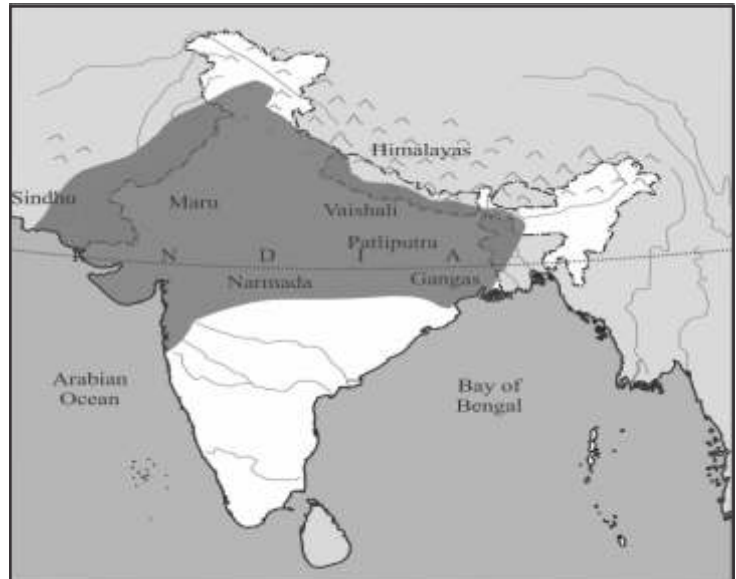
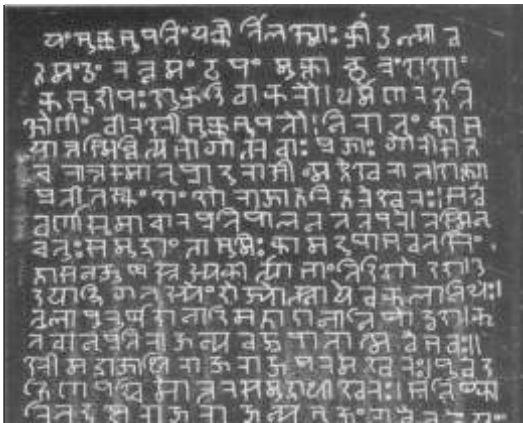


Interpretation of inscriptions indicates that Shreegupta was the first king of Gupta dynasty. He was succeeded by his son, Ghatotkacha. Both of them had not adopted the title of kings. But the one who came after them, that is, Chandragupta I (319 A.D.) adopted the title as Maharajadhiraj and laid the foundation of the empire. Having established his authority in Magadha, he married a Lichchhavi kshatriya girl and strengthened the eastern border.

Chandragupta I conquered Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and some part of Bengal and expanded Gupta Empire. In 319-20 A.D., Chandragupta I, initiated Gupta Samvat. Thus, Chandragupta I occupies the honour of being the first king of Gupta Period.



The Area of Gupta Empire



Allahabad Inscription

Samudragupta (330 A.D. to 376 A.D.)

The history of Samudragupta is obtained from an inscription that was engraved on the same pillar that carried the inscriptions of emperor Ashoka at Allahabad. It is famous as Allahabad pillar Inscription or as Prayag appreciation. This inscription is made up of 33 sentences, written by his prominent officer and state poet Harishen. (Picture of Prayag appreciation)

Conquests of Samudragupta and Expansion of Gupta Empire

Samudragupta was a successful general. The victories obtained through wars are known as Aryavartana or Uttarapatha and Dakshinapatha. His wars in different parts of India are wellknown.

Aryavarta (Uttarapath) Wars

According to Prayag appreciation Samudhragupta defeated three important kings of Aryavartana: Achyuta, Nagasena and Kulaja. He had made the kings of Ahichchhatra, Gwalior and Kota region bow before him. He spread the Gupta Empire by defeating the rulers of the valley of Ganga and surrounding regions.

Dakshina (Dakshinapatha) Wars

Samudragupta defeated 12 kings of Dakshinapatha which is mentioned in the Prayag Appreciation. First he conquered the kings and then released them by collecting tributes from them. Thus he exercised his power through feudalism.

Other Conquests

Among other victories of Samudragupta are Bengal, Kamroop, Nepal, Malav, Yudhey, Madra and Abhirs. He defeated all these kings and collected tributes from them. Many kings gave their daughters to Samudragupta in marriage with him. Similarly, later Kushanas, some Shaka leaders, the foreign rulers of South-West, Shreelanka and many island rulers accepted the sovereignty of Samudragupta.

Thus, Samudragupta by his various victories established himself as an emperor of a vast empire. He overpowered the surrounding rulers in no time and expanded the boundaries of his kingdom. Even the far away rulers accepted his lordship. That is the reason why he is called the Napoleon of India.

Chandragupta II (Vikramaditya) (380 A.D. to 412 A.D.)

According to the inscriptions of Gupta period, Chandragupta II was coronated as a successor of Samudragupta. In some literary sources, other king Ramgupta was mentioned. In the play, Natak-devi Chandragupta, written by great Sanskrit play writer, Vishakhadatta; it is clearly mentioned that Chandragupta II assassinated Ramgupta and came to power. According to historians, the elder brother of Chandragupta II, Ramgupta came to the throne and lost the war against Shaka king. In order to save the state he was prepared to hand over his queen Dhruvaswaminee to the Shakas. This matter was a disgrace for Gupta kingdom. In this situation, to save Dhruvaswaminee Devi, Chandragupta II decided to wage a war against Shaka king. He took the form of Dhruvaswaminee and went to the camp of Shaka, killed him and won the war. Then, according to the wish of the group ministers, he killed his brother, Ramgupta and married his sister-in-law, Dhruvaswaminee. Thus, having regained the honour of the Gupta kingdom he ascended to the throne of Gupta empire. 'Kavyamimansha' and 'Harshacharitam' have also mentioned this episode. It could be interpreted that the gap of five years between Samudragupta and Chandragupta II must be that of Ramgupta, as coins of Ramguptas have been found.

The honour of evolving a great empire, after saving the humiliating situation, goes to Chandragupta II. He had marriage relation with Naga dynasty. He had married princess Kubernaga. His daughter Prabhavati by Kubernaga was married to king Rudrasen II. He defeated Shaka king Rudrasen III of Gujarat and annexed the Shaka kingdom to Gupta Empire. He brought an end to the kingdoms of Shaka-Kshatrap of Western India and came to be known as Shakari. Gujarat, Saurashtra and a huge region of Western Malva were won over and annexed to the empire. As a result he had earned the status of 'Sinhavikram'. In two inscriptions of Udayagiri caves, near Sanchee, there is a mention of his military triumphs. In one of the inscriptions, he is called the dreamer of winning the Earth.

There is also the mention of the triumph of Bengal by Chandragupta. From these mentions of triumphs it could be stated

that Chandragupta II was the greatest conquerer of the Gupta Empire. He had broadened the boundaries of the empire from Saurashtra in West to North-West and up to Bengal in East India.

During the time of Chandragupta II, Chinese traveler, Fa-Hiyan had visited India. He has given significant information regarding the administrative system of Chandragupta II. Chandragupta II was a patron of literature and art. Kalidasa was a great luminary in his court and an invaluable gem.



Mehroli Iron-column, Delhi

Kumargupta I (412 A.D. to 455 A.D.)

The Successor of Chandragupta II, was his son Kumaragupta. The information about him is obtained from Bhilasa inscription. According to this inscription his fame had spread across four seas. Even in the inscription found in Mandasor, he is described as a king ruling over the whole Earth. In the copper plate of Damodarpur, he is addressed as 'Maharajadhiraja'. His inscriptions and coins have been found from central and western parts of India. Magadha, Bengal, and Gujarat were the chief centres of his rein. He preserved the empire he received in heritage from Chandragupta II. However towards the end of his rule foreign attacks had already been set in. These attacks were encountered successfully. He had also maintained good relations with other states established by his father.

Skandagupta (455 A.D. to 467 A.D.)

Skandagupta was the successor and the last powerful king of the Gupta empire, after Kumargupta. During his time on the North-West border Huns were a great threat. However, Skandagupta defeated them. The inscription has been found from Junagadh. That means he kept the empire given by his father intact. From the inscription of Junagadh it proves that he was a king who cared for his peoples welfare.

Post-Skandagupta Gupta Rulers

Up to the time of Skandagupta, the empire remained organized. However, after him, it started disintegrating. His successor kings were: Buddhgupta, Vengupta, Bhanugupta, Narsinhgupta, Baladitya, Kumargupta II and the last one Vishnugupta.

The rulers after Skandagupta were not powerful and skillful like earlier ones and hence by 550 A.D. Gupta Empire in India declined.

The Reasons for the Fall of Gupta Empire

Attack of Huns

During the time of Kumaragupta, there was a danger of the attack from Huns on the North-West border. Huns were very powerful and belonged to warrior tribe. They attacked India dangerously. Kumaragupta was able to defeat them. But at the end of the fifth century, powerful warrior and leader of Huns, Torman, attacked Western India and Central India and gave huge jolt to the Gupta Empire. His son Miharkool ruled in Malva and its surrounding area. Due to the attacks of Huns Gupta Empire was limited to North and East India. His control over Gujarat and Deccan was lost and gradually the empire fell.

The Weakness of Gupta Administrative System

The administration of Guptas was not as efficient and modern as that of Mauryas. Their policies were unorganized. Instead of having well organized and effective administration they handed over the provinces to the local leaders and they were satisfied with the tributes. Consequently, whenever there was a weak king, the local kings tried to be independent and have their rules. Due to these weak Gupta Emperors, many regional rulers emerged and became eventually independent. The administration also lacked the specific tax system of Mauryas. In stead they ruled with feudal lords.

Administrative System of Guptas

King :

King was the centre of the Administrative system. He was entitled by different names such as, 'Chakravartee', 'Mahadhiraja', 'Vikramaditya', 'Parambhattark', 'Parameshwar', and 'Parmaabhagvat'. In Gupta Empire the king had divine powers. Allahabad Inscription gives the information.

The king used to decide the policy for the time of peace and war. At the time of attack, he managed the army. He took the responsibility of the security of the people. He defended the Brahmins and Shramanas. Scholars and artisans were assisted. He was the supreme judge and gave judgment according to rules and regulations of Hindu religion. He appointed all the higher authorities and ministers. He never interfered in the administration of the state, which accepted the allegiance of the king. External affairs matters also used to be under him.

Council of Ministers and Officers :

To help the king there was a council of ministers. He consulted the council to govern. The minister ship was mostly inherited. Chief Judge was known as *Mahadandanayak*. The work of giving justice used to be assigned to *Upareek* and in district to the *Vishayapati*. In the village the mukhiya gave justice. According to the Chinese traveler, Fa-Hiyan there was no death sentence practiced during those days.

The head of the securities of the palace was called *mahapratihara*. The organizer of felicitations and programmes in the state was known as *sthatipala*. 'Dootak' was associated with spying network.

Military :

As mentioned earlier the king was the head of the military. He kept a huge army. In the Gupta Empire the minister of defense was called 'Sandhivigrahak'. And under him was the military head mentioned as 'Mahabaladhikrut'. The general of the elephant army was called *pilooapati*, the general of cavalry was called *Ashvapati* and the head of infantry was called *Narapati*. The military personnel were paid in cash. There is a mention of a special officer called *ranabhandagareek*. He used to take care of the manufacturing of weapons. His duty was to provide weapons to the military.

Revenue System :

The main source of income of the state was the land tax. The heads of the revenue system were called *Gopashramin* and *Akshapatladhikrut*. They decided the tax and also collected it. The one who made documents and filed them was called *Pustapal*. He used to do the survey and measuring of the land. Since the entire system depended on revenue system, the king himself took care of revenue organization system.

According to the information given in 'Neetisar' and 'Narada smriti' by Kamandak, the revenue tax was the sixth part of the income. Apart from it, the king had the power to collect commercial tax called 'shulk' and 'Vishti' (Veth) and 'balee' like other taxes. The income from the land of King's family and forests were the incomes of king himself. Also the king had power over the minerals and diamonds extracted from mines. King used to take salt tax too.

Economic Condition of Gupta Period

Agriculture :

In the inscriptions of the Guptas, there is a mention of different kinds of soil. For example the tilling land was called *kshetra*, untitled land *aprahat*. According to the inscriptions it was the duty of the king to transform the untitled land into agricultural land. The classification of land was done on the bases of fertility and usefulness.

For the measurement of the land, words like *nirvatan*, *kulavap*, and *dronavap* were used. The main crops were wheat, millet, paddy, pulses, vegetables, cotton and sugarcane. They were unaware of maize, potatoes or tomatoes.

During the Gupta period, irrigation was given importance. The lake of Sudarshana of Saurashtra was repaired during the time of Skandagupta. The method of irrigation by the water of the well was also developed. In this method the pots were tied in a chain in such a way that they constantly get filled and continue moving in a cycle with a help of pulley so that the water got emptied in a tank outside the well. The water then was channelized to the plants in the field. Such a scientific method was developed in those days. This method of irrigation was called *Ghattiyantra* (machine of small pots) or *aaraghatta*. A very vivid description of *ghattiyantra* is found in 'Harshacharit' of Banabhatta. Crops like sugarcane were produced in this manner. In Bengal, the water of monsoon used to be stored in reservoirs. Thus different methods of irrigation were employed during this time. However the agriculture still depended on the rain. Irrigation planning on a larger scale is not to be seen.

In the inscriptions of Gupta period there is a mention of the gift of land to many charitable institutions, which was called *dharmadey*. Officers too were given land as gifts. Such a new class of officers was also evolved. They received higher social status. Hence there was an unequal distribution of land and the peasant's position was very bad. Because of the land gifting system the status of peasants was made low. Slavery system too is seen in agriculture. Economic oppression too was experienced. In 'Kamasutra' of Vatsyana, there is a heartfelt description of the servants and maids who became the victims of the oppression by the *balico* (landlords). Due to emergence of smaller kingdoms in many parts of the empire, even the peasants were distributed in different petty kingdoms. Such petty kingdoms extracted tax and bonded labour system was practiced. Thus, there was a lack of modern technological irrigation. However, cotton and sugarcane like crops helped maintain a better position in agriculture.

Trade and Labour Industries

The development of trade-commerce and handicraft in Gupta period was extraordinary. Many things were made in handicrafts, like mud vessels, metal equipments, ornaments of gold and silver, ivory, cotton and silk cloth, etc. Many things of entertainment were imported. Best quality Silk cloth like *Shruma* and *patt* cloth were found in those days. List of many of these things are found in 'Amarkosh' and 'Brihadsamhita' and the inscriptions of Mandasaur.

In the Gupta period, Takshashila, Ahikshatra, Mathura, Patliputra, Koshambi and Bharuch were very important centres of industries and trade and commerce. The trade and commerce of Gupta period was excellent. The gold coins are the proof of that. Apart from it, the Gupta kings had encrypted copper, silver, and brass coins. They were used in the trade and commerce. In the Gupta administration and Sarthavaha administrative system they were used prominently. Patliputra and Ujjainee being capitals were also important trade-commerce centres.

The tradesmen and artisans had their unions. They were called *Shrenee*. The following of rules and regulations, for the members of *Shrenee* was mandatory. *Shrenees* were very often mentioned as *Mahajana*. In the religious scriptures there is a discussion on different categories of artisans. However their social status was considered lower than *Brahmins*, *Kshatriyas* and *Vaishyas*.

Society of Gupta Period

Along with the Hindu Varna system, caste system too is prevalent in that time. This ideal social organization had to be maintained by the king. The place of Brahmins became very prominent. During this time emergence

of new castes and rise in the number of mixed people are noticed. The foreign warriors were called half kshatriya or patita kshatriyas. In the Gupta period many new castes are seen, which gradually evolved as Varna.

The Brahmins were at the top of the Varna system. They were engaged in Sanskrit knowledge and priestly function. They were close to the king. The Brahmin scholars got lot of encouragement.

The status of women in the society was insignificant. Though there is information about powerful Vakatah queen Prabhava, most women were unaware of their rights. It was expected that they lived life of an ideal wife and ideal mother. The women were getting estranged from education and administration.

As far as social life concerns a vast difference is seen between rural and urban people during Gupta period. In Kamasutra, there is a description of urban life at length. Because of the urban prosperity, people living in cities had luxurious life style and the rural people, because of lack of education and technology, lived simple life.

Literature of Gupta Period

In the field of literature, Gupta period was a golden period. During this period, religious and non-religious literature emerged. Religious books like Ramayana, Mahabharata and Puranas got completed during Gupta period and Rama and Krishna got important status as incarnations of Vishnu. Puranas were also written during this period. The criticism concerning matters of Hindu religion like stories of god and goddesses; rituals; vows, methods of worship, pilgrimages; is found in Puranas. Vishnupuran, Vayupuran, Matsyapuran, Garudpuran, etc. were written during this period. Shivapuran too was composed during this time. The Puranas constructed on the different incarnations of Vishnu, like vamanpuran, Varahpuran and Nrusinhpuran were also written during the same time. For the common people Puranas held great importance.

During Gupta period, the books on laws, known as smriti is also found. Among such smritis, Naradasmriti is often mentioned. In these books there are social and economic laws and sub laws. There is also a discussion on the economic rights of women.

It was a unique time for literature. Important literary works in Sanskrit were written during this period. The greatest poet of Sanskrit literature, Kalidasa of fifth century was an luminary of the court of Chandragupta II. He is famous not only in India but all over the world. His literary pieces are translated in to many languages of the world. Among his main works, 'Meghdootam', 'Abhigyan-Shakuntalam', 'Raghuvansha', 'Kumarsambhavam', and 'Ritusamhar' are included. The best of Sanskrit verses are seen in his books.

Besides Kalidas, other important Sanskrit literary personalities were Shudraka and Vishakhadatta. They wrote 'Mruchhchhakatikam' and 'Mudrarakshasha', which were very famous.

Art of Gupta Period

The art of Gupta period is based mostly on Hindu and Buddhist religions. Mostly Buddhist religion has impacted its art. Mathura, Sarnath, Ajanta and Elora are world famous places of Gupta Period art. Among them the caves of Ajanta are the best. In the latter caves there is description of the Jataka stories connected to Buddha. The colours of these pictures have remained the same even after 1500 years. The United Nations have declared those sites as world heritage.

The construction of temple began during Gupta period. In North India, the art and architecture of temples are of Nagar style. Two temples of Nagar style have been found; one in Kanpur of Uttar Pradesh and another in Devagadh of Jhansie. Both of these are made of bricks and stones respectively. Lord Vishnu. is worshipped in both the temples.



Coins of Gupta Period

The symbol and coins of Gupta period are important proofs. There is description and drawing of Gupta emperors. The coins bearing Samudragupta playing Vina (musical instrument) indicates the importance of music in Gupta period. Gupta kings had also released symbols of *Ashvamedha yajnas*. The symbols concerned with worship and prayer of Vishnu and Lord Shankara are found in great deal in the sculptor and architecture.

Religion of Gupta Period

Gupta kings patronized the Bhagavata sect associated with Lord Vishnu. They used to call themselves *Param Bhagavat*. They had tolerance for other religions. During Gupta period, traveler of India, Fa-hiyen clearly mentioned that during Gupta period Buddhist religion progressed tremendously. Bhagvata sect was based on Vishnu and his incarnations in which devotion was glorified. Bagavad Geeta is the best contribution of that. Along with it, to popularize the attributes of the ten incarnations of Vishnu, Puranas were written. The statues of lord were installed in temples.



Kailash Temple- Illora cave



Ajanta Cave

In South India too the Shaiva and Vaishnava saints made both these sects popular. Their intention was to revive the principles of devotion. During this time there is also an emergence of black magic. Such proofs are found in Nepal, Assam, Bengal, Orissa, Central India and Deccan India. The Brahmins had also incorporated tribal gods-goddesses in their rituals. Thus, the emergence of Black magic was a mix product of Brahmins and tribal culture. In black magic, the woman is made the centre of power. The effect of the principles

of Black magic was on all the religions: Shaiva, Vaishnav, Buddhist and Jain. Subsequently the worship of shakti (power) began.

Science and Technology

Likewise Literature, art, Science and technology, especially Astronomy too were developed during Gupta period. Aryabhatta was the great astronomer and mathematician of that time. He wrote the best book on astronomy based on Indian astronomy, named, "Aryabhattiyam". He had proved for the first time that the Earth rotates on its own axis and revolves around the Sun, which is responsible for the eclipse of the Sun.



Bodhisatva- Ajanta

Moreover he was also the founder of zero and was the first one to experiment decimal system of numbers. Thus at the field of Mathematics and Astronomy he is worldly renowned for his contribution. Varahmihira too was an astronomer of this period. He wrote the famous book 'Panchasiddhantika' based on different methods of astrophysics. Another great Mathematician and astrologer was Brahmgupta, who gave the principle of 'Brahmasphutic' in his book 'Brahma-Sphatic Siddhanta'.

Gupta Period also witnessed the new technology related to metal. This is visible in the copper statues of Lord Buddha. The Iron pillar of Mehrauli too indicates the development of metallurgy. This ancient column of 1500 years is still free of rust. The technique of making colours too developed during this time, and the experiment of these colours is visible in the caves of Ajanta.



Padmapani - Ajanta

India of Post-Gupta Empire

With the fall of Gupta Empire in the 6th Century, there emerged petty kingdoms in India. Even those who were under the rule of Gupta Empire made themselves independent and announced themselves as independent states. Among those who made themselves as independent state were: Mokharis, Magadha of post Guptas period, Pushyabhutis, Vermans, Maitrakas, and Gauds. Let us try to understand their histories especially of Harshvardhan, who was the last Hindu king of ancient India.

Regional Rulers

In the Indian history, when there wasn't any central authority many regional powers emerged. In the ancient and middle ages India, such phenomena have occurred often. Gupta Empire too being a powerful empire had ruled over most parts of India. But with its fall many local powers emerged. A brief information about these local powers are given below.

Yashoverman (Mandasor)

During the rule of Kumargupta, the landlord of western Malva, Bandhuverman was ruling over Mandasor. In the inscription of Mandasor, there is a mention of one effective king. He had come to power in 528 A.D. He ruled over till 543 A.D. and defeated Huns.

Maukhari

At the end of the fifth century, the Maukharis of Kanauj acquired power. The Maukharis are found in the writings of Patanjali. There is a mention that Yagnaverman came to power in 554 A.D.

Yagnaverman, Shrdulverman and Anantaverman were the initial kings. They were landlords. They were the Tributary kings of the Gupta kings. The copper plate of Aasirgadh, include Ishanverman and Sarvaverman. Ishanverman had started an independent state. These Maukhari kings defeated the post-period Gupta dynasty king Damodar Gupta. The last king of Maukhari dynasty was Grahverman. He married the daughter of Prabhakaravardhan and sister of King Harsha, Rajashree. The king of Malva, Devgupta attacked and killed Grahaverman. With it came the end of Maukhari rule. He had ruled over Uttar Pradesh and Magadha.

Rise of Valabhi

In Gujarat the rule of Gupta Empire was up to 467 A.D. After that the general Bhattarke of Maitraka dynasty established independent rule in Gujarat. He shifted his capital to Valabhee and developed it. Bhattark was a devotee of Shiva. His successor Dharasena had not acquired king's title like his predecessor. They were known as Maitrakas. The third king of this dynasty, Dronesinh acquired the title of Maharajadhiraj in 500 A.D. and initiated the tradition of powerful rule. Many *Bhumidana* (Land donations) are available to know about the history of Maitraka dynasty. Maitraka kings ruled over Gujarat almost up to the beginning of the eighth century.

Gurjars of Rajputana

After the fall of Gupta Empire, Gurjar dynasty rose to rule in south Rajasthan. Some historians believe that the Gurjars had come from foreign land with Huns. They had settled in a region from Himalayas to Vindya and especially in Rajasthan. They lived in Punjab, Rajasthan and Gujarat. They established their kingdom in South Rajasthan in the sixth Century. Hence, South Rajasthan was known as Gurjar Desh. In Rajasthan Harichandra laid the foundation of Gurjar kingdom. His descendants and himself were known as 'Pratiharas'. Historians believe that Harichandra and his ancestors must have been working as 'Pratiharas' and must have made use of the situation that emerged after the end of Guptas and established their rule in Marwar.

His descendants expanded the kingdom upto south Gujarat. Hiuen Tsang visited Gurjar in 641 A.D. He has noted that its capital was Bhilmala or Shreemal. At present this place is known as Bhilmal. In 726 A.D., the Arab Jhuneda attacked and defeated them and with that Gurjar rule in Rajasthan came to an end.

Nanadipuri of South Gujarat

In South Gujarat, landlord Dada established a separate state in Nandipuree (Nandod). They were Gurjar. Most likely he was the eldest son of Harichandra. That meant that it was part of Gurjar dynasty. The rule was around Ankleshwar and Sankheda. At the time of war between Harsh and Dhruvasen of Valabhee, Dada was on Valabhi's side. His son, Jayabhatta and Dada III expanded the kingdom. Dada conquered Bharuch region from the Maitrakas of Valabhee. He kept his capital Bharuch in place of Nandipur. The last king of this dynasty was Jaayabhatta IV. When the king of Rastrakoot, Dantidurga expanded his kingdom, this Gurjar kingdom ended.

In north and north-west Bengal, Gauda king Shashanka was a powerful king.

In Assam, there were two states, Kamarup and Devak. In Odisha in the second half of sixth century two independent states emerged; from Balasore to Puri, Mana kingdom and Shailodbhava kingdom from Chilka lake to mount Mahendragiri of Gajam district. However due to the rise of Shashanka and Harshaverdhana of Kanoj they did not survive long.

Pushyabhutis of Thaneshwar and Kanoj

The dynasty of Pushyabhuti I ruled over Thaneshwar (Haryana) and later Kanoj (Uttar Pradesh). The main sources of their history were 'Harshcharitam' by Banabhatta and the reports of Chinese pilgrim Hiuen Tsang. Some inscriptions and coins supplement the information. As indicated by 'Harshacharita' king

Pushyabhuti laid the foundation of Pushyabhooti dynasty in Thaneshwara. There is mention of five kings of this dynasty in the inscriptions of Vansakheda and Madhuban. According to the sources, the first three kings were not all powerful emperors. The fourth Prabhakarverdhana became Maharajadhiraja. It is clearly indicated that he was an independent ruler. He married his daughter Rajashree with the Maukhari king Grahaverman.

In 604 A.D. Huns attacked on Thaneshwara. Prabhakarverdhan sent his son Rajyaverdhan to fight against Huns. But Prabhakaraverdhan fell ill and Rajyaverdhan had to return. Prabhakaran died. At the same time the king of Malwa killed Grahverman and took away Rajashree. Shashank helped the king of Malwa and hence there was a danger on Thaneshwar and Kanauj. However, Rajyavardhana defeated Malwa but Gauda king Shashank cheated him and killed him. Thus both Thaneshwar and Kanauj were without king. At this time the younger brother Harshavardhana had the responsibility of taking care of the states, to save his sister and to take revenge of the assassination of his brother.

Emperor Harshvardhan (606 A.D. to 647 A.D.)

Harsha ascended to the throne of Thaneshwar in very unfavourable circumstances. On one side there was the danger of Shashank and on the other the hand his sister was abducted. The throne of Kanauj was vacant. In these circumstances, he marched towards Gauda and undertook the task of locating her sister. He saved his sister from the forest and brought her to Kanauj. Since Rajashree had a young son he ruled over Kanauj and Thaneshwar from Kanauj.

As soon as Harsha ascended to the throne, he waged wars against Maitrakas of Valabhee, Gurjars, Chalukyas of Deccan and in the East with Magadha and Gaud states. The Maitraka of Gujarat were very strong. He had war with king Dhruvasena II of Valabhee but after the war he married his daughter with king Dhruvsena and brought an end to the enmity with Valabhee.

The kings of south Gujarat were the landlords of the Chalukya king Pulkeshi. Hence, the war with them would turn in to war with Chalukya. In the inscription of Aihole there is an appreciation of Pulkeshi II. There is a mention, that Pulkeshi had defeated Harsha. It meant that Harsha was able to defeat kings in North India but was not able to defeat Chalukya Pulkeshi II. Harsha had conquered Magadha. He had a friendship with Kamaroop (Assam) king Bhaskerverman. Along with him he had fought wars with Bengal and other parts of East India.

Harsha had political relation with China. His contemporary emperor Tee-Aange had sent three missions to the court of Harsha. From the side of Harsha too one mission was sent in 641 A.D. Harsh ruled over for 41 years and died in 647 A.D.

Emperor Harshavardhana was a benevolent king. The structure of his administration was same as that of Gupta Empire. Hiuen Tsang writes that the king visited the entire state and was the highest authority. The Upareek (Governor of Province), general and ambassadors are found praising him in the writings in copper plate. However, at the time of Harshavardhana, the policy of grants land instead of cash to the officers was introduced. In comparison to Gupta period, the law and order were soft. In the inscriptions of Vanskheda, Nalanda and Sonapat, it is mentioned that Harsha was a devotee of Shiva. However after that he had become a Buddhist. He organised a big assembly in Kanauj. Hiuen Tsang was present in this meeting. He preached and propagated Mahayana sect. In this gathering, 18 kings and 3000 monks were present. Harsh used to organize 5 distribution ceremonies at Prayag after every 5 years. In it, he donated generously. He encouraged scholars and artisans and donated villages to students studying in Nalanda Vishwa Viddhyalaya. He donated 100 villages for the maintenance of 10,000 students of Nalanda university.

Cultural Situation

As a result of the fall of Gupta Empire, many petty regional rulers emerged in India which gave rise to newer political and cultural fields in Gujarat, Bengal, Odisha, Maharashtra, Andhra, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. It had founded the present day art, culture and language. It was at this time, new languages like Bengali, Oriya, Marathi and Assamia evolved. The literature of these languages got rid of the monopoly of Sanskrit language. New regional kings defended the literature, art and language. The notables among them are the Chole rulers. During this period, Kadamb wrote Ramayana in Tamil and in Karnataka Pampa produced maximum of literature. In Andhra too Ramayana was translated to Telugu.

However in Sanskrit too some scholars had written books like ‘Kathasaritasagar’, ‘Rajtaraginee’ and ‘Geetgovindam’.

During this time hectic activities were undertaken to construct temples. Huge and majestic temples were the hallmark of this time. Three styles of temples evolved during this time.: Nagar, Dravid and Besar. Nagar style temples had special peaks. This style was prevalent in Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, North India and Orissa. Among the best temples of this style are the temples of the Sun temple of Konarka and Lingaraja of Bhuvaneshwar. The architecture of South Indian temples is called Dravidian style, which was at its peak during Chola rule. In this style, Garbhagriha, Vimana, Mandapa and Gopuram are noticeable. The best temple of this style is the temple of Bruhaveswar in Tanjavor built by Chola king Rajaraja. The rulers of Chalukyas built temples of Sara style. Such temples are found in Pattakal. Maximum number of statues were made during this time, in which, the statue of Nataraja made by the artisans of Chola is world famous. Lord Shiva is in the dancing pose.



Statue of Nataraj

India's Relation with East Asia

From ancient times India has been interacting with the cultures of the world. It seems the relations with South-East Asia were established from the fifth century. There are mentions in Jataka stories and other literature that The Indians used to go for pilgrimage to Indian Golden Island (Survanadwip). The modern Java was known as Suvarnadwip. Indian things are found in the ancient remnants in Thailand, Vietnam and Indonesia. It shows that the Indians were spread in South-East Asia by the first century B.C. Moreover, In Kambod, one Indian Brahmin named Kaudinya had established the kingdom, for the first time. In the fifth century A.D., the Indians engaged themselves in various trade and cultural activities in South-East Asia. Many proofs are available. After the eighth century A.D., many rulers of Indian origin were ruling in South-East Asia.

The relation of India with South-East Asia was mostly through the medium of trade. For the trade of cardamom, sandal woods and clove in South-East Asia, Indians were famous. Gradually Indians started settling over there and thus the Indian culture developed. The Indians never disturbed the local structure. Brahmins and Buddhists had settled in South-Asia in huge number. That is how Hindu and Buddhist religion spread in South-East Asia.

In the eighth century A.D., the Shailendra dynasty established itself and ruled over Java, Sumatra and other South-East Asia locations. They had a special Navy. They took control of the trade with China, India and Western countries. The Shailendra rulers believed in Buddhists religion. One of the kings of this dynasty built

a Buddhist monastery in Nalanda. The Chola ruler, Rajaraja too had constructed Buddhist monastery in Tamil state. The rulers of Shailendra dynasty built a world famous Buddhist temple in Borobudur.

In South-East Asia, Hindu gods-goddesses were quite famous. They used to worship Lord Shiva and Lord Vishnu. Many temples are found here. Its best model is the temple of Lord Vishnu in Angkorvat. The ruler of Cambodia, Suryaverman II, had built it in twelfth century A.D. On the walls of this temple there are sculptures depicting stories of Ramayana and Mahabharata. Besides, valleys were made around the temple and they were filled with water to exhibit itself as a wonderful replica of architecture.

EXERCISE

1. Answer the following questions in detail :

- (1) Give reasons for the rise of Guptas.
- (2) Describe the conquests of Samudragupta.
- (3) Discuss: 'Chandragupta was the best king of Gupta dynasty.'
- (4) Give an account about the Art of Gupta Period.
- (5) Write about the Administration of Gupta Period

2. Answer the following questions briefly :

- (1) Write briefly about of the Allahabad Inscription
- (2) Give an idea about the Gupta coins.
- (3) Describe the Economics of Gupta Period.
- (4) Write a short note on the literature of Gupta Period.
- (5) Write briefly about Fahien.

3. Choose the correct option from the given alternatives and give answers :

- (1) Which year is called Gupta Samvat?
(A) 317 A.D. (B) 318 A.D. (C) 319 A.D. (D) 320 A.D.
- (2) Which Gupta King is called the Indian Napoleon?
(A) Chandragupta I (B) Samudragupta (C) Chandragupta II (D) Skandagupta
- (3) Which Gupta King's Inscription is found in Junagadh?
(A) Chandragupta I (B) Samudragupta (C) Chandragupta II (D) Skandagupta
- (4) Which Inscription gives exact information about Kumaragupta?
(A) Girnar (B) Barabarna (C) Bhilasa (D) Domodarapur
- (5) By whose attack Gupta Empire fell?
(A) Shank (B) Kushana (C) Greek (D) Huns

