

Gupta Empire

Due to the collapse of the Mauryan empire, the Satavahanas and the Kushanas in the south and north, respectively, gained power. These kingdoms fostered political stability and economic growth in their respective domains. After the collapse of Kushan dominance in northern India around 230 CE, the Murundas took over the entirety of central India (probable kinsmen of the Kushanas).

About 25 to 30 years were ruled by Murunda. The last 10 years of the 3rd century CE saw the Gupta dynasty achieve dominance (about 275 CE). The Gupta empire presided over the majority of the former Satavahana and Kushana-ruled territories. The Guptas (perhaps the Vaishyas) kept northern India essentially undivided for over a century (335 CE- 455 CE).

- Uncertainty surrounds the Gupta Empire family's origins. One idea holds that they came from the lower-Doab region of modern-day Uttar Pradesh, which is where the majority of the inscriptions and currency hoards from the early Gupta Dynasty Rulers were found.
- The Purana, which mentions the Saketa, Prayaga, and Magadha provinces in the Ganges basin as the realm of the early Gupta Rulers, is said to support this hypothesis as well, according to its proponents.
- According to the testimony of the Chinese Buddhist monk Yijing who lived in the 7th century, another well-known hypothesis places the origin of the Gupta Dynasty in the modern Bengal region of the Ganges basin.
- The rich plains of Madhyadesha, also referred to as Anuganga (the mid-Gangetic basin), Prayag (U.P.), Saketa (U.P. Ayodhya), and Magadha, were where the Guptas exceeded their power.
- The Guptas made the best of their closeness to areas in north India by engaging in silk trade with the Byzantine empire as well as the iron ore riches in south Bihar and central India (eastern Roman empire).
- Due to the tremendous accomplishments made in the fields of literature, arts, science, and technology during the Gupta period in ancient India are known as the "Golden Age." It also contributed to the subcontinent's political union.

Founder of Gupta Dynasty - Sri Gupta

- The Gupta dynasty in northern India was founded by Sri Gupta. He is recognized as Che-li-ki-to, the king. It is thought to be the Chinese translation of "Shri-Gupta," who, as stated by the seventh-century Chinese Buddhist monk Yijing, constructed a temple for Chinese pilgrims close to Mi-li-kia-si-kia-po-no (Mgaikhvana).
- Although numerous coins and seals have been incorrectly assigned to Gupta, he is not substantiated through his own coins or inscriptions.
- The Allahabad Pillar inscription by his great-grandson Samudragupta has the oldest description of him, and it is reproduced verbatim in a number of other subsequent documents of the dynasty.
- Samudragupta's forebears are identified in the Allahabad Pillar inscription as Shri Gupta, Shri Ghatotkacha, and Shri Chandragupta.
- Apart from these findings, very little is known about the founder of the Gupta Empire.

Gupta Dynasty Rulers

The table below gives brief details about the Gupta dynasty rulers:

Gupta Dynasty Kings Facts about Gupta Empire Kings

| | |
|-----------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Sri Gupta | <p>He is the founding ruler of the Gupta Dynasty</p> <p>He reigned between 240 CE-280 CE</p> <p>He used the title of 'Maharaja'</p> |
| Ghatotkacha | <p>He was the son of Sri Gupta</p> <p>He, too, like Sri Gupta, adopted the title of 'Maharaja'</p> |
| Chandragupta I | <p>He reigned between 319 CE and 335/336 CE</p> <p>He is attributed with the start of the Gupta Era</p> <p>He took the title of 'Maharajadhiraja'</p> <p>He married the Lichchavi princess Kumaradevi</p> |
| Samudragupta | <p>His reign lasted between 335/336 CE-375 CE</p> <p>He was called 'Napoleon of India' by V.A. Smith, an Irish Art Historian, and Indologist</p> <p>His campaigns were talked about in the Eran inscription (Madhya Pradesh)</p> |
| Chandragupta II | <p>His reign lasted from 376 to 413/415 CE</p> <p>He had Navratnas, or 9 Gems, in his Court</p> <p>He popularly took up the title 'Vikramaditya'</p> |
| Kumaragupta I | <p>His reign lasted between 415 CE-455 CE</p> <p>He is said to have founded Nalanda University</p> <p>He was also known as Shakraditya</p> |
| Skandagupta | <p>His reign lasted between 455 AD and 467 AD</p> <p>He was a follower of Vaishnavism</p> <p>He successfully defeated the Hunas, but this battle dented his empire's coffers</p> |
| Vishnugupta | <p>He is the last known ruler of the Gupta Dynasty, who ruled from 540 AD to 550 AD)</p> |

Gupta Period - The Golden Age

The Gupta Period is famously called the 'Golden Age' of India for these major reasons;

- The major cultural advancements that predominantly occurred during the lifetimes of Samudragupta, Kumaragupta I, and Chandragupta II are the pinnacles of this era.
- During this time, a number of Hindu epics and works of literature, including the Mahabharata and the Ramayana, were canonized. Scholars from the Gupta era, like Kalidasa, Varahamihira, Aryabhata, and Vatsyayana, made significant strides in a variety of academic subjects.
- During the Gupta era, governmental administration and science both advanced to unprecedented heights.
- Architecture, painting, and sculpture innovations during this time established norms of form and style that controlled the entire following journey of art, not just in India but far past its boundaries.
- Strong commercial relations established the area as a foundation that would inspire neighboring kingdoms and territories in Southeast Asia and India, in addition to making it a significant cultural center.
- It is also believed that during this time, the older Puranas, which are lengthy poetry on a wide range of subjects, were transcribed into written books.
- Despite being primarily a Hindu dynasty, the Guptas accepted followers of various religions. They were devout Hindus who permitted Buddhists and Jainists to practice their faiths. Sanchi is still a significant Buddhist hub. Nalanda is supposed to have been built in 455 CE by Kumaragupta I.



Gupta Administration

The Gupta empire had a system of administrative units that ran from top to bottom, according to an analysis of its epigraphical records.

- There were many names for the empire, including Rajya, Desha, Rashtra, Mandala, Avani and Prithvi.
- There were 26 provinces with the names Bhukti, Bhoga, and Pradesh.
- Additionally, provinces were split into Vishayas and given to the Vishayapatis.

- The Adhikarana, the council of representatives, was composed of 4 representatives Sarthavaha, Nagarasreshthi, Prathamakulika, and Prathama Kayastha.
- They assisted a Vishayapati in administering the Vishaya. The Vishaya had a section known as Vithi.
- Additionally, the Byzantine Empires, the Sassanids, and the Gupta had commercial ties.

The decline of the Gupta Empire

The various reasons that led to the fall of the Gupta empire are discussed below:

1. **Hun Invasion:** The Gupta prince Skandagupta fought bravely and successfully against the early Huns' invasion. However, his successors proved to be weak and could not check the Huns' invasion.
2. **Rise of Feudatories:** Another aspect that contributed to the collapse of the Gupta empire was the development of feudatories. After conquering Mihirkula, Yashodharman of Malwa effectively contested the Guptas' rule. The other feudatories, such as those in Bengal, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Valabhi, Malwa, and other places, also raised people to rebel against the Gupta dynasty and eventually achieve independence.
3. **Economic decline:** The Guptas had lost control of western India by the end of the 5th century, which must have left them without access to the lucrative commerce and trade profits that would have otherwise crippled their economy. The gold coins of the later Gupta monarchs, which contain a lower percentage of the gold metal, serve as a sign of the Guptas' economic collapse. Economic instability was caused by the habit of giving off the land for religious and other uses, which decreased tax collections.