

GS FOUNDATION BATCH FOR CSE 2024

Ancient history - 04 (Guptas and Post Gupta)



Guptas (4th - 6th centuries CE)

The Guptas originated from the Magadha region.

Many Brahminical sources inform us that they were of Vaishya descent.

IMPORTANT KINGS AND THEIR CONTRIBUTIONS

SRIGUPTA (270 - 300 CE)

Srigupta was the **founder** of the dynasty but was a **vassal** of the Kushanas.

GHATOTKACHA (300 CE-319 CE)

He was also **not a sovereign king.**

CHANDRAGUPTA I (319 - 335 CE)

He was the **first sovereign king** of the dynasty.

• He overthrew the yoke of the Kushanas and established his capital at Pataliputra.

He married Kumaradevi, a **princess of the Lichhavi clan** of Vaishali (a kshatriya clan) in order to enhance his social prestige and legitimise his rule.

• He also issued gold coins carrying his image alongside that of the queen.

Upon his coronation, he introduced a new calendar called the 'Gupta Samvat' in 319 CE.

No inscription belonging to this period has been discovered.

SAMUDRAGUPTA (335- 375 CE)

He Is considered to be the greatest Gupta king and warrior.

His exploits have been recorded in the 'Prayag Prashasti' found on the Allahabad Pillar, composed by his court poet, Harisena, in Sanskrit using the Brahmi script.

- According to this inscription, he defeated.
 - 9 kings of Aryavarta (North India) including the the Naga dynasty,
 - 18 kings of Central India including the Atvika tribe, and
 - 12 kings of South India including the Pallavas.

Samudrapupta's followed a conscious policy of imperialism -

- He established direct control over the areas surrounding Magadha, such as Bihar, UP,
 MP, Bengal, etc.
- However, he established indirect control over his South Indian conquests.
 - Most of the defeated kings were restored on the fulfilment of 3 conditions.
 - The defeated king had to pay an annual tribute.
 - The defeated king had to personally appear in Samudrapupta's court, generally on his birthday.
 - The defeated king had to marry his daughter to Samudragupta

Samudragupta emphasised upon the divine nature of kingship.

He claimed to be an incarnation of Vishnu.



- He struck a number of Lakshmi type coins (carrying Goddess Lakshmi's image with his own)
- He assumed high-sounding titles, such as 'Mahrajadiraja' and 'Parambhattaraka'

Samudrapupta's cultivated his image as a warrior-poet

- This conquest of Bengal is commemorated in the **Tiger-Slayer coins**.
- He assumed the title 'Kaviraj' as he was a great patron of the arts.
- He was himself an accomplished Veena player as is commemorated in his Veena-Player coins, carrying an image of him playing the Veena.

The **prominence of Varnashrama Dharma system** is reflected in Samudrapupta's activities.

- He is believed to have performed the Ashwamedha Yajna, which he commemorated by striking the Ashvamedha type coins (an image of him performing the Yajna).
- He also adopted the title 'Lichchavi Dauhitra' to emphasise upon his Kshatriya heritage.

He was a great patron of Vaishnavism.

• Samudragupta also issued **Garuda type coins** carrying the image of a 'Garuda' both associated with Vaishnavism and the royal Gupta emblem.

The first evidence of Sati belongs to the Gupta period (Eran inscription of 510 CE).

The practice of untouchability also emerged during the Gupta period.

RAMAGUPTA (375-380 CE)

The Sanskrit drama, 'Devichandraguptam' written by Vishakhadutta, has portrayed Ramagupta as a weak king.

- According to this play, the Saka king, Rudra Simha III, defeated Ramagupta and conquered his empire.
 - Ramagupta was restored after he agreed to hand over his wife, **Dhruvadevi**, to the invader.
 - O His younger brother, **Chandragupta II**, defeated Rudra Simha III, overthrew Ramagupta, and married Dhruvadevi, thus restoring Gupta 'honour'.

Most historians believe that this play was used by Chandragupta II to justify his usurpation of the throne.

CHANDRAGUPTA II 'VIKRAMADITYA' (380- 415 CE)

Sources -

1. Inscriptions

- a) His **inscriptions at Sanchi and Udaygiri (Odisha)** were composed by his court poet, **Ravisena**, in Sanskrit using Brahmi script.
- b) The **Mehrauli iron pillar inscription** mentions a king called 'Chandra' who claims to have defeated some Saka kings.
 - Most historians attribute it to Chandragupta II and believe that he adopted the title 'Vikramaditya' after defeating the Sakas.



• He established his **second capital at Ujjain** in order to maintain effective control over the western reaches of his empire.

2. Coins

In order to commemorate his victory over the Sakas, he issued silver coins known as 'Rupaka', thus becoming the first Gupta king to issue silver coins.

- He continued the practice of issuing a large number of 'Dinars' (gold coins).
- In addition to Samudrapupta's coins, he issued the Archer Type and Lion-Slayer type of gold coins.

Navratnas -

Chandragupta II was a great patron of arts, and is believed to have patronised 9 great scholars (Navratnas), including:

- Kalidasa
- Dhanvantari
- Shanku
- Vararuchi
- Ghatkharpar
- Varahamihira
- Amarasimha
- Kshapanaka
- Vetala-Bhatta

However, historical evidence to show that these scholars were contemporaries of chandragupta II is debatable.

Fa Hien -

The famous Chinese traveller Fa Hien visited India between 399-412 CE.

• He arrived via the land route (through central Asia) and returned via the sea route (including Sri Lanka and Java).

The purpose of his visit was to:-

- Visit Holy Buddhist sites such as Gaya Lumbini, Sarnath, Sanchi Kushinagar, etc.
- To collect Holy Buddhist scripture.

His book, 'Fu-Kyo-Ki' contains valuable accounts of his travels, describing Indian culture, society, customs, and economic life.

He learnt Sanskrit and translated several Buddhist scrolls and scriptures.

According to him, Buddhism flourished in southern and western India, but was declining in the Gangetic plains.



- In fact, he has lamented the **dilapidated state of prominent sites** such as Lumbini and Kushinagar.
- He says that the gangetic plains were the 'land of Brahmanism'.

He praised:-

- The beauty of Pataliputra, especially the king's wooden throne
- India's colourful festivals.
- The high moral character of Indians.
- Indian tradition of time-keeping.
- Indian sense of cleanliness and hygiene.
- The law and order situation

However, he was **shocked to see the practice of untouchability**.

He does not appear to have been interested in India's political affairs, because he has not mentioned any Indian king by name. This indicates that his accounts are largely unbiased.

KUMARAGUPTA (415- 445CE)

Most inscriptions of the Guptas period are attributed to him, the most famous being the **Mandsore and Mathura inscriptions**.

During his reign, the Nalanda Buddhist Monastery was built, to which he donated one village.

The **Huns**, a war-like tribal group from Central Asia, **began invading** India during his reign.

Other important ancient educational institutions

Taxila Monastery was established around 1000 BCE.

- It flourished under the Achaemenid (Persian) rule during the 6th century BCE.
- It was also patronised by Mauryan, Bactrians, Sakas and Kushanas.
- Famous alumni include Chanakya, Charaka and Panini.

Nalanda Monastery

- It was patronised by the Guptas, Harshavardhana and the Palas
- Balaputradeva, a king of Suvarnadwipa also patronised it.
- Famous alumni include Huien Tsang, Dharampal and Aryabhatta.

Mahaviharas established by the Palas -

- Odantapuri (Gopal I)
- Vikrampura (Dharampala)
- Sompura (Dharampal)
- Jagdalla (Rampala)

Other educational institutions -

Vallabhi (Gujarat) - Jain centre of learning patronised by rulers of Maitraka dynasty.



- Pushpagiri (Odisha) Jain Chethis
- Latagiri (Odisha) Jain Chettis
- Manyakheta/ Malkhed (Karnataka) Rashtrakutas
- Nagarjunakonda (Andhra Pradesh) Buddhist Mahavihara patronised by by Satavaharas, Ikshavakus, Kakatias
- Sharda Peeth (Pok) Lalitaditya of the Karkota Dynasty

SKANDAGUPTA (445- 467 CE)

His **Junagarh rock inscription** tells us that he defeated the Hunas.

He also donated one village to the Nalanda Mahavihara.

GUPTA ADMINISTRATION

Centralised monarchy

- The king was an absolute monarch, considered to possess divine powers.
- Adjoining areas were in their direct control, while South India was under their indirect control.

Matrimonial alliances

- To strengthen their rule.
 - Chandragupta I married a Lichhavi princess to legitimise his rule.
 - Samudragupta married the daughters of defeated kings to ensure their loyalty.
 - O Chandragupta II married his daughter Prabhavatigupta to the Vakataka ruler Rudrasena II.

Succession

- The Guptas followed the notion of **primogeniture**, but it was **not rigid**.
 - O This led to wars of succession, such as the conflict between Ramagupta and Chandragupta II.

Central Bureaucracy

They **continued the Mauryan tradition of appointing top central officials** to assist the king, such as -

- Mahamatya Chief secretary/ minister to the king
- Mahasenepati Commander in Chief
- Mahashvarohi In-charge of cavalry
- Mahapilupati in charge of elephants
- Mahadandanayak officer in-charge of law and order
- Mahanyayadhish Chief Justice



• Mahasandhivigrahaka - in-charge of foreign affairs/ war and peace

However, it was also different from Mauryan bureaucracy because.

- Some Gupta officials held **more than one position**. E.g.: Harisena was the Court Poet, Mahamatys and Mahasandhivignahake of Samudragupta .
- Some positions were **hereditary**. E.g.: Harisena and his son, Ravisena, both served as court poets
- It was **not as large** as the Mayryan bureaucracy because.
 - The tax net was not a wide
 - The empire was not as large since only North India was under its direct control.
 - State regulation was not as complete.
- Senior Gupta officials were paid in land grants.
 - Priests and religious institutions also received land grants.
 - The people receiving land grants were authorised to -
 - Administer justice upon people under their jurisdiction.
 - Extract forced labour called "Vrishti / Vishti ".

Taxation

- 'Udaranga' was the hand revenue, the most important source of State income.
 - According to contemporary Sanskrit sources, it was collected at the rate of 1/6 of the produce.
- The Guptas also taxed other economic activities, such as trade, commerce, crafts production, and services.

Provincial / sub - provincial administration

It was a close approximation of the Mauryan system-

- The empire was divided into **Bhuktis** (provinces), governed by **Rajyapals/ Uparikas** who were generally members of the royal family or the king's most-trusted advisors.
- The provinces were divided into Vishayas, needed by Vishayapati.
- These were subdivided into Sthaniya headed by Sthanika.
- The Grams were headed by Gramini.

City Administration

An **element of local administration** was visible in urban administration, state officials were assisted by a Council of notable citizens -

- Sarthavaha head of the overseas trading guild
- Prathamkulika chief of the artisan guild
- **Prathamkayastha** representative of government officials
- Nagar Sresthin / Pratham Sresthin chief of the banking guild.



GUPTA LITERATURE

Religious texts -

Dharmashastra/Smritis

- These are **ancient Indian law books**, composed by prominent jurists.
- Manusmriti is the oldest, most comprehensive, and most popular, composed by sage Manu.
- Others: -
 - Yajnavalka Smriti
 - Parashar Smriti
 - Brihaspati Smriti
 - Narada Smriti
 - Gautam Smriti
- They fix the rules of social interaction and individual behaviour in accordance with age, caste, and gender.
 - Most of these rules favour upper caste males, who enjoy rights and privileges, while most duties and obligations are reserved for lower castes and women.

Puranas

- They are my mythological accounts of gods and goddesses.
- They also contain the genealogical and dynastic records of kings.
- The **18 Maha Puranas** were written in different periods, i.e., before, during and after the Gupta age.
 - Vishnu Purana
 - Shiva Purana
 - o Parvati Purana
 - Garuda Purana
 - Vayu Purana
 - Agni Purana
 - Bhagavata Purana
 - Matsya Purana i
 - Adi Purana
 - Bhavishya Purana
- They are valuable as they illuminate contemporary culture, societal norms, and technology, as well as the chronology of kings and dynasties.
- However, they must be critically treated as they have the following limitations-
 - They are **primarily religious** texts, where mythology is often enmeshed with fact making it difficult to tell them apart.



- They lack a proper sense of chronology because their authorship is unclear and there is no mention of dates.
- They are written in the **future tense**. Thus, the correct sense of history is often lost.

Secular Literature

The Gupta period saw unprecedented progress in sanskrit literature -

- 'Daridra Charudatta' Drama Bhasa.
- 'Mrichchakatikam' (little clay cart) Drama Shudraka
- 'Devichandraguptam' Drama Vishakhadatta
- 'Mudrarakshasa' Drama Vishakhadatta
- 'Malvikagnimitram' Drama Kalidasa
- 'Vikramorvasiyam' Drama Kalidasa
- 'Abhijnana Shakuntalam' Drama Kalidasa
- 'Kumarasambhavam' Epic Kalidasa
- 'Raghuvansham' Epic Kalidasa
- 'Ritusamhara' Poetic Work Kalidasa
- 'Meghdutam' Poetic Work Kalidasa
- 'Panchasiddhantika' Astronomy and Astrology Varahamihira
- 'Aryabhatika/ Aryabhatiyam' Astronomy and Mathematics Aryabhatta
- 'Amarkosha' Sanskrit lexicon Amarasimha
- 'Panchatantra' Collection of short stories Vishnu Sharma
- 'Kamasutra' a description of 64 arts and crafts including music, dance, makeup, decoration, drama, love-making, etc. Vatsayana
- 'Nitisara' Statecraft Kamandaka
- 'Sushruta Samhita' Surgery Sushruta

GUPTA SCHOOL OF SCULPTURE

Found from various parts of North and Central India.

- It was sculpted both independently and structurally.
- Its subjects are varied, covering **Buddhism**, **Jainism**, **Vaishnavism**, and **Shaivism**.
- The materials used are marble, sandstone, mud, and terracotta.

Gupta sculptures were **indigenously developed** having **no foreign influence**.

- The facial features of Buddha are highly expressive.
- The element of divinity is depicted with a **Halo** behind the head.
- Buddha's **clothes are also indigenous** and much more decent then the Gandhara school.



Gupta sculpture is unique due to the importance of 'Hasta Mudras'

- Abhay mudra It represents fearlessness, i.e.., the Buddha reassuring the devotee.
- **Dhyan mudra** It represents the Buddha in **Meditation**.
- Bhumisparsh mudra It represents the Buddha calling the Earth to witness his steadfastness and enlightenment despite Mara's disruptive schemes.
- Varada mudra It represents the Buddha giving a blessing or granting a wish.
- Karan mudra It represents the Buddha warding off evil.
- Vajra mudra It represents the self-confidence of Buddha due to the union of 6 elements in his being earth, fire, air, water, metal, and spirit.
- Vitaraka mudra It represents the Buddha while teaching or discussing.
- Dharma chakra mudra Associated with the first sermon, it represents the continuous motion of the cosmic order.
- Uttarabodhini mudra It signifies his supreme enlightenment and perfection.
- Anjali mudra If represents the Buddha in prayer / greeting / adoration.

Prominent sculptures of Buddha - Considered to be life-size images of Buddha.

- Sarnath Buddha sandstone, standing position, over 7 feet tall.
- Mathura Buddha sandstone, seated position, roughly 4.5 feet tall.
- Sultanganj Buddha copper, standing position, over 7 feet tall.

Vaishnavite sculptures - The most famous one is found on the walls of the Dashavatara temple, Deogarh, near Jhansi.

Jain sculptures - are mostly of Pasasvanath and Mahavira.

Shaivite sculptures - statues of Shiva, depicted as having 4 heads.

Harshavardhana (606- 647 CE)

SOURCES

Archaeological evidence –

- Coins and inscriptions from NW India, especially Haryana.
- Banskhera inscription tells us that he was a prolific writer.
 - Harsha was also known as 'Siladitya'.
- Aihole Inscription refers to his defeat at the hands of Pulakesin II

Literary evidence-

- Huien Tsang's 'Si-Yu-ki'
- Banabhatta the court poet of Harshavardhana



- o 'Harshacharita' biography, in Sanskrit
- o 'Kadambari' a romantic novel in Sanskrit
- Harshavardhana composed 3 Sanskrit plays.
 - o 'Priyadarshika'
 - o 'Ratnavali'
 - o 'Nagananda'

PERSONAL DETAILS

He belonged to the **Pushyabhuti/ Vardhana dynasty**, with its capital at **Thaneshwar/Sthaneshwar** (Haryana).

- Father Prabhakar Vardhan
- Brother Rajyavardhan
- Sister Rajyashree
- Brother-in-law Grihavaraman (ruler of the Maukhari dynasty at Kanyakubja)

Conquests

- He was **forced to accede the throne at the age of 16** after Rajyavardhen and Grihavarman were assassinated by Shashank the king of Gauda.
- Harsha united the Maukhari and Pushyabhuti kingdoms, shifted his capital to Kannauj, and joined hands with Bhaskarvarman, the ruler of Ahom.
- He **defeated Shashanka** in his second expedition, and thereafter Magadha and Gaud were divided between Harsha and Bhaskarvarman.
- Harsha was an **ambitious** king.
 - He expanded his kingdom from the Himalayas to the Vindhyas and from Sindh to Bengal, with the exception of Kashmir and Ahom.
 - O However, on the banks of the Narmada, he was defeated by Pulakesin II.

Religious Works

- Harsha was a follower of the Sun God, Shiva as well as Mahayana Buddhism.
- According to Buddhist sources, he divided his kingdom into 4 equal parts for different purposes -
 - For the royal family
 - Religious institutions
 - Army and administration
 - Charity among the poor.
 - O However, this arrangement seems to be an exaggeration.
- During his reign, the famous religious festival called 'Makamokshaparishad' was organised every 5 years at Prayag, lasting for 4 days.
 - On the first 3 days, Ganesh, Shiva, and Buddha were worshipped.



- The 4th day was reserved for charitable purposes.
- Harsha also organised an **all-religions' conference at Kannauj**, presided over by Huien Tsang.
 - O However, violence erupted, and the conclave was burnt down.
 - O Hiuen Tsang wrote that 500 Brahmins were held responsible and exiled.

HIUEN TSANG / YUAN CHANG (631-645 CE)

He arrived in India via the land route through central Asia and returned the same way.

The purpose of his visit was to: -

- Collect Buddhist scriptures.
- Visit Holy Buddhist places.
- Study at the Nalanda Mahavihara
 - He spent 2 years here learning Yoga Shastra and 9 more years as an instructor.
 - He mentions that almost 10,000 monks resided and studied at the monastery, and admission was granted through an extremely tough entrance exam.

Hiuen Tsang mentions 3 kings

- Harshavardhan
- Pulakesin II (Badami)
- Narasimhavarman (Kanchipuram)

According to him, India's law and order situation was excellent.

- There was no theft and Indians had a high moral character.
- He writes that strict laws were enforced against thieves and robbers, and the cities were so secure that an old woman could travel unmolested with a basket of gold on her head in the middle of the night.
- Further, highways were protected by royal troops to ensure the safety of travellers and long-distance travellers.
- However, he contradicts himself, saying that he himself was robbed 4 times in Harsha's territory.

According to Hiuen Tsang, 18 Buddhist sects flourished in india.

His accounts have been recorded in the **'Si-Yu-ki'** while his biography was written by his friend, Whee Lee.

He returned to China with a number of Buddhist texts and gifts.

He helped in spreading the Indian culture in China, and is thus, considered to be a good interlocutor between the two civilisations.

CHALUKYAS

- Ruled over the Deccan Region (6th-8th C)
- 3 branches of Chalukyas –



- The Chalukyas of Badami
- The Western Chalukyas of Kalyani
- The Eastern Chalukyas of Vengi
- Most Famous Ruler Pulakesin II
 - Aihole inscription Ravikirti Sanskrit language Kannada script Victory over Harsha on the Banks of the Narmada.
 - Clashed with the Pallavas of Kanchi
 - Defeated Mahendravarman I
 - Defeated by the Pallava King Narsimhavarman I Badami was captured and destroyed.
 - O Huien Tsang visited his kingdom and lamented the decline of Buddhism in the Deccan
- Patronised the **Vesara Style** of Temple Architecture

PALLAVAS

- Ruled over Andhra Pradesh and Northern Tamil Nadu upto the Kaveri River (7th-9th C)
- Capital Kanchipuram
- **Pioneers of the Dravidian Style** of Temple Architecture.
- Mahendravarman I
 - O Began construction of the Mamallapuram Monolithic Rathas
 - O Patronised learning Famous 'Ghatika' at Kanchi
 - O Defeated by Pulakesin II
- Narsimhavarman I (Mamalla)
 - O Mamallapuram Monolithic Rathas were completed.
 - Huien Tsang visited Kanchi during his reign.
 - Defeated Pulakesin II
- Narsimhavarman II (Rajasimha)
 - Shore Temple at Mamallapuram and Kailashnath Temple at Kanchipuram
 - O Sent embassies to China Alliance with the Tang Dynasty General of South China
 - o Patronised the Sanskrit scholar **Dandin**

IMPERIAL CHOLAS

- Created a huge empire covering Sri Lanka, South East Asia and parts of North India with the Tamil country as its core (9th-12th C)
- Founder Vijayala
- Capital Tanjore and later Gangaikondacholapuram
- Parantaka I



- o Great Builder
- O Completed the famous Nataraja temple Chidambaram with a golden roof
- O The two famous **Uttaramerur inscriptions** that give a detailed account of the **village administration** under the Cholas belong to his reign.

• Raja Raja I (985-1014)

- Real founder of the Chola Empire.
- O Conquered the **Deep South** by defeating the Cheras and the Pandyas
- O Conquered Northern Sri Lanka
- Conquered the Maldives
- Constructed the **Rajarajeswara/Brihadishwara temple** at Tanjore.
- O Buddhist Monastery at Nagapattinam

• Rajendra Chola I (1012-1044)

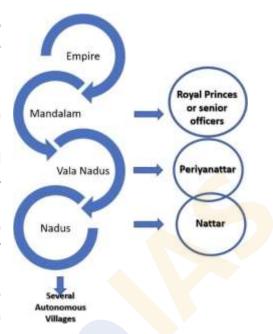
- Extended the empire upto the Tungabhadra by defeating the Chalukyas of Kalyani
- Completely annexed Sri Lanka
- Annexed several regions of Srivijaya/Kadaram (South East Asia) after a successful naval expedition.
- O Defeated the Palas of Bengal after crossing the Ganga.
- O New Capital Gangaikondacholapuram
- O Built the Gangaikondacholapuram/Brihadeeswara Temple
- Built the Airavateswarar Temple at Tanjore
- **Dravidian Style** of Temples reached a **new peak** and emerged in its full glory with all essential elements fully developed.
- Metal sculpture also reached a new high with the development of the world-famous
 Bronze Chola Natraj
- The weaving industry, particularly the silk- weaving at Kanchi flourished.
- Commercial contacts between the Chola Empire and China, Sumatra, Java, and Arabia were extensively prevalent.
- Arabian horses were imported in large numbers to strengthen the cavalry.
- The Ramayana composed by Kamban and the Periyapuranam or Thiruthondar Puranam by Sekkilar are the two master-pieces of this age.

CHOLA LOCAL SELF GOVERNMENT

- The **Uttaramerur** inscriptions.
- 3 Types of General Assemblies
 - **Ur**: a general assembly of the village consisting of the taxpaying residents.



- Sabha or Mahabhasa: Its membership was restricted to the Brahmins of the village. Found in Brahmadeya and Agrahara villages.
- Nagaram: was found more commonly in trade centres such as cities and towns.
- Each village was divided into thirty wards and each was to nominate its members to the village council.
- From the persons duly nominated, one was to be chosen for each ward by the 'Kudavolai' system for a year.
 - The names of eligible persons were written on palm-leaves and put into a pot.



- O A young boy or girl would take out thirty names, each for one ward.
- After being elected, they were assigned various portfolios under different committees. The committee members were called 'Variya Perumakkal'.
- They usually met in the temple or under a tree and passed resolutions.
- The number of committees and ward members varied from village to village.





Foundation Batch 2.0

CSE 2024

FO NISHAT SINGH



Е A T Ū

R

E

S







PYQ (Previous Year Questions) Discussion. Everyday life example.

Development of Sociological perspective.

Answer writing sessions.

Feedback & mentorship at personal level.

Time | 02:00 - 04:30 PM

Mode | Live | Online | Offline

Duration | 05 Months

Starting Date | 24th July



₹**45,000/-** Online ₹**47,000/-** Offline



Scan **QR** Code more information