



## A Study on Gupta Dynasty

*Prof B. G. Math<sup>a</sup>, Prof. Praveen Math<sup>b</sup>*

<sup>a</sup>Associate Professor, Department of History, CMM Arts, Science and commerce college, Sindagi, India

<sup>b</sup>Assistant Professor, REVA University, Bangalore


### Introduction

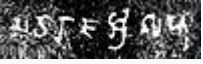


For its splendour and excellence in the realms of culture, the Gupta Age of Indian history is compared to the Periclean Age of ancient Greece, the Augustan Era of ancient Rome, and the Elizabethan Age of mediaeval England. It was a period of overall cultural progress. The Gupta Age made significant advances in religion, literature, philosophy, science, architecture, sculpture, art, astronomy, mathematics, medicine, education, and industry. India went through a mental upsurge that was spectacular in nature. As a result, the Gupta period is rightly referred to as the "Golden Age" of ancient India. The Gupta Empire was a prehistoric Indian empire that existed from the early fourth century CE to the late sixth century CE. It covered much of the Indian subcontinent at its peak, from around 319 to 467 CE. [3] Historians refer to this period as India's "Golden Age." [4] [nota bene] The empire's ruling dynasty was founded by King Sri Gupta, and its most notable rulers were Chandragupta I, Samudragupta, and Chandragupta II, also known as Vikramaditya. According to the 5th-century CE Sanskrit poet Kalidasa, the Guptas conquered about twenty-one kingdoms both inside and outside India, including the kingdoms of the Parasikas, Hunas, Kambojas, tribes in the west and east Oxus valleys, Kinnaras, Kiratas, and others. Several factors contributed to the glory of the Gupta period. Among these factors are a powerful imperial dynasty, political unity of the country, internal peace and security, a strong but benevolent administration, economic prosperity, contact with the outside world, and royal support for culture. A summary of these factors is provided below.








### The Gupta Dynasty:



The Guptas established a powerful imperial dynasty in India. From Chandragupta I to Skandagupta, the dynasty had five emperors who reigned one after the other for a century and a half. During the Gupta Empire's continuous rule of five generations of monarchs, political stability of the highest order prevailed. Following the great Guptas, the dynasty flourished for a few more generations, wielding considerable power. Overall, the Gupta dynasty served India better than many other dynasties in history by providing administrative continuity and stability. In order to establish its grip on popular imagination, the Gupta monarchy pretended to be divine. In the Allahabad Pillar Inscription, Samudragupta is described as a God on Earth, equal to Kuvera, Varuna, Indra, and Yama. These monarchy concepts gilded the dynasty in preparation for a ferocious reign.

The dynasty's varna is not mentioned in the Gupta records (social class). [26] According to some historians, such as A.S. Altekar, they were of Vaishya origin, as certain ancient Indian texts prescribe the name "Gupta" for Vaishyavarna members. [27] [28] According to R. S. Sharma, historian, the Vaishyas, who were traditionally associated with trade, may have become rulers after resisting oppressive taxation by previous rulers. [29] Critics of the Vaishya-origin theory point out that the suffix Gupta appears in the names of several non-Vaishyas both before and during the Gupta period [30], and the dynastic name "Gupta" may simply have derived from the name of the family's first king Gupta. [31] Some scholars, such as S.R. Goyal, believe the Guptas were Brahmanas because they had matrimonial relations with Brahmans, but others believe the evidence is inconclusive.

Gupta Empire	
320 CE–550 CE	
	
Gupta	(c. late 3rd century)
Ghatotkacha	(c. late 3rd century - 319)
Chandragupta I	(c. 319 – 335/350)
Kacha	(early 4th century?)
Samudragupta	(c. 335/350 – 375)
(Ramagupta)	(late 4th century?)
Chandragupta II	(380 – 413/415)
Kumaragupta I	(415 – 455)
Skandagupta	(455 - 467)
Purugupta	(467 – 473)
Kumaragupta II	(473 - 476)
Budhagupta	(476 – 495)
Narasimhagupta	(495 – ?)
(Bhanugupta)	(circa 510)
Vainyagupta	(circa 507)
Kumaragupta III	(circa 530)
Vishnugupta	(540 – 550)

Ruler	Reign	Notes
Sri-Gupta I	 240–290	Founder of the dynasty.
Ghatotkacha	 290–320	
Chandra-Gupta I	 320–325	His title <i>Maharajadhiraja</i> ("king of great kings") suggests that he was the first emperor of the dynasty. It is not certain how he turned his small ancestral kingdom into an empire, although a widely accepted theory among modern historians is that his marriage to the <i>Lichchhavi</i> princess Kumaradevi helped him extend his political power.

Samudra-Gupta		325–375	Defeated several kings of northern India, and annexed their territories to his empire. He also marched along the south-eastern coast of India, advancing as far as the <a href="#">Pallava</a> kingdom. In addition, he subjugated several frontier kingdoms and tribal oligarchies. His empire extended from <a href="#">Ravi River</a> in the west to the <a href="#">Brahmaputra River</a> in the east, and from the Himalayan foothills in the north to central India in the south-west; several rulers along the south-eastern coast were his tributaries.
Kacha		4th-century	Rival brother/king, possibly an usurper, there are coins who attest him as ruler; possibly identical with <a href="#">Samudra-Gupta</a> .
Rama-Gupta		375–380	
Chandra-Gupta II Vikramaditya		380–415	Continued the expansionist policy of his father <a href="#">Samudragupta</a> : historical evidence suggests that he defeated the <a href="#">Western Kshatrapas</a> , and extended the Gupta empire from the <a href="#">Indus River</a> in the west to the <a href="#">Bengal</a> region in the east, and from the Himalayan foothills in the north to the <a href="#">Narmada River</a> in the south.
Kumara-Gupta I		415–455	He seems to have maintained control of his inherited territory, which extended from <a href="#">Gujarat</a> in the west to <a href="#">Bengal</a> region in the east.
Skanda-Gupta		455–467	It is stated that he restored the fallen fortunes of the Gupta family, which has led to suggestions that during his predecessor's last years, the Empire may have suffered reverses, possibly against the <a href="#">Pushyamitras</a> or the <a href="#">Hunas</a> . He is generally considered the last of the great Gupta Emperors.
Puru-Gupta		467–472	
Kumara-Gupta II Kramaditya		472–479	
Buddha-Gupta		479–496	He had close ties with the rulers of <a href="#">Kannauj</a> and together they sought to run the <a href="#">Alchon Huns</a> (Hunas) out of the fertile plains of Northern India.

Narasimha-Gupta Baladitya		496–530	
Kumara-Gupta III		530–540	
Vishnu-Gupta Candraditya		540–550	
Bhanu-Gupta		?	A lesser-known king with uncertain position in the list.

(Source: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gupta\\_Empire#Religion](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gupta_Empire#Religion))

### Administration:

The Gupta rulers provided their empire with not only a stable government system, but also a benevolent administration. The punishment was far from severe. The people were free to go about their daily lives without fear or restraint. Fa-Hien, a famous Chinese pilgrim who visited India during the reign of Chandragupta II, praised the Gupta administration. "The people are numerous and happy," according to his description. They are not required to register their households or to appear before any magistrates or rulers. "The King rules without the use of decapitation or other corporal punishments." The Gupta administration was liberal and lenient, according to various evidences. Taxes were levied based on the wealth of the area. Officers and soldiers were paid on a regular basis. Crime was uncommon. The majority of offenders were only fined. The death penalty was rarely used. The Gupta period was one of general prosperity. Internal trade and commerce grew significantly as a result of internal peace and security. When the Guptas conquered the western territories and extended their sway to the Arabian seacoast, external trade and commerce expanded dramatically. India benefited greatly from trade with the Western countries. The numerous gold coins of the time attest to the state's economic prosperity.

According to Fa-Hien's accounts, the general wealth of the people caused them to be charitable in their habits. The wealthy competed with one another in benevolent and virtuous deeds. "People of various sects set up houses of charity where rooms, couches, beds, food, and drink are supplied to travellers," he writes. Surprisingly, the Chinese pilgrim noticed a large number of hospitals and charitable institutions. Many prosperous cities abound in Gupta-era India. Among them were trade centres, holy sites, and political headquarters. These cities were symbols of wealth and affluence. Despite the fact that the country's overall economic situation was prosperous, the people were far from the vices associated with wealth. "There were no shambles or wine-shops in their market-places," says Fa-Hien. The general economic prosperity of the people enabled large-scale architectural and sculptural activities all over the country. The Gupta culture exemplified a people's creative abilities while also being economically self-sufficient.

A study of the Gupta empire's epigraphic records reveals a hierarchical system of administrative divisions from top to bottom. Rajya, Rashtra, Desha, Mandala, Prithvi, and Avani were some of the names given to the empire. It was divided into 26 provinces known as Bhukti, Pradesha, and Bhoga. Provinces were also divided into Vishayas and given to the Vishayapatis. The Vishaya was administered by a Vishayapati with the assistance of the Adhikarana (council of representatives), which included four representatives: Nagarasreshthi, Sarthavaha, Prathamakulika, and PrathamaKayastha. Vithi was the name given to a section of the Vishaya. The Gupta Empire also maintained trade relations with the Sassanid and Byzantine Empires. During the Gupta period, the four-fold varna system was observed, but the caste system was fluid. Non-Brahmanical professions were also pursued by Brahmins. Khatriyas were involved in commerce and trade. The society coexisted to a large extent.

### Religion and Culture :

The Guptas were a Hindu dynasty in the past. They were orthodox Hindus who allowed Buddhists and Jainists to practise their faiths. Sanchi remained an important Buddhist centre. According to modern genetic studies, Indian caste groups stopped intermarrying during the Gupta period. Later rulers, on the other hand, appear to have promoted Buddhism in particular. According to contemporary writer Paramartha, NarasimhaguptaBaladitya was raised under the influence of Mahayanist philosopher Vasubandhu. He constructed a sangharama at Nalanda as well as a 300-foot-tall vihara with a Buddha statue inside, which Xuanzang described as resembling the "great Vihara built under the Bodhi tree." According to the Manjushrimulakalpa, king Narasimhsagupta became a Buddhist monk and meditated his way out of the world. Xuanzang, a Chinese monk, also noted that NarasimhaguptaBaladitya's son, Vajra, who also commissioned a sangharama, "possessed a heart firm in faith."

During the Gupta Age's cultural renaissance, its rulers were active patrons of culture. Far from being dogmatic or sectarian, the kings, their ministers, and the nobles promoted various aspects of art and literature with extraordinary zeal. Some of the best poets, philosophers, and scientists of the time could be found in the courts of the Gupta kings. The Gupta Emperors made good use of their resources by taking an active interest in the construction and development of cities, monuments, and religious centres. They did their best to support music, art, and literature. They demonstrated a sense of personal involvement in their people's creative achievements. For all of these reasons, the golden age of the Guptas was a watershed moment in Indian culture. The following is a synopsis of the various aspects of the Gupta culture.

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## Art and Architecture

The Gupta period is widely regarded as the pinnacle of North Indian art for all major religious groups. Despite the fact that painting was clearly widespread, the surviving works are almost entirely religious sculpture. The period saw the emergence of the iconic carved stone deity, as well as the Buddha-figure and Jain tirthankara figures, the latter often on a grand scale. Mathura and Gandhara were the two great sculpture centres, with the latter being the centre of Greco-Buddhist art. Both sold their sculptures in other parts of northern India.

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## Causes for the decline of the Gupta empire:

By the middle of the sixth century, the mighty Gupta empire had declined and died. The following are the major reasons for the empire's demise: During Skandagupta's final days, the Pushyamitras, a warlike tribe, dealt the first devastating blow to the Gupta empire. The Huns were a fierce nomadic tribe that originated in Central Asia. Toramana and Mihiragula led the Huns in an attack that broke the back of the Gupta empire. It hastened the Empire's demise. Due to the central authority's weakness, feudatories such as the Maitrakas of Vallabhi, Vardhanas of Sthaneshwar, Maukharis of Kanauj, Gaudas of Bengal, and Yasovarman of Mandasor asserted their independence. This effectively ended the Gupta empire's political unity. Skandagupta's successors were inept and inexperienced. They were unable to maintain a firm grip on the empire. Disagreements among the royal princes eventually weakened the Guptas. Due to the Hun attack on the Roman Empire, trade with the Roman Empire declined. The state suffered a financial loss as a result of the officers being given land assignments in lieu of salaries. Much of the revenue was spent suppressing Pushyamitra uprisings and repelling Hun invasions.

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## Summary

The Gupta period is known as the "classical age" of Ancient India, owing to its cultural achievements. The description appears to be accurate for the upper classes, among whom material and intellectual culture reached previously unheard-of heights. Motivated by entirely different reasons, nationalist historians of the early twentieth century (20th century) sought to locate the utopian "golden age" in this period, primarily due to its literary and artistic excellence. This divergent conclusion, on the other hand, agrees on the common point of cultural flowering during this time period.

The Gupta period (c. 320–647 C.E., named after the Gupta dynasty) saw enormous advances in poetry, prose, and drama, as well as significant discoveries in mathematics and astronomy. This was the era of some of India's most celebrated creatives, including the fifth-century writer Kalidasa, whose works influenced generations of writers. This was also the time when Aryabhata, a fifth-century astronomer, proposed that the earth rotated on its own axis and calculated the solar year to be 365.3586805 days. During the Gupta period, the Puranas, a collection of religious literature considered sacred by both Hindu and Jain religious traditions and consisting of stories and genealogies of the gods, folk tales, and traditional lore, rose to prominence. While it is difficult to date the Puranas because they contain anonymous texts compiled over many centuries both before and after the Gupta period, we know that Puranic stories were a popular religious and cultural reference during the Gupta years from depictions of Puranic episodes in art and architecture. Kalidasa's poetry and plays frequently referenced Purana episodes.

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