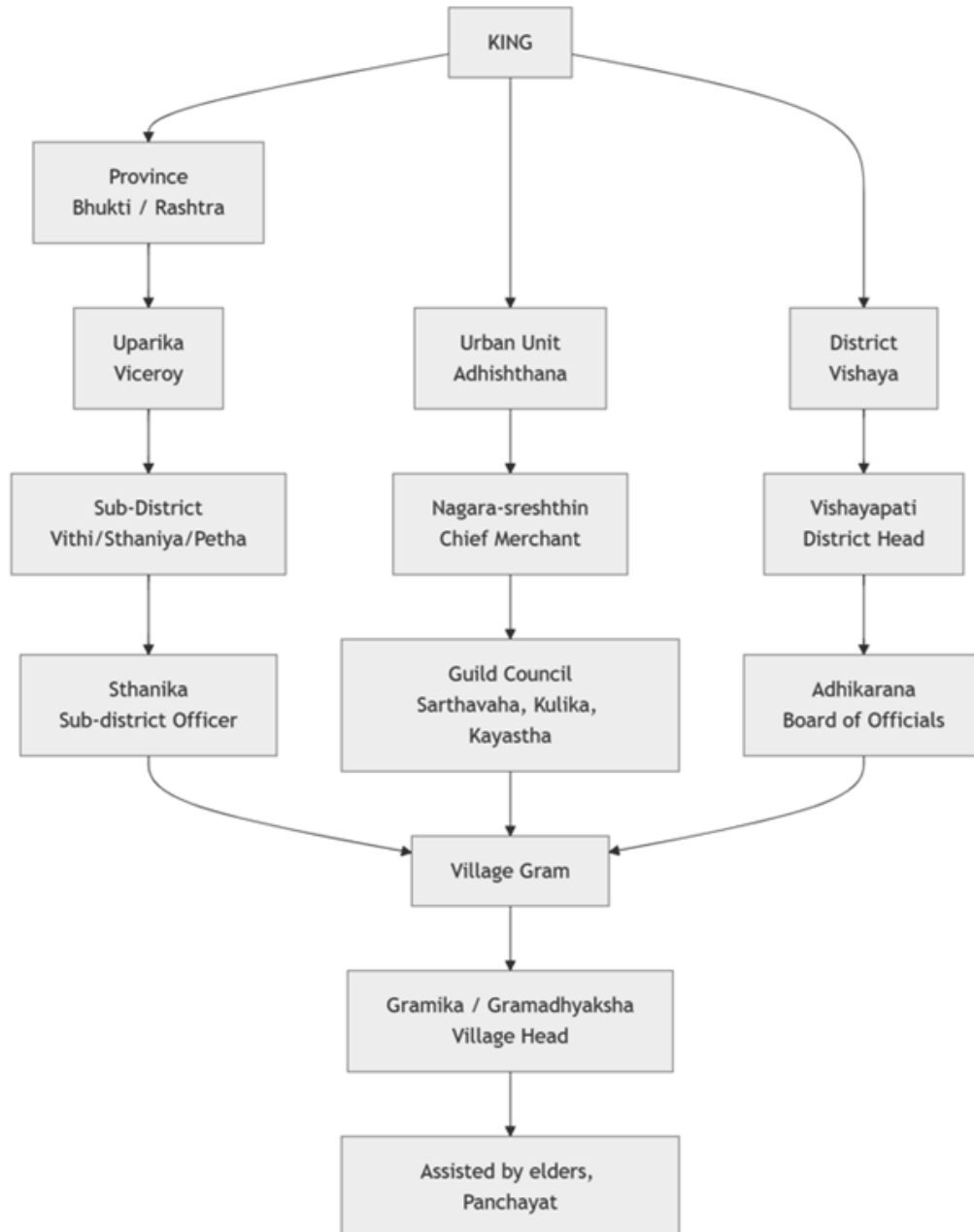
- **Urban Administration:** In towns and districts, state officials were assisted by a **corporate council**.
  - Example: The **Adhishtana-Adhikarana** (District Board) in Kotivarsha (North Bengal) included:
    - **Nagara-sreshthin:** Chief Merchant/Banker
    - **Sarthavaha:** Chief Caravan Trader
    - **Prathama-Kulika:** Chief Artisan
    - **Prathama-Kayastha:** Chief Scribe/Revenue Officer
- **Guilds:** Merchants, artisans, and bankers were organised into powerful **guilds** (e.g., silk weavers in Mandasor, oil-pressers in



Bulandshahar). These guilds were governed by their own laws and had considerable autonomy.

- **Village Assemblies:**

- **Ashtakuladhikarana:** A board of eight members in North Bengal, headed by a *Mahattara* (village elder).
- **Panchamandali:** Mentioned in the Sanchi inscription.

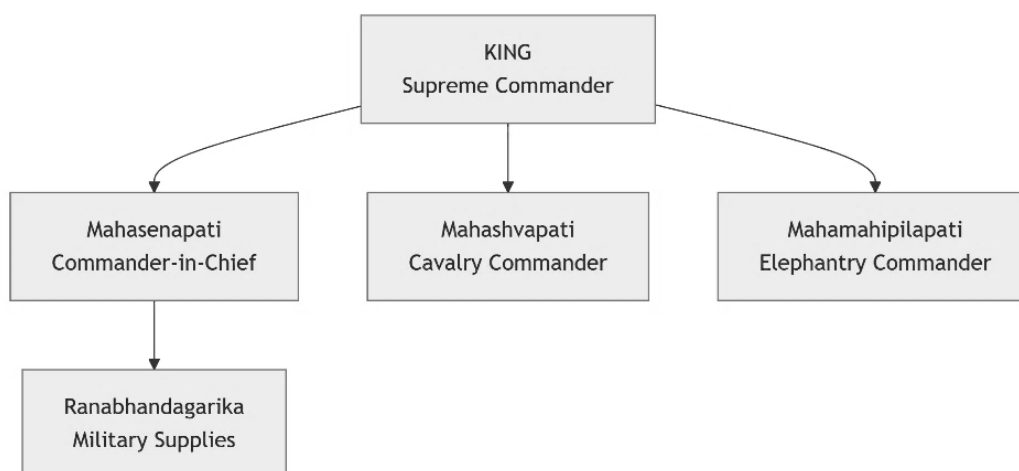


## Revenue Administration

Source / Tax	Description
<b>Land Revenue (Bhaga)</b>	Principal source; typically <b>1/6th of produce (Shadbhaga)</b> .
<b>Other Taxes</b>	<i>Bali</i> (tribute), <i>Sulka</i> (customs on trade), <i>Uparikara</i> (commodity tax), <i>Visthi</i> (forced labour).
<b>Officers</b>	- <b>Akshapataladhikrita</b> – maintained revenue accounts and registers.- <b>Pustapala</b> – record keeper, verified land transactions.
<b>Land Grants</b>	- Tax-free grants to Brahmanas and religious institutions. - Beneficiaries could collect taxes and administer justice in the granted villages. - Royal officials barred from interference.
<b>Mode of Payment</b>	High officials paid in cash (gold coinage abundant), others in land grants — showing feudalisation.

## Military Administration

- The king maintained a **standing army**, supplemented by forces from feudatories.
- King as supreme commander.
- **Shift in Warfare:** Horse chariots declined, and **cavalry** and **horse archery** became prominent.
- Use of composite bows, armoured cavalry, and elephant corps



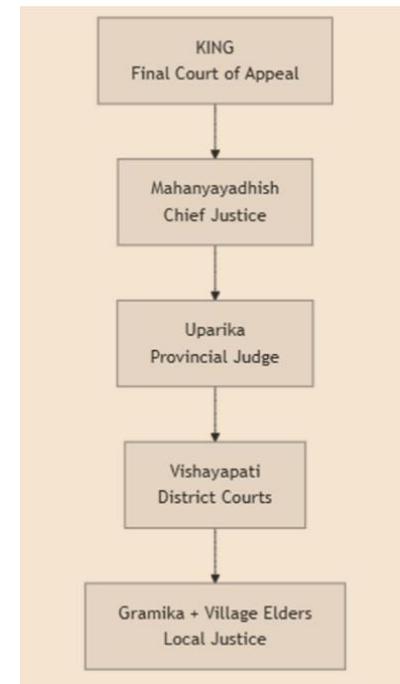
### Key Officials:

- **Mahasenapati:** Commander-in-Chief.
- **Mahashvapati:** Controller of Cavalry.
- **Mahamahipilapati:** Controller of Elephantry.
- **Ranabhandagarika:** In-charge of military stores and supplies.



## Judicial Administration

- The judicial system was more developed; **civil and criminal laws were clearly demarcated**.
- Features:**
  - Criminal law was **milder** compared to the Mauryan period.
  - No capital punishment** and **no judicial torture** (as noted by Fa-Hien).
  - Guilds** had the authority to try cases within their own fraternity.
  - Beneficiaries of land grants** were empowered to punish criminals within their granted territories.



*Hierarchy of Judiciary*

## Guilds and Urban Economy in Administration

Feature	Description
<b>Role of Guilds (Shrenis)</b>	Artisans, merchants, bankers formed guilds ( <i>nigamas</i> ) which participated in local governance.
<b>Autonomy</b>	Maintained own laws and regulations; could endow temples and issue charters.
<b>Examples</b>	- <i>Silk weavers of Mandasor</i> (famous inscription).- <i>Oil pressers of Bulandshahar</i> (guild organisation).
<b>Economic Policy</b>	Reduced taxes on trade; increased land revenue share; light regulation by state.

## Law and Order / Social Administration

- Law and order effectively maintained; **Fa-Hien** noted rarity of theft and crime.
- Police head (*Dandapashika*) supervised enforcement.
- Absence of harsh penalties reflects a **liberal penal system**.
- Emphasis on moral and religious norms as basis for justice.

## Decentralisation and Feudalisation Trends

- Hereditary and multiple offices → decline of royal control.
- Land grants to officials and priests created **autonomous landed intermediaries**.
- Vassal kings and feudatories managed frontier regions under nominal Gupta suzerainty.
- Marks the **early phase of Indian feudalism**.



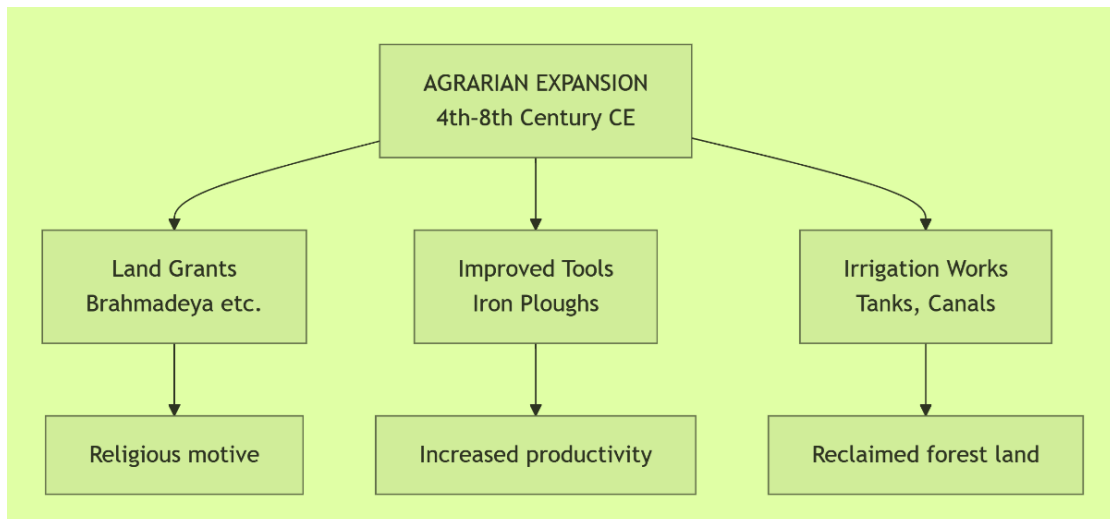


## ECONOMY OF THE GUPTA EMPIRE

### AGRARIAN ECONOMY

#### 1. Agricultural Expansion

- Period (4th–8th century CE) saw **massive agricultural growth** due to land grants and improved techniques.
- **Brahmadeya, Agrahara, and Shasana grants** led to the reclamation of **virgin and forest lands**.
- Key improvements:
  - Use of **iron ploughshares** and **irrigation**.
  - Better **preservation of cattle wealth**.
  - **Crop diversification** and regional specialization.



#### Crops and Agricultural Practices

- **Main Crop:** Rice (*Dhanya*).
- **Kalidasa (Raghuvamsa)** – lists varieties: *sali, nivara, kalama, uncha, shyamaka*.
- **Cash Crops:** Cotton, oilseeds, mustard, indigo (*Amarkosha*).
- **Special Produce:**
  - **Sugarcane** (Paundrak region – Bengal)
  - *Arecanut, Coconut, Pepper, Cardamom*
  - Agricultural hubs: *Amaravati–Bhandara region*.
- **Wider use of transplantation technique** in rice cultivation.

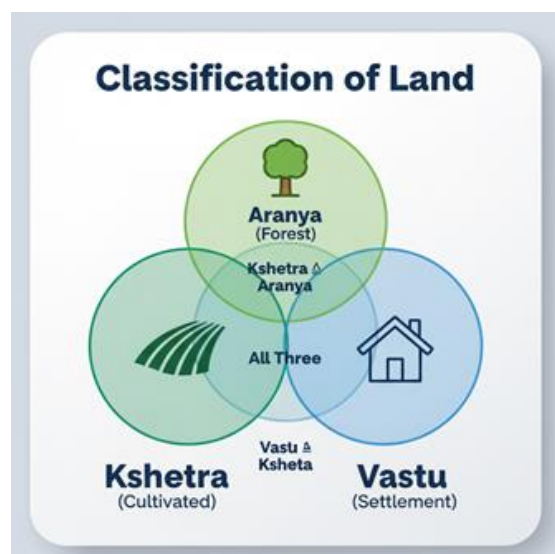


## Irrigation System

- State and community participation in irrigation development.
- **State Role:** The state played a role in building and maintaining large structures (e.g., the **Sudarshana Lake** in Junagarh).
- **Sources:** Sudarshana Lake (Junagadh), wells, ponds (*Pushkarini*), tanks (*Tadaga*), canals (*Ali*, *Brihadali*).
- **Legal protection:** Fines for damaging irrigation structures.
- **Amarkosha term:** *Jalanirgama* – water channel.
- **Prachi Prachura Payasi** – denotes a well-irrigated tract.

## Types and Measurement of Land

- Land classified into:
  - *Kshetra* – cultivated area
  - *Vastu* – settlement land
  - *Aranya* – forest
- **Amarkosha** mentions 12 types of land.
- **Measurement units:**
  - *Angula* ( $\frac{3}{4}$  inch), *Hasta* (8 inches), *Dhanu/Danda*, *Nala*.
  - **Eastern India units:**
    - *Aadhavapa* ( $\frac{3}{8}$ – $\frac{1}{2}$  acre)
    - *Dronavapa* ( $1\frac{1}{2}$ –2 acres)
    - *Kulyavapa* (12–16 acres)
    - *Pataka* (60–80 acres).



## Taxes and Revenue System

- **Main Land Tax:** The king collected **Bhaga**, a land tax varying from **1/4th** to **1/6th** of the produce.
- **Other taxes (as per inscriptions):**
  - **Udranga:** Possibly a water tax or police tax.
  - **Vata-bhuta:** Cesses for religious rites
  - *Klipta* (sales tax) and *Upaklipta* (minor tax).

Tax Name	Type	Meaning / Purpose
<b>Bhaga</b>	Land tax	1/4th–1/6th of produce
<b>Uparikara</b>	Tenant tax	For temporary tenants
<b>Halirakara</b>	Agricultural	Plough tax
<b>Vishti</b>	Labour levy	Forced labour for state
<b>Shulka</b>	Trade tax	Toll/customs duty
<b>Bali</b>	Periodic levy	Supplementary tribute

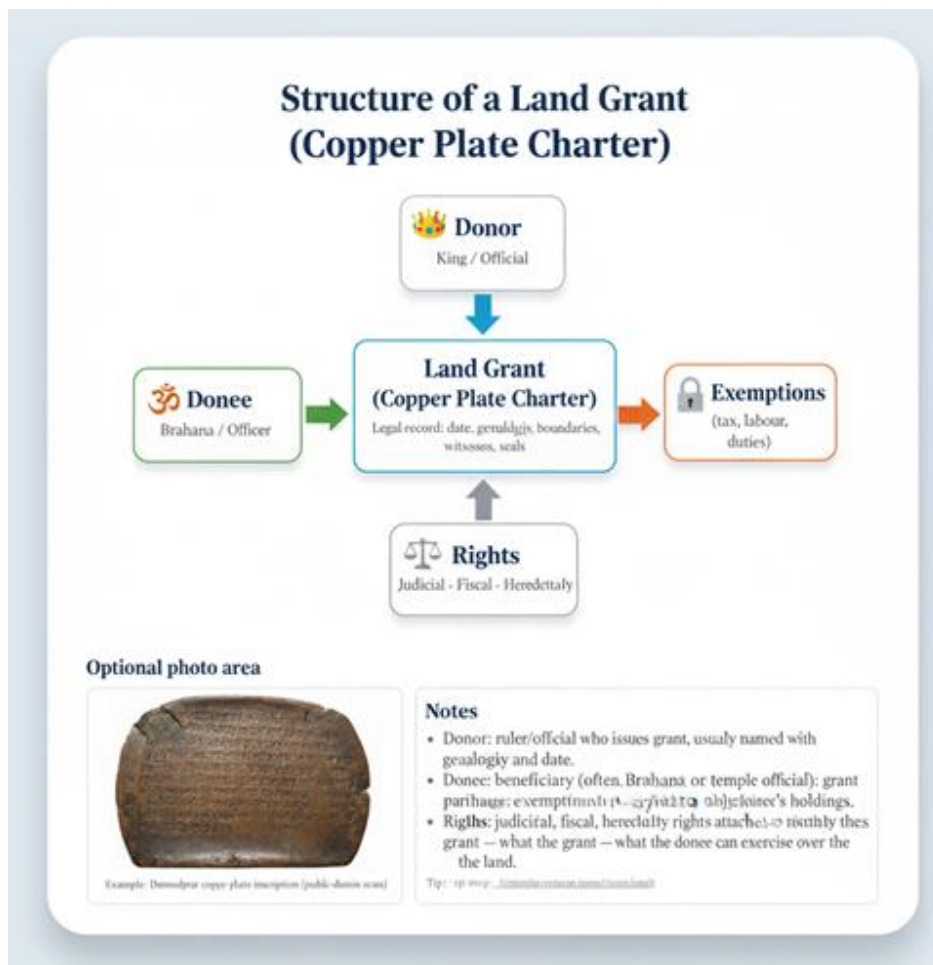


**Other Levies:**

- **Supplies:** Peasants had to supply food grains, animals, furniture, etc., for royal officers and the army passing through their area.
- **Decline of Mauryan-style regulation:**
  - Local feudatories and landholders handled most administration and revenue.

**LAND GRANTS AND AGRARIAN TENURE****1. Nature of Land Grants**

- Extensive **land grants to Brahmanas and officials**, recorded on **copper plate charters**.
- **Features:**
  - **Pariharas:** Exemptions (taxes, entry of royal officials) granted with the land.
  - Hereditary and transferable rights over land and revenue.
  - Grant included judicial and administrative rights (*adhikaras*).

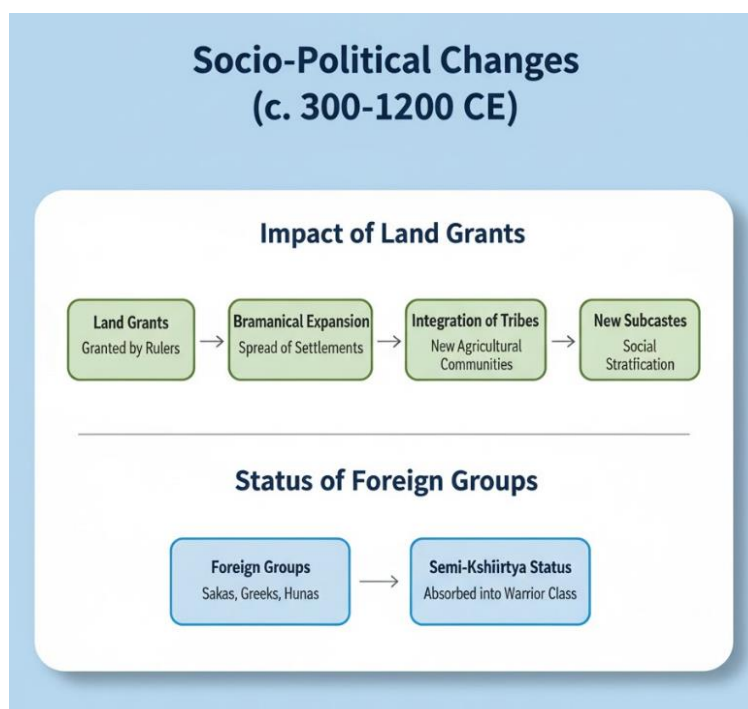


**Key Tenure Terms**

Term	Nature	Characteristics
<b>Nivi Dharma</b>	Permanent usufruct	Revenue rights to donee
<b>Akshaya Nivi</b>	Inalienable	Perpetual
<b>Nivi Dharma Kshaya</b>	Transferable	Alienable

**3. Examples of Pariharas (Exemptions)**

Term	Meaning
<b>Achandradyakalo</b>	Eternal exemption ("as long as the sun and moon exist")
<b>A-Karada</b>	Free from tax
<b>Sa-Nidhi</b>	With underground possessions
<b>A-Bhadra-Praveshya</b>	No government entry
<b>Sa-Amramadhuka</b>	With usufructory rights

**NON-AGRARIAN ECONOMY****1. Craft and Industry**

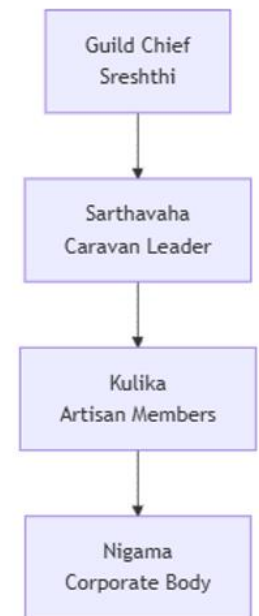
- **Artisan guilds** thrived despite overall decline in foreign trade.
- Mentioned in **inscriptions, seals, and literary works** (*Kamasutra, Amarkosha*).
- **Major crafts:**
  - Metalwork (iron, copper, gold) – *Raghuvamsha* mentions *Ayoghana* (iron forging).
  - Pottery, ivory carving, textiles, carpentry.
- **Ajanta paintings** illustrate luxurious life and urban wealth.





## 2. Guilds (Shrenis)

- Functioned as **economic and social corporations**; regulated production, trade, and charity.
- Multifunctional Role:** Continued to be powerful, engaging in production, banking, and philanthropy.
- Philanthropy:** Guilds constructed temples, shelter homes, and assembly halls (e.g., the Sun Temple in Mandasor).
- Structure:** Had a detailed organizational structure with chiefs and officers (*madhyastha, karyachintaka*).
- Acted as **joint corporate bodies (Sreshthi–Sarthavaha–Kulika–Nigama)**.
- Mandsor Inscriptions (436, 473 CE):**
  - Guild of **silk weavers** migrated from *Lata (Gujarat)* to *Dasapura (Malwa)*.
  - Shifted professions → sign of **decline in silk trade**.
  - Built **Sun Temple** – indicates **wealth and public role** of guilds.



**Hierarchical chart**

## TRADE AND COMMERCE

### Internal Trade

- Vibrant domestic trade** through *vipanis* (markets) and *apanamargas* (trade routes).
- Trade centers: **Pataliputra, Ujjain, Mathura, Tamralipti, Broach, Kalyan, Sopara**.
- Traders: *Sarthavahas* (caravan leaders), *Shreshthins* (merchant guild heads).
- Kamandaka's Nitisara:** advised kings to patronize traders for state prosperity.
- Fa-Hien:** noted secure roads, prosperous cities, and wealthy merchants.

### External Trade

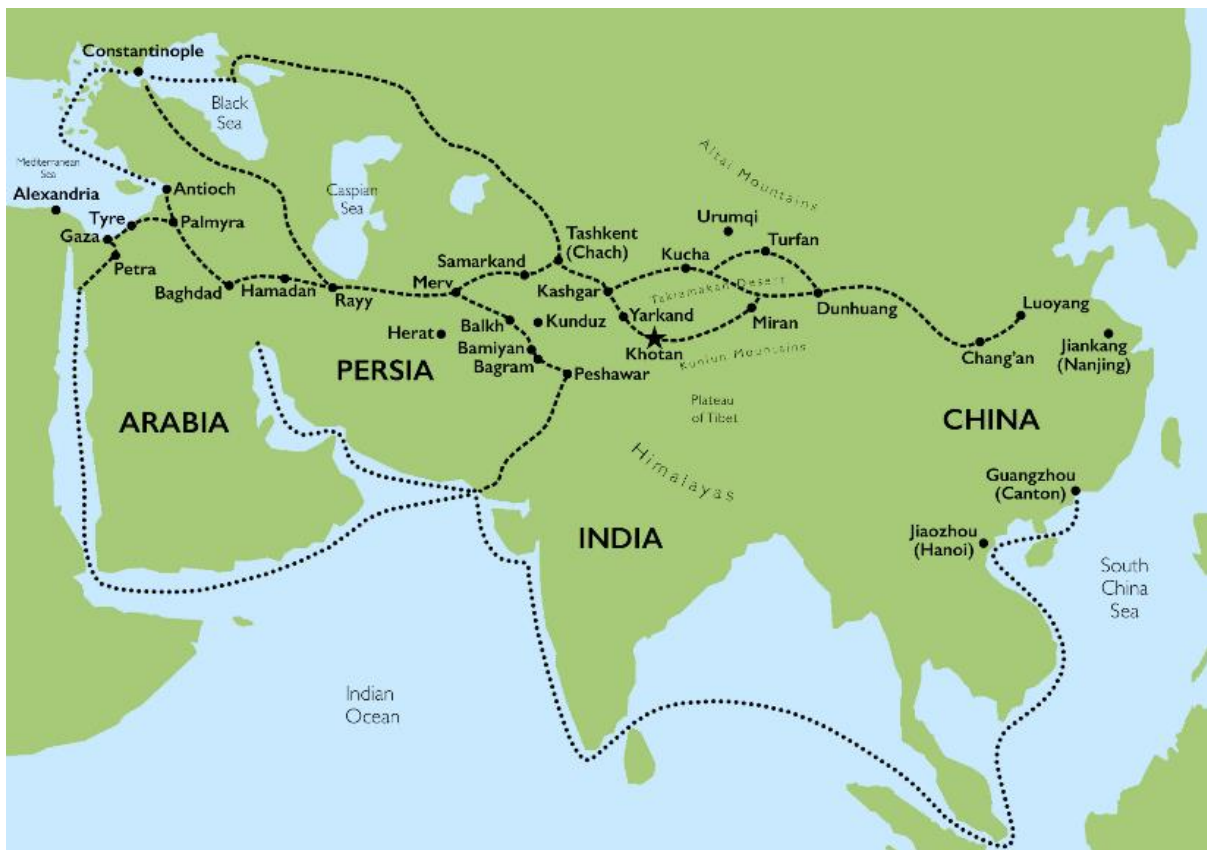
- Early Gupta period:** Active maritime and overland trade.
  - Ports: *Tamralipti* (Ganga delta), *Broach, Sopara, Kalyan*.
  - Traded with **Southeast Asia** (Suvarnabhumi, Java, Cambodia), **Arabia, Iran, Byzantine Empire**.
  - Manimekalai* mentions voyages to Sri Lanka and Java.
  - Kalidasa* refers to "*Chinamshuka*" (Chinese silk).
- Exports:** Silk, spices, ivory, textiles, metal goods.
- Imports:** Horses, precious stones, wine, silk from China.

### Decline in Foreign Trade

- Post-5th century decline due to:



- **Byzantine mastery of silk production (c. 550 CE)** → loss of Indian monopoly.
- **Huna invasions** disrupted northwestern routes.
- Decline in **Roman demand** for luxury goods.
- **Result:**
  - Reduced **inflow of gold and silver**.
  - **Scarcity of gold coins** after Chandragupta II.
  - Silk weavers' migration (Mandasor Inscription).



## COINAGE AND MONETARY ECONOMY

Metal	Type / Name	Use / Features
Gold	<i>Dinaras</i>	Largest in number; show Gupta kings; slightly less pure than Kushan coins. Used to pay officials and for large transactions like land sales.
Silver	<i>Rupyakas</i>	Issued post-Gujarat conquest; for local trade.
Copper	—	Limited use; fewer coins compared to earlier periods.

- Coins were used to pay **officials, soldiers**, and for **land transactions**.



- Depictions on coins reflect **royal achievements, deities, and cultural motifs**.
- The disruption in foreign trade led to a reduced inflow of gold and silver, causing a general scarcity of coins in the post-Gupta period.



## SOCIETY IN THE GUPTA PERIOD

The Gupta period marks the **consolidation of Brahmanical social order** and a **revival of orthodox Hinduism**.

- Society became **hierarchical, complex, and land-based**, with new classes emerging due to **land grants** and **agrarian expansion**.
- The accounts of **Fa-Hien (399–414 CE)** serve as the **primary foreign source** for understanding social conditions.

### I. Varna (Caste) System: Rigidity and New Fluidity

- **Brahmana Supremacy:**
  - Increased significantly due to **large-scale land grants (Brahmadeya)** from kings and rich individuals.
  - These grants often included administrative rights and tax exemptions, creating a class of **priestly landlords**.
  - In return, Brahmanas **legitimized Gupta rule** by portraying kings as god-like and **recasting the originally Vaishya Guptas as Kshatriyas**.
- **Proliferation of Castes:**
  - The caste system became more complex, leading to numerous sub-castes due to two main factors:
    1. **Assimilation of Foreigners:** Groups like Greeks, Sakas, and Hunas were absorbed into Indian society. Their ruling classes were often assigned a **semi-Kshatriya status** (e.g., **Hunas** became one of the **36 Rajput clans**).
    2. **Absorption of Tribal People:** As Brahmanical culture spread through land grants, tribal communities were integrated. Tribal chiefs were often given Kshatriya status, while the common tribespeople were assigned the status of **Shudras**.



## II. Status of Shudras and Untouchables

- **Improved Status of Shudras:**

They were now **permitted to listen** to the epics (Ramayana, Mahabharata) and the Puranas.

- They could **worship Krishna** and perform some domestic rituals previously prohibited.
- From the 7th century CE, they were primarily regarded as **agriculturists**.

- **Deterioration for Untouchables (Chandalas):**

- *Chandalas* were considered untouchables, lived outside villages, and handled meat and corpses.
- Fa-Hien reports they had to **announce their presence by striking wood** to prevent “pollution.”
- The concept also reached South India in the late Sangam age (e.g., texts like *Acharakkovai* mention pollution from untouchables).

Aspect	Shudras	Chandalas
Status	Agriculturists	Outcastes
Rights	Allowed to listen to epics, worship Krishna	None
Residence	Within village	Outside village
Mentioned by	Smritis	Fa-Hien

### Position of Women

- **Deterioration of status**, especially among upper castes:
  - Dependent on men for livelihood; denied property and education.
  - Women of lower varnas (Vaishya, Shudra) enjoyed more economic freedom through labor and agriculture.

Aspect	Features / Key Points
<b>(a) Marriage &amp; Family</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Early marriage for girls became common.</li> <li>• <i>Gandharva</i> (love-based) marriage was idealized in literature (e.g., <i>Kamasutra</i>).</li> <li>• <i>Niyoga</i> (levirate marriage) prohibited among higher varnas but permitted among Shudras.</li> <li>• Widow remarriage restricted for upper castes but allowed for lower castes.</li> </ul>
<b>(b) Property Rights</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Stridhana</i> (woman's gifts during marriage) recognized as her exclusive property.</li> <li>• Later <i>Smritis</i> allowed women to sell or mortgage immovable property.</li> </ul>



		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inheritance of landed property by daughters remained rare.</li> </ul>
<b>(c) Sati and Purdah</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• First clear evidence of <i>Sati</i>: inscription at Eran (510 CE), Madhya Pradesh.</li> <li>• <i>Purdah</i> system absent; women depicted freely in art and sculpture.</li> <li>• Courtesans (<i>ganikas</i>) admired for beauty but lacked social respectability.</li> </ul>
Aspect	Upper Varna Women	Lower Varna Women
Marriage	Early & arranged	Flexible, economic role
Property	Stridhana only	Contributed to livelihood
Education	Restricted	Informal skills
Freedom	Constrained	Higher mobility

### Slavery and Labour

- **Slavery continued** in domestic and agrarian forms.
- *Narada Smriti* lists **15 categories of slaves**, including war captives, debt bondsmen, and voluntary slaves.
- **Forced labour (*Vishti*)** became a regular administrative practice, often imposed on peasants.

### Fa-Hien's Observations on Social Life

- Society peaceful, prosperous, and religiously tolerant.
- People adhered to **Ahimsa**, avoided meat, alcohol, garlic, and onions (except Chandalas).
- Existence of **free hospitals, charitable institutions**, and **rest-houses** for travelers.
- Criminals were rarely given capital punishment; fines were common.
- Reflects a **benevolent monarchy** and **high moral standards**.





## RELIGION IN THE GUPTA PERIOD

Period marked by **revival and reorganization of Brahmanism (Hinduism)** and **decline of royal patronage to Buddhism**. Known as the “**Classical Age of Hinduism**”—when **temple worship, sectarian cults, and Sanskrit Puranas** took shape.

- **Religious tolerance** remained the norm—Gupta rulers patronized **Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism** alike.

### Hinduism and Brahmanical Revival

- Rise of **Smarta** (Smriti-based) practices; Sanskrit became the **sacred and administrative language**.
- Symbols like *linga*, *trishula*, *chakra*, *shankha*, and *Garuda* appear on coins and seals.
- Temple-based worship replaced Vedic sacrifices.

Vaishnavism (Bhagavatism)	Shaivism and Shaktism
Dominant faith of the Guptas; centered on devotion ( <i>bhakti</i> ) to Vishnu/Krishna.	Shiva gained increasing importance; expansion of <i>linga</i> worship and cults of Parvati, Durga, and Kali.
<i>Bhagavad Gita</i> popularized as the text of <i>Bhakti</i> and <i>Dharma</i> .	<i>Shaiva</i> and <i>Shakta</i> texts (e.g., <i>Devi Mahatmya</i> ) became influential.
Concept of <i>Avatara</i> (incarnation) gained ground — <i>Dashavatara</i> system crystallized.	Emphasis on <i>Shakti</i> (female divine power) and worship of Shiva as supreme deity.
<i>Puranas</i> (e.g., <i>Vishnu Purana</i> ) composed to promote Vaishnavite ideals.	Worship of composite deities like <i>Hari-Hara</i> (Vishnu-Shiva) and <i>Ardhanarishvara</i> (Shiva-Parvati) shows syncretism.
Chandragupta II and Kumaragupta called themselves <i>Bhagavatas</i> ; Garuda adopted as royal emblem.	The boar ( <i>Varaha</i> ) adopted by Vakatakas as emblem — mark of Shaiva influence.

### Buddhism

- Though declining, **Buddhism still flourished** in parts of India, particularly the south and west.
- **Hinayana and Mahayana** sects coexisted.
- Fa-Hien noted many **monasteries and Buddha images**, though several were in ruins.
- **Nalanda** developed into a great **center of Mahayana learning**, supported by Gupta patronage.
- The **procession of Buddha images** and **festivals** indicate continuity of popular Buddhism.



## Jainism

- Continued to flourish under Gupta tolerance.
- Prominent in **Gujarat, Bengal, Udayagiri, and Gorakhpur**.
- Jain councils** (e.g., at Valabhi) organized to compile texts.
- Jain monks received grants and royal patronage in several regions.

## Religious Syncretism and Tantrism

- Increasing **fusion of Brahmanical and tribal beliefs**.
- Key Features:**
  - Emphasis on **rituals, yogic practices, and the worship of Shakti** (the feminine divine energy).
  - Use of diagrams (*yantras/mandalas*) and symbolic gestures (*mudras*).
  - It was **more egalitarian**, admitting women and Shudras.
- Tantric ideas influenced Shaivism, Vaishnavism, Buddhism, and Jainism, leading to the introduction of female deities in these religions.
- Represented the **integration of folk traditions** with elite Brahmanical religion.

## ART AND ARCHITECTURE OF THE GUPTA EMPIRE

### INTRODUCTION

- The **Gupta period (4th–6th century CE)** is regarded as the “**Classical Age**” or “**Golden Age of Indian Art**”.
- It marked the **maturation of earlier traditions** (Mathura, Gandhara) and the **emergence of distinct Indian styles** in **temple architecture, sculpture, painting, and metallurgy**.
- The Guptas, especially **Samudragupta** and **Chandragupta II (Vikramaditya)**, were **great patrons of art, literature, and learning**.

### CHARACTERISTICS OF GUPTA ART

Feature	Description
<b>Harmony &amp; Balance</b>	Elegant proportions, serenity, and spiritual expression rather than mere realism.
<b>Idealism over Naturalism</b>	Depictions of divine beauty — calm faces, gentle smiles, and symmetrical features.
<b>Integration of Religion &amp; Aesthetics</b>	Hindu deities (Vishnu, Shiva, Devi), Buddha, and Jain Tirthankaras portrayed in human form.
<b>Refinement of Material Use</b>	Stone, brick, bronze, terracotta, ivory, and metal used skillfully.
<b>Influence</b>	The style spread across South and Southeast Asia (Sri Lanka,



Java, Cambodia).
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## TEMPLE ARCHITECTURE

### 1. Beginning of Structural Temples

- First time **permanent Hindu temples** were built in **stone and brick**, moving beyond wooden and cave structures.
- **Basic Features of Early Gupta Temples:**

**Style:** Early form of the **Nagara style**.

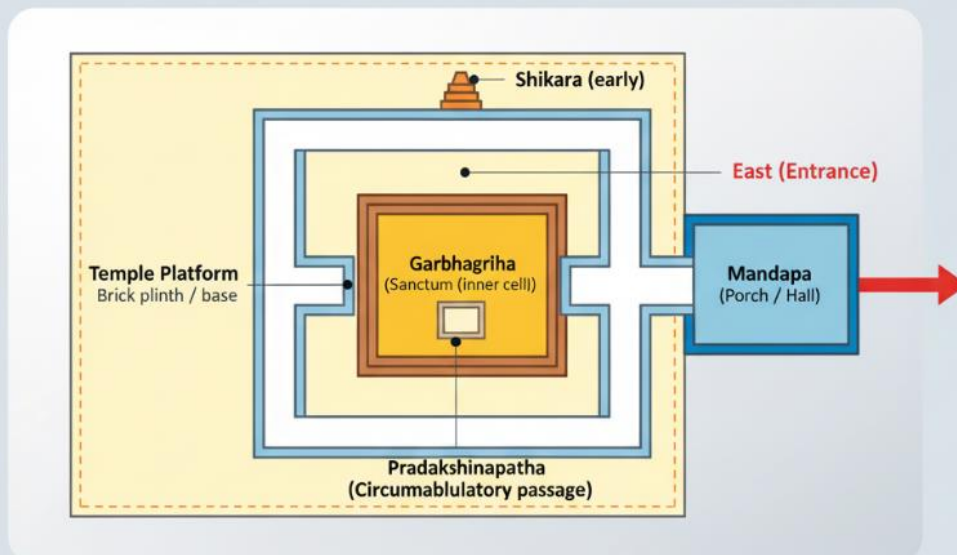
- **Plan:** Generally **flat-roofed** and **square** in plan.
- **Core Components:** A simple, small, dark sanctum known as the **Garbhagriha** (womb-house) to house the main deity.
- **Entrance:** A **portico** or a porch supported by pillars.
- **Progression:** Started with a single room, gradually evolving to include more rooms and a shikhara (spire) in later periods.



*Dashavatara Temple*

### Early Gupta Temple — Top-view Plan (Bhitaragon)

Simplified schematic floor plan with annotated features: Gardara, Shikara, and East-facing entrance.



Garbhagriha

Pradakshinapatha

Mandapa



## 2. Major Temples

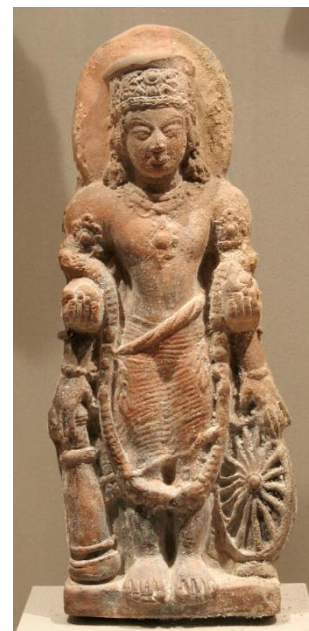
Temple	Location	Material & Features	Deity / Significance
<b>Dashavatara Temple</b>	Deogarh (Jhansi, U.P.)	Stone, square plan, sculpted panels on walls and doorway; early <i>shikhara</i> form.	Vishnu temple – earliest example of <i>Panchayatana</i> style (central shrine + 4 subsidiary shrines).
<b>Bhitargaon Temple</b>	Kanpur (U.P.)	Brick structure with terracotta panels; high shikhara; arched doorway.	Dedicated to Vishnu – <b>oldest surviving brick temple in India.</b>
<b>Tigawa Temple</b>	Jabalpur (M.P.)	Stone temple, flat roof; simple shrine.	Vishnu.
<b>Nachna-Kuthara Temple (Parvati Temple)</b>	M.P.	Two-storeyed; elaborately carved doorway; early Nagara form.	Parvati.
<b>Udayagiri Caves</b>	Vidisha (M.P.)	Rock-cut caves with Vaishnava reliefs; Varaha (boar) rescuing Earth is famous.	Early Vaishnavite art under Chandragupta II.

*Significance:* Gupta temples established the **prototype of later North Indian temple architecture.**

## SCULPTURE

### General Features

- Refinement of earlier **Mathura and Gandhara** traditions into a **harmonious Indian classical style.**
  - Features:**
    - Spiritual Aura:** Figures radiate inner calm and sublime spirituality.
    - Refined Physique:** Slim, graceful bodies with smooth, flowing contours.
    - Transparent Drapery:** The treatment of thin, clinging garments, especially in Buddha images, creating a "wet" effect.
    - Haloos:** Elaborately carved with floral and geometric patterns.
    - Hierarchy:** The main deity is often depicted on a larger scale than subordinate figures, reflecting social hierarchy.



*Standing Four Armed vishnu in U.P*



## Hindu Sculptures

Subject / Theme	Examples / Notes
<b>Vaishnava Images</b>	Dashavatara reliefs — Vishnu reclining on Shesha, Nara-Narayana, and Gajendramoksha.
<b>Shaiva Sculptures</b>	Shiva in various forms; Ardhanarishvara (half male–female), Lingas with faces.
<b>Varaha (Boar) Avatar</b>	Udayagiri relief – Vishnu rescuing Earth; symbolic of cosmic protection.
<b>Krishna Govardhana</b>	Varanasi – colossal free-standing figure lifting Govardhan mountain.
<b>Ashvamedha Horse Sculpture</b>	Khairigarh (U.P.) – life-size horse figure from beige sandstone.

## Buddhist and Jain Sculptures

School	Features / Example Sites
<b>Mathura School</b>	Robust, smiling figures; Buddha in <i>abhaya</i> or <i>dharmachakra</i> mudra; red sandstone.
<b>Sarnath School</b>	Refined, transparent drapery; smooth body contour; emphasis on spiritual expression (e.g., Buddha preaching).
<b>Sultanganj Buddha (Bihar)</b>	Bronze image ~2 m tall; best specimen of Gupta metal casting.
<b>Jain Sculpture (Mathura)</b>	Dated 432 CE seated Tirthankara – simplicity and meditative calm.

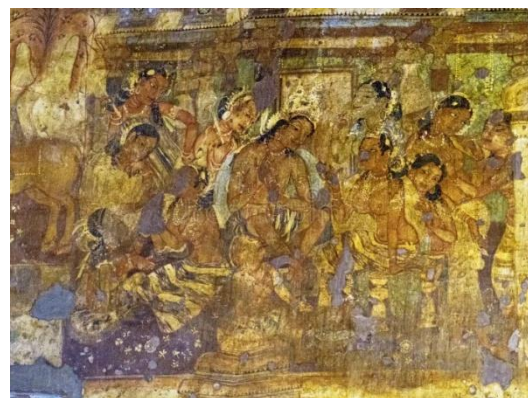
## Terracotta and Minor Arts

- Terracotta figurines of **Goddess Ganga and Yamuna**, yakshas, dancers, animals found at **Kaushambi, Rajghat, Bhita, Mathura**.
- Represent **folk art** and urban life; graceful, decorative, and realistic.

## PAINTING

### 1. Ajanta Caves (Maharashtra)

- Finest example of **Gupta painting tradition** (Murals/Frescoes).
- Out of **28 caves**, 23 belong to **Vakataka–Gupta period**, 5 to **Satavahana period**.
- Depict:
  - **Jataka tales, life of Gautama Buddha**, and **Bodhisattvas** (e.g., Padmapani, Vajrapani).
  - Scenes of court life, nature, and domestic activities.



*Ajanta caves*





- Figures are **graceful, natural, expressive**, with **lustrous, long-lasting colours**.
- **Technique**: tempera on plaster; layered with natural pigments.
- Declared **UNESCO World Heritage Site**.

## 2. Bagh Caves (M.P.)

- Simpler and more linear than Ajanta.
- Depict Buddhist themes with vivid human expressions.



*Bagh caves*

**Importance:** Gupta murals became the **foundation of Indian miniature and mural traditions**.

## Literature of the Gupta Empire (c. 3rd - 6th Century CE)

The Gupta period is rightly called the "**Golden Age of Sanskrit Literature**" or the "**Classical Age**". It witnessed an unparalleled efflorescence of both religious and secular literature, written primarily in Sanskrit.

### General Features of Gupta Literature

Aspect	Details
<b>Language</b>	Predominantly Sanskrit; Prakrit also used in some plays and fables.
<b>Patronage</b>	Emperors like Samudragupta and Chandragupta II (Vikramaditya) were great patrons of literature.
<b>Themes</b>	Covered religion, statecraft, science, poetry, drama, and human emotions.
<b>Style</b>	Balanced and ornate; characterized by <i>rasa</i> (aesthetic flavor) and <i>alankara</i> (figures of speech).
<b>Nature</b>	Combination of devotional ( <i>bhakti</i> ) and secular literature.



## I. Religious and Didactic Literature

This period saw the systematic compilation and codification of existing traditions and the creation of new religious texts.

- **The Puranas:**
  - The major **Puranas** were compiled in their present form during this period.
  - They were instrumental in popularizing Brahmanical religion among the masses through myths, legends, and genealogies.
  - **Key Puranas:** Vishnu Purana, Vayu Purana, Matsya Purana, Shiva Purana, and avatar-specific texts like Varaha and Vamana Purana.
- **Epics (Final Compilation):**
  - The **Ramayana** and the **Mahabharata** were almost completed and reached their final form in the 4th century CE.
  - They were pivotal in promoting the idea of *avatars* (incarnations) of Vishnu, with Rama and Krishna being central figures.
- **Dharmashastras (Law Books):**
  - Several **Smritis** or law books were written in verse, providing rules for social and economic conduct.
  - **Important Texts:**
    - **Yajnavalkya Smriti:** A very important and systematic legal text.
    - **Narada Smriti:** Provides detailed insights into social and economic life, including types of slaves and interest rates.

Katyayana and Brihaspati Smritis are other significant works.

## Secular Literature

### Kalidasa (4th–5th Century CE)

- Regarded as **the greatest poet and dramatist** of classical Sanskrit.
- One of the **Navaratnas (Nine Gems)** in Chandragupta II's court.
- His works blend **romanticism, devotion, and nature imagery**.
- **Major Works:**

Type	Title	Theme / Description
<b>Epic Poems (Mahakavyas)</b>	<i>Raghuvamsha</i>	Genealogy of the Solar dynasty (Raghu, Rama)
	<i>Kumarasambhavam</i>	Birth of Kartikeya (son of Shiva & Parvati) — references to <i>Sati</i> custom
<b>Lyric Poetry</b>	<i>Meghaduta</i>	Messenger cloud poem — love and separation theme



<b>Drama / Plays</b>	<i>Abhijnanasakuntalam</i>	Love story of King Dushyanta & Shakuntala — considered among the world's best literary works
	<i>Malavikagnimitram</i>	Romantic play celebrating <i>Vasantotsava</i> (Spring festival)
	<i>Vikramorvashiyam</i>	Love between King Pururavas and celestial nymph Urvashi

- **Style:** Graceful Sanskrit, vivid natural imagery, emotional depth.

#### Other Major Playwrights and Poets:

- **Bhasa:** A predecessor to Kalidasa. Wrote 13 plays, including:
  - **Swapnavasavadattam** ("Vasavadatta in a Dream")
  - **Urubhangam** ("The Broken Thigh"): A tragedy based on the Mahabharata.
- **Shudraka:** Known for **Mrichchhakatika** ("The Little Clay Cart"), a unique play focusing on a love story between a poor Brahmana and a courtesan's daughter, providing a vivid picture of contemporary social life.
- **Vishakhadatta:** Wrote political dramas.
  - **Mudrarakshasa** ("The Signet Ring of Rakshasa"): A historical/political play about the ascent of Chandragupta Maurya.
  - **Devichandraguptam:** (Only fragments survive) about the Gupta king Ramagupta.
- **Bharavi:** Author of the **Mahakavya Kiratarjuniya**, which describes the combat between Arjuna and Lord Shiva (in the guise of a hunter).

#### Major Sanskrit Writers and Their Works (Gupta Period & Later)

Author	Work(s)	Key Features / Description
<b>Magha</b>	<i>Shishupalavadha</i>	Depicts Krishna's slaying of Shishupala; known for complex Sanskrit and elaborate similes.
<b>Sri Harsha</b>	<i>Naisadhiyacharitam</i>	Story of King Nala and Queen Damayanti; continuation of classical poetic style in late Gupta age.
<b>Dandin</b>	<i>Kavyadarsha</i> and <i>Dasakumaracharita</i>	<i>Kavyadarsha</i> – earliest treatise on Sanskrit poetics; <i>Dasakumaracharita</i> – romantic and adventurous prose narrative of ten princes.
<b>Bhatti</b>	<i>Ravanavadha</i> ( <i>Bhattikavya</i> )	Illustrates Paninian grammar through the story of the <i>Ramayana</i> .
<b>Mentha</b>	<i>Hayagrivavadha</i>	Minor poet of the Gupta period; limited literary impact.



## Scientific, Technical, and Secular Prose Literature

This period saw significant advancements in scholarly and scientific writing.

- **Lexicography:**
  - **Amarasimha:** A scholar in Chandragupta II's court, compiled **Amarakosha**, a thesaurus of Sanskrit words and one of the earliest known lexicons.
- **Grammar:**
  - The foundations laid by **Panini** and **Patanjali** were further developed and studied extensively.
- **Political Science and Statecraft:**
  - **Kamandaka:** Wrote **Nitisara** (also known as Kamandakiya Nitisara), a treatise on statecraft, expanding on the ideas of Kautilya's Arthashastra.
- **Fables and Didactic Stories:**
  - **Vishnusharma:** Traditionally credited with composing the **Panchatantra**, a collection of animal fables with moral and political lessons. It is one of the most widely translated non-religious texts in history.
- **Scientific & Scholarly Works**
  - **Aryabhata** – *Aryabhatiya* & *Surya Siddhanta*: astronomy, trigonometry, and cosmology.
  - **Varahamihira** – *Brihatsamhita*: encyclopaedic work on astrology, geography, architecture, and weather.
  - **Dhanvantri** – contributions to **Ayurveda and medicine**.
  - **Baudhayana, Ishwar Krishna, Bhartrihari, and Vararuchi** – philosophical and grammatical works.
  - **Shanku** – early writings on **geography and measurement**.

## Five Great Sanskrit *Mahakavyas* (Epics of Classical India)

Title	Author	Theme
<i>Raghuvamsha</i>	Kalidasa	Lineage of Raghu & Rama
<i>Kumarasambhavam</i>	Kalidasa	Birth of Kartikeya
<i>Kiratarjuniya</i>	Bharavi	Combat of Arjuna & Shiva
<i>Shishupalavadha</i>	Magha	Krishna killing Shishupala
<i>Naisadhiyacharitam</i>	Sri Harsha	Love story of Nala & Damayanti



## Science and Technology During the Gupta Empire (4th–6th Century CE)

The **Gupta period** is often described as the “**Golden Age of India**”, not only for its art and literature but also for its **remarkable scientific and technological advancements**. This era witnessed significant developments in **mathematics, astronomy, medicine, metallurgy, and art**, many of which laid the foundation for later progress in both the Islamic world and Europe.

### Mathematics: The Foundation of Modern Concepts

Gupta mathematicians made seminal discoveries that would later influence the entire world.

- **The Decimal System and Zero:**
  - The **decimal place value system** was developed and widely used. The **first datable evidence** of the use of zero as both a symbol and a number is found in **Varahamihira's Panchasiddhantika**.
  - A **Gupta inscription from 448 AD** (Allahabad district) confirms the use of the decimal system.
  - **Aryabhata** is credited with inventing the concept of **zero (shunya)**.
- **Key Mathematicians and Their Works:**
  - **Aryabhata I (c. 476-550 CE):**
    - **Work:** *Aryabhatiya* and the lost *Aryabhata-siddhanta*.
    - **Contributions:**
      - Provided a very accurate value of **Pi ( $\pi$ ) as 3.1416**.
      - Laid the foundations of **Algebra (Bijaganita)**.
      - Provided methods for solving **indeterminate equations**.
      - Perfected the methods of extracting **square roots and cube roots**.
      - Gave the formula for the **area of a triangle**.
  - **Varahamihira (6th Century CE):**
    - **Work:** *Brihat Samhita* (an encyclopedic work) and *Panchasiddhantika* (summarizing five astronomical schools).
  - **Brahmagupta (Late 6th/Early 7th Century CE - post-Gupta but in the tradition):**
    - **Work:** *Brahmasphutasiddhanta*.
    - **Contributions:**
      - Defined the rules of arithmetic for **zero** (e.g., addition, subtraction).
      - Provided a formula for the **area of a cyclic quadrilateral** (Brahmagupta's Formula).





- Solved quadratic equations.

## Astronomy

### 1. Aryabhatta's Contributions

- First to assert that **Earth rotates on its axis**, causing day and night.
- Calculated **length of the solar year** as **365.258 days**, remarkably close to the modern value.
- Provided **scientific explanation of eclipses** — caused by the Earth's and Moon's shadows, not demons.
- Determined **planetary orbits** and methods to calculate **celestial positions**.

### 2. Varahamihira (6th Century CE)

- One of **Chandragupta II's Navaratnas**; lived in **Ujjain (Avanti)**.
- Authored:
  - **Panchasiddhantika** – synthesis of five astronomical traditions, both Indian and Greco-Roman.
  - **Brihat Samhita** – encyclopedic work on meteorology, astrology, rainfall prediction, and gemology.
- Predicted **solar and lunar eclipses** accurately.
- Explained the **relation between clouds, winds, and rainfall**.

### 3. Brahmagupta (598–668 CE)

- Authored **Brahmasphutasiddhanta (628 CE)** and **Khandakhadyaka (665 CE)**.
- Contributions:
  - Refined **rules for zero**, negative numbers, and operations involving them.
  - Worked on **cyclic quadrilaterals, geometry, and planetary calculations**.
  - **Hinted at the law of gravitation**.
- Discussed **rotation of Earth, solar/lunar eclipses, and planetary conjunctions**.

## Medicine and Surgery (Ayurveda)

### 1. Major Physicians

Name	Contribution	Key Work
<b>Charaka</b>	Father of Indian medicine; developed internal medicine system	<i>Charaka Samhita</i>
<b>Sushruta</b>	Pioneer of surgery and anatomy	<i>Sushruta Samhita</i>
<b>Vagbhata</b>	Synthesized Charaka and Sushruta's ideas	<i>Ashtangasamgraha</i> and <i>Ashtangahridaya</i>



Name	Contribution	Key Work
<b>Dhanvantri</b>	Royal physician, symbol of Ayurveda	—
<b>Kashyapa</b>	Specialized in pediatrics and gynecology	<i>Kashyapa Samhita</i>
<b>Palakapya</b>	Veterinary science (especially elephants)	<i>Hastyayurveda</i>

## 2. Notable Medical Advances

- Systematic understanding of **human anatomy, embryology, and pathology**.
- **Surgical instruments** and detailed techniques for:
  - **Cataract extraction**
  - **Lithotomy (removal of bladder stones)**
  - **Plastic surgery (rhinoplasty, ear repair)**
- **Dissection of human corpses** for study.
- Veterinary science advanced, particularly for **elephants and horses**.

## Metallurgy and Technology

Gupta craftsmen demonstrated exceptional skill, particularly in iron and bronze work.

- **The Iron Pillar at Mehrauli, Delhi:**
  - Manufactured in the **4th century CE** during the reign of Chandragupta II.
  - It is a **testament to advanced iron technology**, as it has **not rusted** for over 1600 years due to its high phosphorus content and pure iron composition.
  - It is over 7 meters tall and made of wrought iron.
- **Bronze Casting:**
  - The period is known for producing exquisite **bronze images**, such as the **Sultanganj Buddha (over 2 meters high)**, using the lost-wax technique on a large scale.
- **Other Technologies:**
  - The vibrant and lasting **Ajanta paintings** indicate a highly advanced knowledge of **chemistry and pigment production**.
  - References to complex automatic devices (*svayamvaha yantras*) show an awareness of mechanical engineering.



Field	Evidence / Object	Feature
Ironwork	Iron Pillar	Rust-resistant alloy
Bronze casting	Sultanganj Buddha	Lost-wax method
Chemistry	Ajanta pigments	Long-lasting organic colors
Mechanics	Svayamvaha Yantras	Early automata references

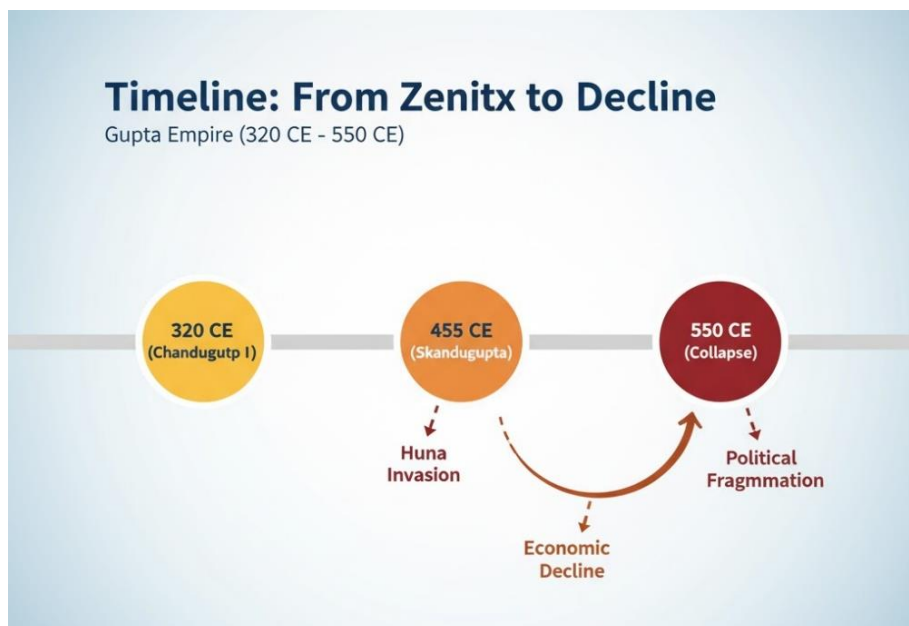
### Key Scientists and Works

Scholar	Period	Field	Major Works	Key Contributions
<b>Aryabhatta I</b>	5th CE	Mathematics & Astronomy	<i>Aryabhatiya</i>	Rotation of Earth, $\pi$ value, trigonometry, decimal system
<b>Varahamihira</b>	6th CE	Astronomy & Astrology	<i>Panchasiddhantika</i> , <i>Brihatsamhita</i>	Eclipse theory, meteorology, encyclopedic science
<b>Brahmagupta</b>	7th CE	Mathematics & Astronomy	<i>Brahmasphutasiddhanta</i> , <i>Khandakhadyaka</i>	Zero rules, geometry, gravitation concept
<b>Vagbhata</b>	6th CE	Medicine	<i>Ashtangahridaya</i>	Compilation of Ayurvedic principles
<b>Sushruta</b>	Ancient–Gupta	Surgery	<i>Sushruta Samhita</i>	Surgery, anatomy, plastic surgery
<b>Charaka</b>	Pre-Gupta	Medicine	<i>Charaka Samhita</i>	Internal medicine, pharmacology
<b>Palakapya</b>	Gupta	Veterinary	<i>Hastayurveda</i>	Elephant medicine
<b>Dhanvantri</b>	Gupta	Ayurveda	—	Founder of Ayurvedic tradition



## Decline of the Gupta Empire (c. 500–600 CE)

The **Gupta Empire**, which marked the “Golden Age of India,” gradually weakened after the reign of **Skandagupta (c. 455–467 CE)**. A combination of **external invasions**, **internal disintegration**, **economic decline**, and **weak successors** led to its downfall by the **mid-6th century CE**.



### Causes of Gupta Decline

Category	Key Factors
<b>External</b>	Huna invasions; loss of western trade routes; foreign interventions
<b>Political</b>	Weak successors; succession disputes; rise of regional powers (Yasodharman, Pushyamitras); feudalism
<b>Economic</b>	Land grants → loss of revenue; fall in trade; industrial decline; debased coinage; agrarian distress
<b>Military</b>	Depleted treasury; dependence on feudatories; outdated tactics; neglect of conquests
<b>Administrative</b>	Decentralisation; hereditary local offices; absence of primogeniture
<b>Socio-religious</b>	Rise of temple endowments; revenue diversion; ideological fragmentation

### Consequences of the Decline

- The **Gupta Empire disintegrated by mid-6th century CE**.
- Northern India was **divided into multiple small kingdoms** (Malwa, Bengal, Bihar, etc.).
- **Political fragmentation** paved the way for **regional dynasties** such as:
  - **Pushyabhutis of Thanesar (Harshavardhana's lineage)**



- **Maukharis of Kannauj**
- **Later Guptas of Magadha**
- Marked the **end of the classical age of unity** in North India until Harsha's consolidation in the 7th century.

### Conclusion

The **decline of the Gupta Empire** was **multi-dimensional** — rooted in **external aggression, economic decay, and internal disintegration**.

By the **6th century CE**, the once-powerful Gupta realm had **fragmented into regional kingdoms**, marking the end of a **centralized imperial tradition** in northern India until the rise of **Harshavardhana**.





## GUPTA PYQ's : (without answer for Practice)

1. Idol worship was started in  
 (a) Gupta period **UPSC CSE 1980**  
 (b) Vedic period  
 (c) Epic period  
 (d) Maurya period

2. Gupta Architecture is represented by many bricks temples and the temple of Bitargoon is most notable for its well-preserved and molded bricks of excellent design, this temple has  
 (a) A tall Gopuram **UPSC CSE1992**  
 (b) A Pyramidal roof  
 (c) An Apsidal plan  
 (d) Double basement

3. In Sanskrit plays written during the Gupta period women and Sudras speak:  
 (a) Sanskrit **UPSC CSE 1995**  
 (b) Prakrit  
 (c) Pali  
 (d) Sauraseni

4. The term Yavanpriya, mentioned in ancient Sanskrit texts, denoted : **UPSC CSE 1995**  
 (a) a fine variety of Indian muslin  
 (b) ivory  
 (c) damsels sent to the Greek court for dance performance  
 (d) Pepper

5. Who among the following is known for his work on medicine during the Gupta period?  
 (a) Saumilla **UPSC CSE 1996**

- (b) Sudraka  
 (c) Shaunaka  
 (d) Susrutha

6. Match List-I with List-II and select the correct answer using the codes given below the lists:

List-I (Dynasty)	List-II (Temple Site)
A. Gupta	1. Badami
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C. Chalukya	3. Khajuraho
D. Pallava	4. Deogarh

**Codes: UPSC CSE 1997**

- (a) A – 4; B – 3; C – 1; D – 2  
 (b) A – 4; B – 2; C – 3; D – 1  
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7. Match List-I with List-II and select the correct answer using the codes given below the lists:

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B. Vishakhadatta	2. Mrichchha-Katikam
C. Sudraka	3. Brihat-Samhita
D. Bilhana	4. Devi-



List-I (Author)	List-II (Text)
	Chandraguptam
	5. Vikramankadeva-Charita

**Codes:** **UPSC CSE 1997**

(a) A - 3; B - 4; C - 5; D - 2

(b) A - 3; B - 4; C - 2; D - 5

(c) A - 5; B - 3; C - 4; D - 1

(d) A - 1; B - 3; C - 5; D - 2

**8. The silver coins issued by Guptas were called**

(a) Rupaka

(b) Karshapana **UPSC CSE 1997**

(c) Dinara

(d) Pana

**9. Which one of the following ports handled the North Indian trade during the Gupta period?**

(a) Tamralipti

(b) Broach **UPSC CSE 1999**

(c) Kalyan

(d) Cambray

**10. Assertion (A): The origin of feudal system in ancient India can be traced to military campaigns. Reason (R): There was considerable expansion of the feudal system during the Gupta period.**

**UPSC CSE 2000**

a. Both A & R are true but R is the correct explanation of A

b. Both A & R are true but R is not a correct explanation of A

c. A is true but R is false

d. A is false but R is true

**11. The Allahabad Pillar inscription is associated with which one of the following?** **UPSC CSE 2006**

(a) Mahapadma Nanda

(b) Chandragupta Maurya

(c) Ashoka

(d) Samudragupta

**12. There are only two known examples of cave paintings of the Gupta period in ancient India. One of these is paintings of Ajanta caves. Where is the other surviving example of Gupta paintings?**

(a) Bagh caves

(b) Ellora caves **UPSC CSE 2010**

(c) Lomas Rishi cave

(d) Nasik caves

**13. India maintained its early cultural contacts and trade links with Southeast Asia across the Bay of Bengal. For this preeminence of Bengal, which of the following could be the most convincing explanation/ explanations?**

**UPSC CSE 2011**

1. As compared to other countries, India had a better ship-building technology in ancient and medieval times.

2. The rulers of southern India always patronized traders, Brahmin priests and Buddhist monks in this context.

3. Monsoon winds across the Bay of Bengal facilitated sea voyages.



**14. With reference to the guilds (Shreni) of ancient India that played a very important role in the country's economy, which of the following statements is/are correct?** **UPSC CSE 2012**

1. Every guild was registered with the central authority of the State and the king was the chief administrative authority on them.
2. The wages, rules of work, standards and prices were fixed by the guild.
3. The guild had judicial powers over its own members.

**Select the correct answer using the codes given below:**

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 3 only
- (c) 2 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

**15. With reference to the scientific progress of ancient India which of the statements given below are correct?** **UPSC CSE 2012**

1. Different kinds of specialized surgical instruments were in common use by the 1st century AD.
2. Transplant of internal organs in the human body had begun by the beginning of the 3rd century AD.
3. The concept of sine of an angle was known in the 5th century AD.
4. The concept of cyclic quadrilateral was known in the 7th century AD.

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 3 and 4 only
- (c) 1, 3 and 4 only
- (d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

**16. The Chinese traveller Yuan**

**Chwang (Hiuen Tsang) who visited India recorded the general conditions and culture of India at that time. In this context, which of the following statements is/are correct?** **UPSC CSE 2013**

1. The roads and river-routes were completely immune from robbery.

2. As regards punishment for offences, ordeals by fire, water and poison were instruments for determining the innocence or guilt of a person.

3. The tradesmen had to pay duties at ferries and barrier stations.

**Select the correct answer using the codes given below.**

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 1 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

**17. During Gupta period, the designations 'Mahattara' and 'Pattakila' were used for:**



**UPSC CSE 2014**

- (a) Military officers
- (b) Village headmen
- (c) Specialists in Vedic rituals
- (d) Chiefs of craft guilds

**18. With reference to Indian history, which of the following is/are the essential element/elements of the feudal system? UPSC CSE 2015**

- 1. A very strong centralized political authority and a very weak provincial or local political authority.
  - 2. Emergence of administrative structure based on control and possession of land.
  - 3. Creation of lord-vassal relationship between the feudal lord and his overlord.
- (a) 1 and 2 only
  - (b) 2 and 3 only
  - (c) 3 only
  - (d) 1, 2 and 3

**19. With reference to forced labour (Vishti) in India during the Gupta period, which one of the following statements is correct?**

**UPSC CSE 2019**

- (a) It was considered a source of income for the State, a sort of tax paid by the people.
- (b) It was totally absent in the Madhya Pradesh and Kathiawar regions of the Gupta Empire.
- (c) The forced labourer was entitled to weekly wages.

- (d) The eldest son of the labourer was sent as the forced labourer.

**20. With reference to the period of Gupta dynasty in ancient India, the towns Ghantasala, Kadura and Chaul were well known as**

**UPSC CSE 2020**

- (a) ports handling foreign trade
- (b) capital of powerful kingdoms
- (c) places of exquisite stone art and architecture
- (d) important Buddhist pilgrimage centres

**21. With reference to the history of India, the terms “kulyavapa” and “dronavapa” denote:**

**UPSC CSE 2020**

- (a) measurement of land
- (b) coins of different monetary value
- (c) classification of urban land
- (d) religious rituals

**22. From the decline of Guptas until the rise of Harshavardhana in the early seventh century, which of the following kingdoms were holding power in Northern India?**

**UPSC CSE 2021**

1. The Guptas of Magadha
2. The Paramaras of Malwa
3. The Pushyabhutis of Thanesar
4. The Maukharis of Kanauj
5. The Yadavas of Devagiri
6. The Maitrakas of Valabhi

**Select the correct answer using the code given below.**

- (a) 1, 2 and 5
- (b) 1, 3, 4 and 6
- (c) 2, 3 and 4
- (d) 5 and 6

**23. Fa-hien (Faxian), the Chinese pilgrim, travelled to India during the reign of** **UPSC CSE 2025**

- (a) Samudragupta
- (b) Chandragupta II
- (c) Kumaragupta I
- (d) Skandagupta

**24. Which among the following statements regarding the Gupta Dynasty is/are correct?**

**CDS II 2012**

1. The Kumaramatyas were the most important officers and they were appointed directly by the king in the home provinces.
2. The village headmen lost importance and the transactions began to be effected without their

consent.

**Select the correct answer using the codes given below**

- (a) Only 1
- (b) Only 2
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

**25. Among the precious stones, the most extensive foreign trade during the Gupta age was that of**

- (a) Diamonds
- (b) Ruby
- (c) Pearl
- (d) Sapphire

**CDS II 2013**

**26. Which one among the following was not an attribute of**

**Samudragupta described in Prayag Prashasti?**

**CDS I 2016**

- (a) Sharp and polished intellect
- (b) Accomplished sculptor
- (c) Fine musical performances
- (d) Poetical talent of genius

**27. Which one among the following statements about the coins of the Gupta rulers is correct?**

**CDS I 2016**

- (a) The obverse and reverse, both had only the king's portrait and date
- (b) The obverse and reverse, both had only an image of a deity and





date

(c) The obverse generally had king's portrait and reverse had an image of a deity or a motif

(d) The obverse generally had king's portrait and reverse always had a date

**28. Which one of the following statements about the Gupta period in Indian History is not correct? CDS II 2017**

1. Sanskrit language and literature reached classical excellence through royal patronage.

2. The status of women was redefined. They were entitled to formal education. Early marriage was prohibited by law and they were given the right to property.

3. Decentralization of administrative authority was impacted by increased grants of land to priests and temples.

4. Land grants paved the way for feudal developments resulting in the depression of the peasantry.

**29. Who among the following ancient Indian kings was praised in glowing terms in the Prayaga Prashasti? CDS II 2021**

- (a) Ashoka
- (b) Harshavardhana
- (c) Samudragupta
- (d) Bindusara

**30. Which one of the following statements about Chandragupta II is not correct? NDA 2009**

- (a) Kalidasa and Amarasimha were famous scholars in his court
- (b) He expanded his empire both through matrimonial alliances and conquests
- (c) He married a Naga princess, named Kubera Naga
- (d) He married his daughter Prabhavati to an Ahom prince

**31. Which one of the following was the official language of the Gupta period? NDA 2009**

- (a) Pali
- (b) Magadhi
- (c) Prakrit
- (d) Sanskrit

**32. Which one among the following cities was the best producer of silk cloth under Gupta reign?**

- (a) Pataliputra **NDA 2012**
- (b) Murshidabad



- (c) Ghazipur
- (d) Varanasi

**33. Which one of the following was composed by Harishena?**

**NDA II 2022**

- (a) Nashik Inscription of Gautami Balashri
- (b) Prayaga Prashasti of Samudragupta
- (c) Deopara Prashasti of Vijayasena
- (d) Hathigumpha Inscription of Kharavela

**34. Varahamihira is**

- (a) An astronaut

**SSC 2011**

- (b) A space shuttle
- (c) A power station
- (d) An ancient astronomer

**35. In which state was the Nalanda University located in India?**

- (a) Bengal
- (b) Bihar
- (c) Orissa
- (d) Uttar Pradesh

**SSC 2009**

**36. Which was the oldest University?**

- (a) Gandhara
- (b) Kanauj
- (c) Nalanda
- (d) Vaishali

**SSC 2014**



**GUPTA PYQ's : (with answers)****1. Idol worship was started in**

- (a) Gupta period **UPSC CSE 1980**  
 (b) Vedic period  
 (c) Epic period  
 (d) Maurya period

**Answer: (a) Gupta period** (Note: While idol worship has older roots, its widespread, institutionalized form is associated with the Gupta period.)

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 Reason (R): There was considerable expansion of the feudal system during the Gupta period.

**UPSC CSE 2000**

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 (c) Lomas Rishi cave  
 (d) Nasik caves

**Answer: (a) Bagh caves**



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**UPSC CSE 2011**

1. As compared to other countries, India had a better ship-building technology in ancient and medieval times.

2. The rulers of southern India always patronized traders, Brahmin priests and Buddhist monks in this context.

3. Monsoon winds across the Bay of Bengal facilitated sea voyages.

**Answer: All 1, 2, and 3 are correct explanations.** *(The options in the image are cut off, but the standard answer is that all three statements are convincing explanations.)*

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1. Every guild was registered with the central authority of the State and the king was the chief administrative authority on them.

2. The wages, rules of work, standards and prices were fixed by the guild.

3. The guild had judicial powers over its own members.

**Select the correct answer using the codes given below:**

(a) 1 and 2 only

(b) 3 only

(c) 2 and 3 only

(d) 1, 2 and 3

**Answer: (c) 2 and 3**

**only** *\*(Statement 1 is incorrect; guilds were largely autonomous and self-regulating.)\**

**15. With reference to the scientific progress of ancient India which of the statements given below are correct?**

**UPSC CSE 2012**

1. Different kinds of specialized surgical instruments were in common use by the 1st century AD.

2. Transplant of internal organs in the human body had begun by the beginning of the 3rd century AD.

3. The concept of sine of an angle was known in the 5th century AD.

4. The concept of cyclic quadrilateral was known in the 7th century AD.

(a) 1 and 2 only

(b) 3 and 4 only

(c) 1, 3 and 4 only

(d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

**Answer: (c) 1, 3 and 4 only**



**16. The Chinese traveller Yuan Chwang (Hiuen Tsang) who visited India recorded the general conditions and culture of India at that time. In this context, which of the following statements is/are correct?** **UPSC CSE 2013**

1. The roads and river-routes were completely immune from robbery.
2. As regards punishment for offences, ordeals by fire, water and poison were instruments for determining the innocence or guilt of a person.
3. The tradesmen had to pay duties at ferries and barrier stations.

**Select the correct answer using the codes given below.**

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 1 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

**Answer: (b) 2 and 3 only** (*Statement 1 is an exaggeration; Hiuen Tsang noted improvements in safety but not complete immunity.*)

**17. During Gupta period, the designations 'Mahattara' and 'Pattakila' were used for:** **UPSC CSE 2014**

- (a) Military officers
- (b) Village headmen
- (c) Specialists in Vedic rituals
- (d) Chiefs of craft guilds

**Answer: (b) Village headmen**

**18. With reference to Indian history, which of the following is/are the essential element/elements of the feudal system?** **UPSC CSE 2015**

1. A very strong centralized political authority and a very weak provincial or local political authority.
2. Emergence of administrative structure based on control and possession of land.
3. Creation of lord-vassal relationship between the feudal lord and his overlord.

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

**Answer: (b) 2 and 3 only**

**19. With reference to forced labour (Vishti) in India during the Gupta period, which one of the following statements is correct?**

**UPSC CSE 2019**

- (a) It was considered a source of income for the State, a sort of tax





paid by the people.

(b) It was totally absent in the Madhya Pradesh and Kathiawar regions of the Gupta Empire.

(c) The forced labourer was entitled to weekly wages.

(d) The eldest son of the labourer was sent as the forced labourer.

**Answer: (a) It was considered a source of income for the State, a sort of tax paid by the people.**

**20. With reference to the period of Gupta dynasty in ancient India, the towns Ghantasala, Kadura and Chaul were well known as**

**UPSC CSE 2020**

(a) ports handling foreign trade

(b) capital of powerful kingdoms

(c) places of exquisite stone art and architecture

(d) important Buddhist pilgrimage centres

**Answer: (a) ports handling foreign trade**

**21. With reference to the history of India, the terms “kulyavapa” and “dronavapa” denote:**

**UPSC CSE 2020**

(a) measurement of land

(b) coins of different monetary value

(c) classification of urban land

(d) religious rituals

**Answer: (a) measurement of land**

**22. From the decline of Guptas until the rise of Harshavardhana in the early seventh century, which of the following kingdoms were holding power in Northern India?**

**UPSC CSE 2021**

1.The Guptas of Magadha

2.The Paramaras of Malwa

3.The Pushyabhutis of Thanesar

4.The Maukharis of Kanauj

5.The Yadavas of Devagiri

6.The Maitrakas of Valabhi

**Select the correct answer using the code given below.**

(a) 1, 2 and 5

(b) 1, 3, 4 and 6

(c) 2, 3 and 4

(d) 5 and 6

**Answer: (b) 1, 3, 4 and 6** (*The Paramaras (2) emerged later, and the Yadavas of Devagiri (5) were a much later medieval dynasty.*)



**23. Fa-hien (Faxian), the Chinese pilgrim, travelled to India during the reign of** **UPSC CSE 2025**

- (a) Samudragupta
- (b) Chandragupta II
- (c) Kumaragupta I
- (d) Skandagupta

**Answer: (b) Chandragupta II**

**24. Which among the following statements regarding the Gupta Dynasty is/are correct?**

**CDS II 2012**

1. The Kumaramatyas were the most important officers and they were appointed directly by the king in the home provinces.

2. The village headmen lost importance and the transactions began to be effected without their consent.

**Select the correct answer using the codes given below**

- (a) Only 1
- (b) Only 2
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

**Answer: (a) Only 1** *(Statement 2 is incorrect; village headmen continued to be important in local administration.)*

**25. Among the precious stones, the most extensive foreign trade during the Gupta age was that of**

- (a) Diamonds
- (b) Ruby
- (c) Pearl
- (d) Sapphire

**CDS II 2013**

**Answer: (c) Pearl**

**26. Which one among the following was not an attribute of Samudragupta described in Prayag Prashasti?**

**CDS I 2016**

- (a) Sharp and polished intellect
- (b) Accomplished sculptor
- (c) Fine musical performances
- (d) Poetical talent of genius

**Answer: (b) Accomplished sculptor** *(The Prayag Prashasti praises his intellect, music, and poetry, but not sculpture.)*

**27. Which one among the following statements about the coins of the Gupta rulers is correct?**

**CDS I 2016**

- (a) The obverse and reverse, both had only the king's portrait and date
- (b) The obverse and reverse, both had only an image of a deity and date
- (c) The obverse generally had king's portrait and reverse had an image of a deity or a motif
- (d) The obverse generally had king's



portrait and reverse always had a date

**Answer: (c) The obverse generally had king's portrait and reverse had an image of a deity or a motif (Gupta coins are renowned for this artistic standard.)**

**28. Which one of the following statements about the Gupta period in Indian History is not correct? CDS II 2017**

1. Sanskrit language and literature reached classical excellence through royal patronage.

2. The status of women was redefined. They were entitled to formal education. Early marriage was prohibited by law and they were given the right to property.

3. Decentralization of administrative authority was impacted by increased grants of land to priests and temples.

4. Land grants paved the way for feudal developments resulting in the depression of the peasantry.

**Answer: Statement 2 is not correct. While some women from elite classes were educated, the**

*overall status of women declined during the Gupta period. Early marriage became prevalent, and property rights were limited.*

**29. Who among the following ancient Indian kings was praised in glowing terms in the Prayaga Prashasti? CDS II 2021**

- (a) Ashoka
- (b) Harshavardhana
- (c) Samudragupta
- (d) Bindusara

**Answer: (c) Samudragupta (The Prayaga Prashasti (Allahabad Pillar Inscription) is a eulogy of Samudragupta by his court poet Harisena.)**

**30. Which one of the following statements about Chandragupta II is not correct? NDA 2009**

- (a) Kalidasa and Amarasimha were famous scholars in his court
- (b) He expanded his empire both through matrimonial alliances and conquests
- (c) He married a Naga princess, named Kubera Naga
- (d) He married his daughter Prabhavati to an Ahom prince

**Answer: (d) He married his daughter Prabhavati to an Ahom**



**prince** *This is incorrect. Prabhavati Gupta was married to Rudrasena II, a Vakataka prince, not an Ahom prince (the Ahom kingdom emerged much later in Assam).*

- (b) Prayaga Prashasti of Samudragupta
- (c) Deopara Prashasti of Vijayasena
- (d) Hathigumpha Inscription of Kharavela

**Answer: (b) Prayaga Prashasti of Samudragupta**

**31. Which one of the following was the official language of the Gupta period?** **NDA 2009**

- (a) Pali
- (b) Magadhi
- (c) Prakrit
- (d) Sanskrit

**Answer: (d) Sanskrit**

**32. Which one among the following cities was the best producer of silk cloth under Gupta reign?**

- (a) Pataliputra **NDA 2012**
- (b) Murshidabad
- (c) Ghazipur
- (d) Varanasi

**Answer: (d) Varanasi**

**33. Which one of the following was composed by Harishena?**

**NDA II 2022**

- (a) Nashik Inscription of Gautami Balashri

**34. Varahamihira is**

- (a) An astronaut **SSC 2011**
- (b) A space shuttle
- (c) A power station
- (d) An ancient astronomer

**Answer: (d) An ancient astronomer**

**35. In which state was the Nalanda University located in India?**

- (a) Bengal
- (b) Bihar **SSC 2009**
- (c) Orissa
- (d) Uttar Pradesh

**Answer: (b) Bihar**

**36. Which was the oldest University?**

- (a) Gandhara
- (b) Kanauj **SSC 2014**
- (c) Nalanda
- (d) Vaishali

**Answer: (c) Nalanda** *(While Taxila is older, it is not an option. Among the choices, Nalanda is the oldest and most famous.)*

