A HISTORY OF THE GUPTA AGE
QUESTIONS-ANSWERS

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1965
LAJPAT & COMPANY
EDUCATIONAL PUBLISHERS
Bazar Gandanwala, AMRITSAR.
Published by:-
Lajpat & Company,
Bazar Gandanwala,
Amritsar.

1st Edition

Price Rs. 11.25

CENTRAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL
LIBRARY, DELHI.

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Call No 934.8:18

Printed by:-
Shri Prem Nath Manchanda,
Proprietor:
Manchanda Art Press
Hall Bazar, Amritsar.
PREFACE

This book has been written in response to the keen demand for a book covering the Gupta age on the same lines as the author’s History of Modern Europe (1789-1870). Like its predecessor, it has been specially designed to meet the requirements of students preparing for the M.A. Examination of the Indian Universities. It will prove equally useful for the candidates appearing in the I.A.S., the P.C.S., and other competitive examinations. It is also hoped that the book will arouse in its readers, a genuine interest in the subject which will survive the enforced study for examination.

All the master books on the subject have been freely drawn upon and quoted to make the book really useful from the examination point of view. I am deeply indebted to all those eminent authorities from whom I have borrowed so profusely.

I owe a heavy debt of gratitude to my master Prof. Bodh Raj Sharma, former Head of the Political Science Department, Punjab University for making a considerable improvement in the book. I am really thankful to Prof. Hira Lal Khandari, M.A., who readily helped me in various ways in the preparation of the book. My thanks are also due to Shri Satyapal, Assistant Librarian, Pt. Moti Lal Nehru Municipal Library, Amritsar for locating sources of information.

Any suggestions to improve the usefulness of the book will be gratefully received by me.

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CHAPTER I

THE SOURCES

Q. 1. Discuss critically the various sources of study of the age of the Imperial Guptas and bring out clearly their comparative value.

Ans. The Gupta period in the history of India has been compared by the European writers with the age of Pericles in the history of Greece and with the Elizabethan era of England. As we enter the Gupta period, the history of India regains interest owing to the discovery of a series of contemporary inscriptions. Several other sources, literary, numismatic and archæological, have also been made available to us through the scholarly labours of Indologists both of the East and the West for extracting and reconstructing an almost correct and datable history of the times of the Gupta dynasty — "the dynasty which had liberated Indians from the Kushan-Sassanian shadow, the dynasty which broke the Hun, unbreakable throughout Asia and Europe, the dynasty which made the name Vikramaditya, a tradition immortal in their country." The sources of the history of this period may be arranged under the following heads

A. Indigenous Literature

(a) The Puranas.

The Puranas contribute the most valuable information for the reconstruction of the history of the Gupta period. They are perhaps the only source providing any information regarding the origin and the earlier exploits of this illustrious dynasty. The Puranas are eighteen in number but five out of these namely Vayu, Matsya, Vishnu, Brahmanda and Bhagvata are useful for our purpose. In these are preserved long chains of royal genealogies. But the Puranas can be utilised for the study of history subject to certain reservations, because these literary works suffer from some serious defects from the historical point of view, "such as the absence of dates, the lack of general agreement among themselves, the omission of the names of certain kings and their usual tendency to treat contemporary dynasties as successive." Due to these drawbacks, some of the European writers have been inclined to disparage unduly the authority of the genealogical lists given in them. Keith goes so far as to remark that most of the collections of the "old world legends" have got no historical value whatsoever and that some of them contain information which is manifestly
mythological, untrustworthy and altogether confused from the chronological point of view. This statement is, however, too sweeping. Although the Puranas in the shape in which they have come down to us contain much which is untrustworthy yet it is absurd to suppose that “fiction completely ousts the truth”. That the Puranic account of the Gupta period is correct can be proved from the contemporary epigraphic and numismatic evidence and it fully bears out the observation of Dr. V. A. Smith that modern European writers have been inclined to disparage unduly the authority of the Puranic list, but a closer study finds in them much genuine and valuable historical tradition.

The Puranas depict a clear picture of the Gupta empire, its various provinces and other boundaries. They make a distinction between those territories which formed an integral part of the Empire and those which were outside its direct jurisdiction. They help us in locating the names of the kings and minor dynasties as well as in identifying them. They help us in fixing the period of the rise of smaller states either as independent ones or as the feudatories of the Gupta empire. The Puranas describe the extent of the Empire of Chandra-gupta I who ruled over the territories called Janapadas situated along the Ganges such as Prayaga, Saketa (Ayodhya) and Magadha. They tell us about the different types of titles adopted by different Gupta rulers. The Bhavisya Purana says that Chandra-gupta was the only among the Guptas who assumed the title of Vikramaditya. The Puranas give us a full account of the contemporaries of Samudragupta in the first half of his reign as, for example, the history of the Nagas and Vakatakas, the Sakas in Sindh and West Punjab. Dr. Jayaswal finds in the Puranas an invaluable source of the early history of the Gupta period and he compiled the history of early Guptas on the basis of information gathered from them.

(b) Kaumudi-Mahotsava.

The discovery of a contemporary Sanskrit play “Kaumudi-Mahotsava” by a South Indian scholar has also contributed a lot of information for the study of Gupta history. Some scholars hold that this drama was composed by a lady Viijaka while others attribute the book to Kisorka, her father’s name being Krsivala. Dr Jayaswal by means of a study of its literary style and other characteristics claims that the play belongs to the Gupta period. He thinks that the occupation of Pataliputra by Chandra-gupta I with the help of Licchchhavis has been reflected in this drama. Dr. Dikshit also holds that the play has thrown a considerable light on the rise and origin of the Gupta dynasty and portrays the social and religious conditions of the times. The play has indeed solved many a riddle of the Gupta history which otherwise would have remained unsolved.
(c) Devi Chandra Guptam

An important piece of record for the Imperial Gupta history is supplied by a few passages of a lost dramatic work called Devichandraguptam by Visakhadatta probably the same as the author of Mudrarakshasa. The references to this drama in the contemporary literary records were brought to the notice of the scholars about 40 years ago from a quotation in a contemporary work on Sanskrit dramaturgy called 'Natyadarpana'. After a critical examination of the fragments of the drama, Mr. Sylvain Levi claims that the hero of the play is Chandra-gupta II of the Gupta dynasty and that it also refers to the Kushan invasions of the Punjab just after the death of Samudragupta and the accession of Ramagupta to the throne. Dr. Raychandhr, however, holds that the drama Devichandraguptam is unsuited to form the basis of the chronology of Chandra-gupta II.

(d) Harshacharita by Banabhatta.

Harashchrīta by Banabhatta is an interesting chronicle in secular and court literature. Although the work is primarily a narrative of the history of Harsha of Kanauj, it contains also plentiful references to the events of the reign of the Guptas. The historical value of this work has been finally established and accepted by the scholars.

(e) Manju-Sri-Mula-Kalpa.

It is a remarkable Mahayana chronicle which deals with the Imperial dynasties from 700 B.C. to 700 A.D. without a break. It gives an adequate account of the early Guptas and throws light on the later Gupta period which for long was a blank in the history of ancient India.

(f) Kamandaka Nitisara.

Kamandaka Nitisara was probably written by Sikhara, the Prime Minister of Chandra-gupta II. It is mostly a summary of the Arthasastra of Kautilya. The object of the author is to give instructions to the kings. He justifies the murder of the Saka King by Chandra-gupta II. To quote him, "Morality is not offended by the murder of an enemy through disguise".

(g) The Works of Kalidasa.

The dramas of Kalidasa may be considered as fabulous legends by a casual observer but a student of history will find them as repository of the conditions then prevalent in the country. Kalidasa represents in himself the advancement and progress of the Indian society of his times in the field of literature. A close and critical study of his works gives us an insight into not only the politics but also the social customs,
culture and the legal institutions of the time. It is generally held that he was a contemporary of Chandra-gupta Vikramaditya. His testimony helps us to solve many riddles and controversial points of the Gupta history.

B. Records of Travels of Foreigners.

No less valuable than the indigenous literature of India are the accounts left by foreign travellers as a source of the Gupta history. We have most excellent narratives left by Fahien and Huien Tsang, the most distinguished Chinese travellers who visited India in search of knowledge in the 5th and 7th centuries A.D. respectively. "The work of these two Chinese monks" says Spear, "imparts flesh and blood to the bones of dates, dynastic names, and formal inscriptions which are the historian's stock in trade for so much of the early period"

The book Fo Kuo ki, or Records of the Buddhist Kingdom in which Fahien recorded his journey has been happily preserved completely in original and has been translated once into French and four times into the English language. It contains a very vivid and valuable record of his observation about the government and the general condition of the people of the Gangetic provinces during the reign of Chandragupta II, Vikramaditya.

Huien Tsang, the prince of pilgrims who travelled India after the death of Harsha, deserves our particular notice. In his travels described in a work entitled 'Records of the West World', he gives some account of the later Gupta period. He also attests to the effectiveness of the Gupta administrative machinery.

Another traveller I-tsing, the Chinese Buddhist pilgrim who visited India during the period 671 - 695 A.D. also deserves our attention. He refers to a "great king" (Maharaja) Che-li-ki-to which is taken as Chinese rendering of the Indian name Sri-gupta who built a shrine for the use of Chinese pilgrims near Mrigasikhavana (at a place about forty miles to the east of Nalanda, known as the temple of China).

C. Inscriptions.

The history of the Gupta period has been mainly written with the help of inscriptions. The accurate knowledge of many aspects of the Gupta period which has now been attained is derived mainly from a patient study of a series of ancient inscriptions during the 19th and 20th centuries. Fleet has rightly remarked, "It is almost entirely from a patient examination of the inscriptions...that our knowledge of the ancient political history of India has been derived. But we are also ultimately dependent on the inscriptions in any other line of Indian research. Hardly any definite dates and identification can be established except from them. And they regulate everything that we can learn from tradition, literature, coins, art, architecture or any other source".
The inscriptions are indeed far more useful and reliable than the literary sources for the elucidation of the Gupta period. The discovery, publication and historical interpretation of a large number of inscriptions belonging to this period amply testify to the industry and the historical acumen of several scholars, Indian and foreign. Dr Fleet was certainly the foremost among them and rendered a valuable service by publishing in 1888 the 3rd Volume of Corpus Inscriptionum or the Inscriptions of the Early Guptas and their successors.

The inscriptions are found engraved on rocks, pillars, stones, metal plates and in caves etc. in the languages current at different periods and in different localities. The chief importance of these inscriptions lies in their plain statement of events. The Allahabad Pillar Inscription, while eulogising the achievements of Samudra-gupta, gives us more or less a detailed history of his glorious career. Comparable to that inscription is also the Mandasor pillar inscription of Yasho-harman. There are some inscriptions which record the carrying out of public works as in the case of the Junagarh Rock Inscription of Skanda-gupta. The Eran Inscription refers to the death of one Goparaja while he and his sovereign Bhanu-gupta were fighting the enemies. There are other inscriptions which record the religious endowments or secular donations. They reveal the religious aspect of Hindu character and the desire of Hindus of making religious endowments on every possible occasion. The Gupta sovereigns made extensive donations to Brahmins and sometimes even to Buddhists and Jains. Incidentally these inscriptions refer to the genealogy and the date of the donation and to some aspects of the religious life of the period. The donative inscriptions are numerous. The essential part of these records is the specification of the details regarding the donor, the donee and the donation. A majority of these again are royal donations and are specifically dated. These inscriptions, whatever their original object might have been, afford considerable help for the reconstruction of a detailed and connected history of the Gupta period and give a coherent picture of the religious, social and economic life of the period. They are extremely helpful in fixing dates and often support and supplement what we learn from literature. For instance, in the absence of the Allahabad Inscription, the veil of oblivion would hang heavily on the rule of Samudra-gupta.

D. Coins

The coins are a rich and plentiful source for the construction of the history of the Gupta age. A large number of coins belonging to this period have been collected from various parts of the country. They present a wide variety of types as shown in their legends, symbols, standard, weight or fabric. Their fabric and weight can be historically interpreted. But the legends on the reverse and the obverse of these coins, which are far more important greatly help us by providing important clues for reconstructing the history of this period. Like the
inscriptions, they corroborate and supplement, in many cases, the information derived from literature, and often modify or amplify it.

Allan published in 1914 his work the "Catalogue of the Coins of the Gupta Dynasties and of Sasanka, King of Gauda". It contains a systematic study of the Gupta coins. We have coins bearing the figures of Chandra-gupta I and his queen Kamaradevi struck by their son Samudra-gupta. There are several varieties of coins of Samudragupta, such as tiger type, lyrist type. Asvamedha type, standard type and archer type etc. We also have many varieties of coins of Chandragupta II viz, archer type, couch type, chhattri type, lion slayer type and horseman type. Similarly we have various types of coins of Skanda-gupta, Kumara-gupta and the later Imperial Guptas.

Coins are almost the sole evidence with regard to the Gupta kings after Budha-gupta. The names of Chandra-gupta III, Dvadashaditya, Vishnu-gupta, Hari-gupta, Ghatotkacha-gupta are known only from their coins. The purity of metal undoubtedly reflects the economic condition of the times. The silver plated coinage of Kumar-gupta proves the financial stress on the Imperial Gupta treasury during his period. The coins issued during the times of Samudra-gupta reflect the prosperity of the Empire. The Gupta coins reveal that conservatism was very strong in the realm of numismatics as the early gold coins of the Guptas resemble closely those of the later Kushans.

E. Seals

A large number of seals belonging to the Gupta period have been found by Spooner near Vaisali in the Muzaffarpur district. The variety and character of the Vaisali seals give us an insight into the local and provincial administration of the Guptas. We have seals issued by both high and low officials. Seals of officers like police chiefs, controller of military stores, chief justice (Mahadandanayaka) Kumaramatyas, leave no doubt about the existence of an organised hierarchy of officials exercising authority in different parts of the country. Marshall's Bhilsa excavations have also yielded some important seals belonging to this period. Most of the conclusions about the revenue system of the early Guptas derived from the study of Dhan السيد and Damodarpur Plates have been supported by a study of these seals.

F. Monuments

Monuments are not of much interest to a student of purely political history, but they constitute one of the most important sources of information regarding the cultural history of the Gupta period. They are of great importance in tracing the history of evolution of art under the Imperial Guptas. The art of a country is generally regarded to be a fair index of its culture, and it throws light on some higher aspects of its civilization which cannot be easily understood from other sources.
The remains have considerably helped towards a proper appreciation of the life and spirit of India under the Guptas. They also illustrate the development of religion for most of them are structures devoted to religion and indirectly they also reflect the economic condition of the times. The Imperial Guptas have left behind a large number of buildings, monuments and other works of art. Those monuments illustrate different schools of art and architecture viz., the Mathura School, Benares School and the Nalanda School. The temples of the Gupta period such as those at Udayagiri, and Bhitari represent the religion and deities of the period viz., Vishnu, Shiv and Durga. The fine sculptures of the Badami caves gives us a clear idea of the religious condition of the people.

Conclusion

Such in brief are the sources which help us in the reconstruction of the history of the Gupta period. The most striking feature, when judged by modern standards, is the meagreness of our materials and the wide range over which they are scattered. Accordingly, the historian "must work like a miner with the pick axe and shovel of his perseverance and critical judgement and get at the gold of facts". Quite often they are to face difficulties in reconstructing history because of conflicting claims, utter absence of dates, or prevalence of several eras at different periods and places and it is only after overcoming these difficulties that we can achieve the object of building a connected and consistant account of the history of our period.

Points to Remember

1. The Gupta period compared with the age of Pericles and of Elizabeth.
2. The Sources of study copious.

(A) Indigenous literature.

(i) The Puranas.

1. These are the most valuable source.
2. Five Puranas are important for the study of Gupta history.
3. Puranas to be used with caution for the reconstruction of the history of the Guptas.
4. Depict a clear picture of the Gupta empire; give boundaries of the kingdom of Chandragupta I; give an account of first half of Samudra-gupta's reign. Jayaswal has compiled the history of early Guptas from the Puranas.

(ii) Kaumudi-Mahotsava.

1. Drama composed by Vijjaka or Ki-orka.
2. Jayaswal claims the play relates to the Gupta period.
3. Dikshat holds the play throws light on rise and origin of the Guptas and on the religious and social condition of the times.

(iii) Devichandra-guptam.

1. Only a few passages of the work discovered from another work Naiya-darpana.
2. Sylvain Lévi claims that the hero of the play is Chand-agupta II; also refers to Kushan invasion of the Punjab after Samudragupta’s death.
3. Raychaudhuri does not find the play authentic.

(iv) Harshacharitaram by Banabhatta.

The value of the play for the study of the Gupta period established; gives informations about the later Guptas.

(v) Manjusri-Mula-Kalpa.

Deals with Imperial dynasties from 700 B.C. to 700 A.D., throws abundant light on the early Guptas.

(vi) Kamandaka Nitisara.

Probably written by sikhara; is a summary of Arthasastra; gives instructions to the king in diplomacy.

(vii) Works of Kalidasa.

His works are repository of the conditions prevailing in the country; represent progress of Indian society and literature probably during Chandra-gupta II’s reign.

B. Records of Travels of foreigners.

Excellent narratives left by Fahien give a vivid picture of the government, society and administration during the reign of Chandra-gupta II.

Huen T’ang’s work gives account of the later Gupta period.

I-tsing — source of information for the study of Sri-gupta’s reign.

C. Inscriptions.

1. History of the Guptas written mainly with the help of inscriptions.
2. Fleet’s contribution.
3. Important Inscriptions — The Allahabad Pillar Inscription of Samudra-gupta, Junagahr Rock Inscription of Skanda-gupta etc.

D. Coins.

1. Rich and plentiful source.
2. Symbols, legends, weight and fabric of the coins give clue to many riddles; information corroborated by inscriptions and literary sources.
3. Allan's catalogue of coins of the Gupta dynasty a very valuable work.

4. Coins sole evidence with regard to the later Gupta's, the names of Chandra-gupta III, Vishnu-gupta, Hari-gupta, Ghatotkacha-gupta only known from the coins.

(E) Seals.

1. Excavations by Spooner and Marshall yielded a large number of seals belonging to the Gupta period.

2. Seals provide much information about the Gupta administration.

(F) Monuments.

1. Dumb monuments of art and architecture are important source of cultural history of the Guptas; depict evolution of different schools of sculpture.

2. The temples represent the religious condition of the times.

(G) Conclusion.

1. Judged by modern standards these sources are meagre.

2. Difficulties experienced in re-constructing a connected history of the Guptas.

3. The historians have to put in hard labour to reach the facts.
CHAPTER II

Political condition of India on the eve of the rise of Guptas to imperial power.

Q. 1. Give an account of the political condition of northern India on the eve of rise of the Gupta Empire.

Ans. During the period between the fall of the Kushans and the rise of the Guptas as a paramount power, Northern India lacked political unity. There was no strong centralised power in the country. It was parcelled out into a large number of small independent states without any cohesion or any bond of unity. Each of these states was busy in setting its house in order. The contemporary records of which the Puranas are the pre-eminent record that anarchy and disorder prevailed everywhere and the people led a deplorable life. From the study of a large number of coins and inscriptions of different kings belonging to the Gupta period we come to know about the existence during this period of a large number of independent states—monarchies and republics.

Monarchical States in Northern India.

The Naga Kingdoms

One of the powers of considerable importance in the period immediately preceding the rise of imperial Guptas were the Nagas. They had been a well known tribe since ancient times. The literary, epigraphic and numismatic evidence proves that the Nagas had spread themselves over a considerable portion of Northern India. According to Puranas, the Naga kings flourished at Vidisa (Bhas Nagar Bhilsa), Kautilpur (probably in Mirza Pur district), Padmavati (Padam Pawaya in the old Gwaliar state and Mathura. The name of the Naga king Mahesvara Naga, son of Nagabhatta has been referred to in Lahore Copper Seal Inscription. This shows that Nagas also ruled over the Punjab. A Vakataka lapidary, the Chammuk Copper Plate Inscription of Parvasena II records that a branch of the Naga dynasty, the Bharasiva Nagas ruled the kingdom bordering on the Bhagirathi (the Ganges) and are credited with the performance of no less than ten Asvamedha sacrifices.

The greatest of the Naga kings was probably Chandrasena whose name reminds us of the great king Chandrasena of the Meharauli Pillar Inscription. But it is far from certain that the two are identical.

After the downfall of the Kushans, the Nagas ruled over a consider-
able part of India. Several Vakataka records mention that Rudersena II was a grand son of Bhava Naga. This shows that Nagas were a ruling power before the Gupta power was established. They became an important power during the early days of Guptas, but much of this power was subsequently crippled by the onslaughts of Samudra-gupta.

The Kingdom of Ahichchhatra

There was a kingdom of Ahichchhatra (modern Ram nagar in the Bareilly district) during the first three centuries of the Christian era. The coins refer to the names of Bhadragnosha Suryamitra, Phalgunimitra, Agnimitra, Bhatasvamitra etc. Coins bearing the name of Achyu have also been found in the Ahichchhatra region. In this connection, Altekar and Majumdar point out that a king named Agyuta (identical with Achyu) had risen to power in Ahichchhatra. His coins bear a close resemblance to those of the Naga coins. It is probable that he was himself a Naga ruler, perhaps a scion of a collateral branch of the Mathura family. Agyuta was one of those kings who were violently exterminated by Samudra-gupta and his kingdom was incorporated in the Gupta Empire.

The Kingdom of Ayodhya

Before the rise of the Guptas to imperial power, a kingdom flourished round the historic city of Ayodhya which was its capital. It roughly corresponded to the modern Oudh. The names of Dhanadeva and Visakhadeva, Muladeva, Vayudeva, Naradatta and Sivadatta rulers of Ayodhya have come to us from a hoard of coins of this period. Dhanadeva, a king of Kosala of Ayodhya inscription has been referred to as a Raja He has been described as the sixth in descent from Senapati Pushyamitra. The names of some other rulers of this dynasty viz., Satyamitra, Ayumitra and Sanghamitra have also been known from the coins. The Puranas suggest that Chandara-gupta I attacked this kingdom and annexed it to his empire.

The Kingdom of Kausambi.

A king named Bhimasena founded a small independent kingdom at Kausambi (identified with Kosam near Allahabad) in 130 A.D. Numismatic evidence shows that it was ruled by a king named Nava between 300 and 320 A.D. We donot know precisely who succeeded Nava but by the middle of the 4th century A.D., a king Pushvasri or Pushpasri was ruling at Kausambi. It was probably a successor of this ruler named Rudra Deva mentioned in the Allahabad Pillar Inscription who ruled this state on the eve of the rise of the Imperial Guptas. Samudra-gupta defeated him and annexed Kausambi and its adjoining territories to his vast empire.
The Maukharis.

During the first half of the 3rd century A.D., there was a small Maukhari principality at Badva in Kotah state in Rajputana. It was ruled by Mahasenapati Bala in 239 A.D. Some inscriptions engraved on sacrificial pillars show that there were several Maukhari families in the Kotah region during the 3rd century A.D. The drama Kaumudi Mahotasva points out that the Maukharis were a local power in Magadha under Sundravarman. The Maukharis power is also testified by the Chandravalli inscription of Mayurasarman which indicates that they were ruling in Magadha in the time of early Kadambas i.e. about the 4th century A.D.

The Vakatas

In central India ruled the Vakatas with their capital at Purika. The founder of the dynasty was Vindhyasakti who was probably a Satyayana officer in Berar. He has been described as Vakataka Vamasketu. He increased his power by fighting many battles. He was succeeded by his son Pravasena I who was the real founder of the dynasty and under whom Vakataka power attained zenith. He transformed his small patrimony into a sizable kingdom comprising northern Maharashtra, Berar, parts of Madhya Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh. After the successful termination of his wars he performed horse sacrifices and adopted the title of Samrat. He also made a matrimonial alliance with Bharasiva Naga. Pravaresana was succeeded by Rudrasena I, who was a contemporary of Samudra-gupta and was probably the same person as Rudrasena mentioned in the Allahabad Pillar Inscription. The rise of Samudra-gupta considerably eclipsed the greatness of the Vakatas, though the Gupta Empire did not affect their independent status and they continued as an important power during the times of Chandra-gupta II. Chandra-gupta’s daughter Prabhavati was married to the Vakata ruler Rudrasena II.

The Guptas

Finally, there were the Guptas destined to rise into imperial prominence. The origin and early history of the Guptas like those of the Nagas and the Vakatas are shrouded in obscurity. It is surmised that the Guptas originally lived in the Punjab and some of them got into service under the Saka rulers and went to the modern Uttar Pradesh and Bihar in their official capacity and domiciled in those parts of the country. Later when the Saka rulers were dislodged from power by the Nagas, these Gupta officials were permitted to remain in possession of their Jagirs and estates. According to the genealogical list, as given in the Allahabad Pillar Inscription, the founder of the dynasty was a person named Gupta. He is given a simple title of Maharaja which shows that he was only a minor chief
ruling a small territory in Magdha. How big the kingdom of Magdha then was, we have no means to ascertain. Gupta has been identified with Maharaja (ch-li-ko) Sri-gupta, who according to I-tsing erected a temple near Mrigasikhvana for some pious Chinese pilgrims. Gupta was succeeded by his son Ghatotkacha who is also styled as Maharaja. He was succeeded by his son Chandra-gupta I, the founder of the Gupta empire.

The Republics

Some republics had existed in India even before the rise of the Mauryas. After the fall of the Mauryan empire they re-emerged in the country. These tribal republics played a significant role in the destruction of the Kushan and the Saka powers. The following important republics viz., the Malavas, Arjunaayanas, Yaudheyas, Sibis, Lichchhavis, Kunindas, Kulutas and Abhras were thriving on the eve of the rise of the Guptas to imperial power.

The Malavas.

The Malvas were a well known republican tribe described by the Greek historians as Malloi and located them in the lower Punjab. They were known as the most numerous and war like of all the Indian tribes in these parts. At the time of Alexander’s invasion they lived in the Bari Doab and offered hostile reception to his armies. By the end of the fourth century A.D. they had migrated to Rajputana and ultimately settled in the Malva region called after them. Battling against the Sakas and the Kushan domination they made an unsuccessful attempt for independence. At a later period they revolted and declared themselves independent republic. On the eve of rise of the Imperial Guptas they ruled an extensive area. But they could not resist the onslaughts of Samudra-gupta and their republic was annexed to his dominions. The capital of the Malavas republic seems to have been the modern Nagari or Korkota nagar.

The Arjunaayanas.

The Arjunaayanas were located in the immediate neighbourhood of the Malavas. They flourished as a republic in the eastern parts of Jaipur and Alwar states. Their coins have been found which do not bear the name of any king or general. They bear the legend ‘Arjuna-yananam Jayah’ i.e. victory to the Arjunaayanas. They believed themselves to be the descendants of the eldest brother of Arjuna. They came into prominence after decline of the Indo Greek power but they were subdued by the Sakas about the end of the fourth century B.C. They, however, soon asserted their independence when the Sakas started showing some signs of decay. They enjoyed an independent position
on the eve of the rise of the Imperial Guptas. Like other republican states, they also submitted to the mighty arms of Samudra-gupta.

The Yaudheyas.

Closely associated with the Arjunayanas by descent and traditions were the Yaudheyas. The Yaudheyas are mentioned in an inscription discovered at Bijayagarh near Bayana in the Bharatpur state. They seemed to have settled down in the East Punjab, in the Sutlej region, Bharatpur and probably further south. The credit of giving the first blow to the Kushan empire goes to this republican tribe. Around 45 A.D. they declared themselves independent in north eastern Rajputana. But this attempt of theirs was checked by Mahakshatrapa Rudradaman. Towards the end of the second century A.D., however, they made another and this time successful bid for independence. This event was celebrated with the issue of a new currency now occasionally found in the territories which comprised their homeland. The Yaudheyas did not enjoy freedom for long and were ultimately subdued by Samudra-gupta.

The Sibis.

The Sibis were thriving in the neighbourhood of Malavas at the time of Alexander's invasion. They had a monarchy in the earlier days but became a republic later. By the end of first century B.C. they had migrated to Rajputana and settled in a region near Chitor with their capital at Madhymika, where a large number of coins of the republic have been found. Their coins bear the legend 'Mahamikaya Sibi Janapadas' (The coins of the Sibi state or commonwealth struck at Madhyamika. The Sibis have also been mentioned in the Allahabad Inscription. They, however, do not seem to have been enjoying a very important position on the eve of the rise of the Imperial Guptas.

The Lichchhavis.

The Lichchhavis were one of the most prominent of the republican tribes of ancient India. They lived in North Bihar with their base at Vaisali on the river Gandak. It seems likely that they were a martial race like the modern Gurkhas. They are first noticed in the Pali Buddhist literature. They are known to have settled in Vaisali in the times of Gautama Buddha and though conquered by Ajatasatru, they continued to be an important and powerful clan as shown by references in Kautilya's Arthasastra. Smith suggests that the Lichchhavis were ruling as feudatories of the Kushans. After their defeat at the hands of Ajatasatru the king of Magadha, the Lichchhavis migrated to and conquered Nepal probably as early as the first or second century A.D. The Lichchhavis and the Guptas were neighbours and cemented their relations by a matrimonial alliance which later on resulted in their
union and enhancement of the power and prestige of the Gupta kingdom. The rise of the Guptas to imperial power was largely due to the Lichchhavvis, who were later on absorbed in the Gupta empire. Although the importance and location of the Lichchhavvis as a clan or a state remain controversial issues it is definite that they played a very significant role in the political history of India on the eve of the rise of the Guptas.

The Kunindas.

The Kunindas flourished down to 300 A. D. and offered valuable co-operation to the Yaudheyas in overthrowing the Kushan supremacy. They ruled over the territory between the Yamuna and Sutlej and between the upper courses of the Beas and the Sutlej (Siwalik territory.) From two types of coins of this tribe, we know of the two tribal chiefs Amoghabhuti and Chatresvara, who enjoyed some real political significance. Chatresvara liberated his country from the Kushans during the second and third centuries when the Kushan rule started showing decay all over Northern India. Chatresvara also issued coins as a mark of independence of the tribe. Chattria was probably the name of the capital of the Kunindas. The Kunindas were probably over-run by the Kulutas, their neighbours, who were in turn subdued by the Guptas.

The Kulutas.

The republican tribe of the Kulutas inhabited the Kulu valley and was the neighbour of the Kunindas. They seemed to have asserted their independence from the foreign rule sometime in the second century A. D. The tribe had a fairly long period of independent existence. The Kulutas were probably conquered by the Guptas but were allowed to enjoy internal autonomy as it is evident from the account of Hiuen Tsang. The tribe does not appear to be very important so it is not mentioned in the Allahabad Pillar Inscription.

The Audumbaras.

The Audumbaras are located in the vicinity of the Kulutas and Kunindas probably in the modern districts of Gurdaspur, Hoshiarpur and eastern parts of the district of Kangra. From their coins it appears that they had a very long period of political independence. The coins of this tribe also indicate that some of their early rulers were Dharagosha, Sivadasa and Rudradasa. It is also supposed that the rulers like Agnimitra, Mahamitra, Bhumimitra and Mahabhattimitra whose names are mentioned in the coins also belonged to the Audumbaras. However, nothing definite can be suggested without further positive evidence.

The Madrakas.

The Madrakas inhabited the northern regions between the river
Ravi and the Chenab. They had their capital at Sakala (modern Sialkot). They remained under foreign domination for a pretty long time. The decline of the Indo Greek rule gave them a chance of freedom but they were again subdued by the Kushans. They reasserted their independence after the fall of the Kushan rule. They are mentioned in the Allahabad Pillar Inscription as a feudatory of the great Gupta emperor Samudra-gupta. After acknowledging his suzerainty they were allowed to enjoy internal autonomy.

Conclusion.

Thus we find that on the eve of the rise of the Guptas to imperial power, Northern India presented a pathetic spectacle of a land of petty states, lacking cohesion and unity. Such a chaotic state of affairs offered a great prize to an able and ambitious power to rise to eminence. The Guptas took advantage of the situation and reunited the whole of northern India and carved out one strong and united power in the country. It was under a number of able, versatile and mighty Gupta monarchs that a large part of northern India was brought under “one political umbrella” leading to an era of orderly government and progress in the country.

Main Points

Introduction.

India lacked political unity on the eve of the rise of the Guptas, was divided into many small independent states—monarchies and republics, anarchy and disorder prevailed.

The Monarchical States

The Nagas.

An ancient tribe, became powerful after the Kushans. According to Puranas ruled over Vidisa, Kantipur, Padmavati Mathura, and Punjab. A branch of Nagas under the Bharasvis ruled over territories bordering on the Ganges; performed ten horse sacrifices; greatest king Chadrasena. Another great king Rudrasena; Naga power was crippled by the invasions of Samudra-gupta.

The Ahichchhatras.

Ahichchhatra (modern Ram Nagar) flourished in the first three centuries of the Christian era; rulers—Agnimitra, Phalgunimitra, Suryamitra, Bhadra ghosha etc. Coins of king Achyuta discovered which resemble Naga coins; probably himself a Naga ruler; Achyuta exterminated by Samudra-gupta.
The Ayodhya Kingdom.

Flourished round Ayodhya corresponding to the modern Oudh; Names of rulers discovered from the coins—Dhanadeva, Muladeva, Vayudeva, etc.; The Ayodhya inscription refers to a Raja who was the sixth in descent from Pushyamitra; kingdom annexed by Chandra-gupta I.

The Kausambi Kingdom.

Founded by Bhimasena in 130 A. D., King Nava ruled during 300—320 A. D., Rudradeva was the ruler on the eve of the rise of the Guptas; Samudra-gupta annexed the kingdom.

The Maukharis.

A small principality in Kotah state during the first half of the third century A. D.; ruled by Mahasenapati Bala in 239 A. D. Kaumudi Mahotsava states the Maukharis ruled in Magadha; Chandravalli Inscription also supports this view.

The Vakatakas.

Ruled in central India with capital at Suriga; founder Vindhyasakti succeeded by Pravarasena the real founder; ruled a sizable kingdom; title of samrat; succeeded by Rudrasena I, a contemporary of Samudra-gupta; Vakataka power eclipsed by Samudra-gupta, Vakatakas, however, retained their independent character.

The Guptas.

Destined to rise into imperial eminence; founder Sri-gupta, a Maharaja, succeeded by Ghatotkacha also a Maharaja; succeeded by Chandra-gupta I 'the real founder of the empire.'

THE REPUBLICS.

Flourished before the rise of the Mauryas; again appeared after the fall of the Mauryas; played significant role in the destruction of Kushan and the Saka power.

The Malavas.

Known since the times of Alexander; inhabited Bari Doab; offered hostile reception to Alexander; by the end of first century migrated to Rajasthan; finally settled in Malava region; fought against Kushans and Sakas; ruled over an extensive area on the eve of the rise of the Guptas. Defeated by Samudra-gupta and territories annexed.
The Arjunayanas.

Located in the immediate neighbourhood of Malavas; flourished in the eastern parts of Jaipur and Aihwar states; believed to be descendants of the eldest brother of Arjuna. Subdued by Sakas about the end of first century A.D.; re-asserted independence; finally submitted to the mighty arms of Samudra-gupta.

The Yaudheyas.

Settled in the east Punjab in the Sutlej region and Bharat pur; gave the first blow to Kushan power; fought against the Sakas, asserted independence; celebrated victory with the issue of new coins; subdued by Samudra-gupta.

The Sibis.

Thrive in the neighbourhood of Malavas; formerly a monarchy later a republic; migrated to Madhyamika where coins of the republic found; did not enjoy important position on the eve of the rise of the Guptas.

The Lichchhavis.

Most prominent of the republican tribes; flourished in north Bihar; moved to Nepal in the first or second century A.D., entered into a matrimonial relation with the Guptas; brought power and prestige to the Guptas; later absorbed by the Guptas.

The Kunindas.

Flourished down to 300 A.D., assisted Yaudheyas in overthrowing Kushan supremacy; Chatrasena an important chief; issued coins as a mark of the independence of the tribe; Chatira was the capital; the republic included modern Siwalik hills; defeated by the Guptas.

The Kulutas.

Inhabited Kulu valley; subdued by Guptas; allowed to enjoy internal autonomy; tribe not very important.

The Audambras.

Flourished in the vicinity of the Kulutas; ruled over the modern districts of Gurdaspur, Hoshiarpur and eastern parts of Kangra; had a long period of political independence; Rulers—Dharagosha, Sivalasa, Rudradasa.
The Madarakas.

Inhabited areas between Ravi and Chenob, capital Sakala; subdued by Kushans, re-asserted their independence; mentioned as the feudatories of Samudragupta; enjoyed internal autonomy.

CONCLUSION.

Northern India disunited; situation offered a great chance; Guptas rose to the occasion; united a large part of Northern India under one political umbrella.
CHAPTER III

The origin and foundation of the Gupta Empire.

Introduction.

With the accession of the imperial Guptas to power, the history of India enters upon a new epoch. A strong flood of light is suddenly thrown on the history of northern India, the veil of oblivion is lifted and the history of India once again gains unity and interest. We do not come across any literary or epigraphic records of the events of the period between the decline of the Kushans and the rise of Guptas. Whatever little is known is wrapped up in obscurity and it can hardly be said to be authentic. But the history of the Guptas has the advantage of having abundant, authentic and varied sources of information. During the rule of this illustrious dynasty extending over a period of three centuries, the social and political institutions, art, architecture and literature all made mighty strides and felt the impulse of rejuvenescence. Pataliputra rose from centuries of oblivion into the capital of a magnificent empire once again. The nation was reunited under the aegis of great Gupta kings who kept the country united and safe from foreign invasions for centuries.

Q. Discuss the origin, the original home and the social background of the Imperial Guptas.

The Origin of the Guptas.

Very little information is available about the origin and early history of the Guptas like that of their predecessors, the Nagas and the Vakatakas. The scholars have put forward divergent views with no finality about them.

Dr. Majumdar and Dr. Altekar are of the view that the Gupta families existed in India from very early times. The names of some officials ending in Gupta have been discovered in ancient Indian records of the Sunga and the Satavahana periods, and even a queen of the Gupta family (Gupta Vamodita) is mentioned in an old Brahmi inscription. A Bharhut Pillar Inscription of the Sunga period refers to the son of Rajan Visadeva as Gotiputa implying that his queen was a Gaupti i.e. she belonged to the Gupta clan. The same surname Gotiputa is also mentioned in many other ancient records. All these go to establish the importance and antiquity of the Gupta family. It is not definite, whether there was any parent clan from which all
other branches spread or whether there were some different families without any connection who adopted this surname at different times. The latter view, however, seems more plausible in view of the fact that this surname was wide spread all over Northern India and the Deccan.

2. Some Guptas are mentioned as officers in the records of the Andhra kings e.g. Shiva Gupta, Shiv Skanda Gupta but it is not possible to connect them with the Imperial Guptas of the 4th century A. D.

3. The Allahabad Pillar Inscription gives us information about the Gupta family which rose to imperial power and brought splendour to itself. The genealogical lists as given in the Allahabad Pillar Inscription mention that the founder of the dynasty which rose to imperial eminence was a person named Gupta. This Gupta has been identified with Maharaja Chi-ki-to to which is taken as the Chinese rendering of the Indian name Sri-gupta. According to I-tsing, a Chinese pilgrim, who came to India in the last quarter of the seventh century A D., this Sri-gupta erected a temple near Mrigasikha-vana for some pious Chinese pilgrims. He remarks that this temple was built about five hundred years before his visit. Allan is of the view that there is nothing inherently impossible in the identification of Che-li-ki-to of I-tsing with Maharaja Sri-gupta, although it involves certain chronological difficulties. Dr. Fleet, however, rejects this identification. He argues that “It is now certain that the era used by the early Guptas commenced in 319-20, A. D., the Maharaja Sri-gupta mentioned by I-tsing and referred to by him about 175 A. D., cannot be identified with the founder of the early Gupta family which lived in the fourth century A, D.” But this difficulty as suggested by Fleet is not very substantial. I-tsing clearly refers to the times of Sri-gupta on a hearsay evidence and from memory and about 500 years is too round a figure to be interpreted literally. Dr. R. K. Mookerji says that even if we admit the calculation of Fleet there is a difference of only half a century. If we take the early year of the Gupta era as the initial year of Chandra-gupta and assign a period of about 40 years each to the reign of Ghatotkacha and Sri-gupta we can allot 240–280 A. D. as the period of Sri-gupta’s reign. This comes to about 455 years before I-tsing’s time. Thus there should be no difficulty in accepting the identification as a working hypothesis.

Original Home of the Imperial Guptas.

1. There is also a controversy among the scholars about the original home of the imperial Guptas. Dr. D. C. Ganguly is of the view that the early home of the Guptas may be located in Murshidabad district in the state of West Bengal. He bases his conclusion on a
statement of I-tsing discussed in the previous paragraph. I-tsing places the temple built by Sri-gupta about fifty stages east of Nalanda down the Ganges and places Nalanda as seven stages to the north-east of Mahabodhi. On the basis of this calculation, the temple of Mrigasikhavana is located in the Murshidabad district.

Critics like Majumdar have pointed two defects in the identification of Dr. Ganguly. In the first place, the name of the temple mentioned by I-tsing should be read as Mrigasthapana and not as Mrigasikhavana. This Mrigasthapana was in Varendi which was included in the dominions of Sri-gupta. But Murshidabad is situated in the Radha Division and not in the Varendi district. Secondly, I-tsing’s stages come to about 240 miles. There is no doubt that Murshidabad is 240 miles east of Nalanda, but it seems from his account that I-tsing first went to the Ganges from Nalanda and then along the river east. This brings us to Maldah district and not to Murshidabad district.

2. A study of the Vishnu Purana, Vayu Purana and Bhagvata Purana reveals that the early Guptas probably ruled over Magadha, Prayaga, Saketa and along the river Ganges. This indicates that the original kingdom of the Guptas comprised Magadha and ended along the river Ganges into north Bengal.

3. Dr. Raychaudhuri suggests that the Guptas originally were the rulers of Magadha and the territories of Prayaga and Kosala were later added to their empire. Dr. R. K. Mukerji is of the opinion that all the villages which were granted to the Buddhist monastery at Mrigasikhavana were situated in Magadha. Basing his argument on the stages in the route followed by I-tsing in his travels, he suggests that the Gupta territories might have extended up to the Murshidabad district. Still there are other historians who hold the opinion that Magadha was not the original home of the Guptas but it might have been conquered by Maharaja Ghatoikacha, but there is absolutely no evidence to support this view.

Social Background of the Gupta family.

This question is equally beset with considerable difficulty. On a consideration of the termination of the names of the Guptas, it has been asserted with some plausibility that the Guptas belonged to the Vaishya caste. But much stress should not be laid on this argument. To give just one example to the contrary we may cite Brahmagupta as the name of a celebrated Brahmin astronomer.

The Gupta inscriptions are silent about their caste and it is left to Prabhavati Gupta, the daughter of Chandra-gupta II to
mention the fact in her Poona Plates that their Gotra was Dharna. This silence of Gupta inscription on this important fact of genealogical history of their family has raised doubts. This has been seized upon by Dr. Jayaswal to suggest that the Guptas were Krasakara Jats from the Punjab and that the word Gotra in Prabhavati Gupta’s Poona Plate Inscription would mean a caste or sub-division. Dr. Jayaswal suggests that the Dharni the Jat clan found in Amritsar may be compared with the Sanskrit Dharna of Prabhavati Gupta.

Dr. Raychaudhri holds that this Dharna gotra may be taken as an indication of the fact that the imperial Guptas might have been related to Dharni, the chief consort of Agnimitra Shungha. It seems to be only a conjecture and cannot be accepted as it is based on doubtful evidence.

According to the Kaumudi Mahotsava, a contemporary play, the Guptas originally seem to have belonged to a lower order of Hindu society. The author of this drama condemns the relatives of the Guptas, the Lichchhavis as ‘Mlechchhas’ and calls Chandrasena (who has been identified with Chandra-gupta I by Dr. Jayaswal) a casteless or a low caste man undeserving of royal honour. On the evidence of this drama Jayaswal states that the, “Guptas were comparatively speaking, people of low birth who raised themselves to a higher social status by their political greatness and that they themselves, nowhere disclose their origin and caste status as if they have purposely concealed it.”

Dodwell also suggests that the Guptas were a people of humble origin. He writes, “It is just possible that Gupta and Ghatotkacha are foreign names under a Sanskrit guise and that the Guptas were not of Hindu blood. In any case, the name Gupta suggests a humble origin.”

The above arguments about the social background of the Guptas can be refuted on three grounds: In the first place, the drama Kaumudi Mahotsava tells that Chandrasena was adopted as a son by the Magadha king. How could a low caste man be adopted as a son by a king particularly when the latter was a high caste man. Secondly, the identification of Chandra-gupta I with Chandra sena of the Kaumudi Mahotsava is far from certain and the evidence which Jayaswal has relied on is not conclusive. Lastly, as suggested by Dr. B. G. Gokhale, the adjectives, low or high are unsatisfactory as indicators of precise social status. It is thus difficult to accept the view that the Guptas belonged to a low caste,
Points to Remember

Origin of the Guptas.

1. Very little information available; divergent views about their origin.

2. Names of Guptas in the Sunga and Satavahan records establish the antiquity of the family.

3. Andhra records refer to Shiva Gupta and Shiv Skanda Gupta; not possible to connect with the Imperial Guptas of the 4th century A.D.

4. The Allahabad Pillar Inscription refers to a person Gupta as the founder of the Gupta dynasty; Gupta identified with Sri-gupta; I-tsing's account; Sri-Gupta built a temple 500 years before his visit; Allan supports this view.

5. Fleet rejects the identification of Sri-gupta mentioned by I-tsing as this relates to 175 A.D. and cannot be identified with the founder of the imperial Gupta dynasty who lived in the 4th century A.D.

6. Difficulty as suggested by Fleet not very substantial; R. K. Mookerji says 'about 500 years ago' too vague a term; According to him even if we admit Fleet's calculation, difference of only 50 years.

7. The identification of Sri-gupta may be accepted as a working hypothesis.

Original home of the Guptas.

1. A controversial question.

2. Ganguly says original home was Murshidabad; the temple mentioned by I-tsing was fifty stages east of Nalnada down the Ganges; on this basis, the temple was in Murshidabad.

3. Majumdar disagrees with Ganguly. The name of the place should be read as Mrigasthapanas and not as Mrigasikhanas. The route followed by I-tsing indicates the temple in Maldah district and not Murshidabad.

The Puranas suggest that early Guptas ruled over Magadha, Prayaga and Saketa.

Raychaudhuri says Guptas originally ruled over Magadha and later annexed Prayaga and Kosala.
R. K. Mookerji says that the Guptas originally ruled over Magadha and extended their empire upto Murshidabad.

Many others hold that Magadha was not their original home but was conquered by Ghatotkacha.

Social Background of the Gupta family.

1. Belonged to Vaishya caste because of the ending Gupta; not correct Brahmagupta a Brahman.

2. Prabhavati Gupta’s Poona plate Inscription mentions Dharna as Gotra of Gupta; Joyaswal suggests that they were Dharnis, a Jat clan in Amritsar district.

3. Raychaudhri says Dharna gotra indicates Guptas’ relation to Dharni, the chief consort of Agnimitra Shunga.

4. According to Kaumudi Mahotsva Guptas belonged to a lower order of Hindu society; the Guptas purposely concealed their caste.

5. Dodwell also holds Gupta to be of humble origin.

6. The above arguments that Guptas belong to a low caste can be refuted on three grounds.

Q.: Write notes on Sri Gupta and Ghatotkacha.

Sri Gupta

Sri Gupta is perhaps the first known ancestor of the Imperial Guptas. He has been mentioned in several historical records. The Allahabad Pillar Inscription gives us information about his status. The twenty-eighth line of the Inscription records that this illustrious king was an ancestor of Samudra-gupta.

“He was the son’s son of the Maharaja, the illustrious Gupta, who was the son’s son of the Maharaja, the illustrious Ghatotkacha who was the son of Maharaja Adhiraja, the glorious Chandra-gupta (I,) (and) the daughter’s son of Lichchhavi Mahadevi Kumaradevi.”

From the above statement, it appears that the grand father of Samudra-gupta has been referred to as “Gupta” only. Dr. Fleet is of the view that “Sri” is not an integral part of the name but is used in fact as an honorific term. Sri-gupta is described only as a Maharaja which shows that he was only a feudatory chief and not a paramount
sovereign. The Poona Copper Plate of the Gupta princess Prabhavati Gupta mentions Sri-gupta as the Adhiraja of the dynasty and as belonging to Dharnagotra in the Ruddapur Copper Plate Inscription. It is perhaps because of his subordinate position that no coins or inscriptions of his period seem to have been issued. Samudra-gupta also, when referring to his ancestors, described with pride, the family of his mother i.e., Lichchhavis. It has also been contended by some writers that the references to Lichchhavis confirm that the early Guptas did not enjoy an independent sovereign status and that their descendants took pride in mentioning the name of their mother's ancestors who, according to Dr. V. A. Smith, had established their power in the north.

It is also opined that the early Guptas were subordinate rulers under Murundas but there is no definite proof in support of this contention.

I-tsing is another important authority which furnishes some information about Sri-gupta. I-tsing records that one Maharaja Chi-li-ko (Sri Gupta) erected a temple for some pious Chinese pilgrims near Mrigasikhavana about 500 years before his visit. Allan finds no difficulty in identifying Maharaja chii-ko with Sri Gupta. Dr. Fleet and some other writers, however, object to this identification but the majority of scholars have overruled this objection by saying that there was no other Gupta except the one under reference. We need not take dates given by I-tsing too literally as he himself depended on "the tradition handed down from ancient times by old men."

From the epigraphic and literary records of the Gupta period we may assume that Sri-gupta, the founder of imperial Gupta line flourished probably about 240 A. D.—280 A. D. His dominions should have been sufficiently large to make him styled as Maharaja in Magadha. Some writers hold that his rule extended as far as Murshidabad. Jayaswal, however, suggests that he ruled a principality near Prayaga under the suzerainty of the Bharasivas.

**GHATOTKACHA**

Ghatotkacha was a successor of Sri-gupta. He is also styled as a simple "Maharaja" in the Allahabad Pillar Inscription which would suggest that his political status was quite humble among the kings of his time. He probably continued to rule over his patrimony from 280-319 A. D., the year 320 A. D. being the year of accession of the first Chandra-gupta and the founder of the Gupta era. No details of the reign of Ghatotkacha are available from the Gupta inscriptions and his name is the only thing which is known about him. Bloch suggests that Maharaja Ghatotkacha of the Allahabad Pillar
Inscription may be identified with Ghatotkacha Gupta whose name appeared as ‘Ghatotkacha gupatasya’ on a seal at Vaisali. This view, however, does not seem plausible. In the first place, the name of the son of Maharaja Gupta and the father of Chandra-gupta I, in the Allahabad Pillar Inscription has not been mentioned as Ghatotkacha Gupta, but has been referred to as merely Ghatotkacha. Secondly, Vaisali was not a part of the Gupta kingdom during Ghatotkacha’s time. Thirdly, Ghatotkacha Gupta mentioned on the Vaisali seal was not called Maharaja but only a Kumaramitya, who was most probably the viceroy of the province whose headquarters were at Vaisali in the empire of Chandra-gupta II.

Two records of Prabhavati Gupta, daughter of Chandra-gupta describe Ghatotkacha as the first Gupta king. But this is not in line with the Allahabad Inscription. Some writers have tried to identify Ghatotkacha with Kacha. But this view also seems to be incorrect because it is certain that he has nowhere been mentioned by this half name. He has also been identified by Dr. Bloch with the name found on a coin in the St. Petersburg collection which bears on the obverse the word ‘Ghato’ and a legend ending in Gupta. This view also seems to be incorrect because the scholars generally agree that no coin was issued by the Gupta rulers before Chandra-gupta I because they did not enjoy any independent status.

Allan and other scholars suggest that the dominion of Ghatotkacha was confined to Pataliputra and its neighbourhood.

Points to Remember

**Sri Gupta 240-280 A.D.**

First known ancestor of the imperial Guptas, The Allahabad Pillar Inscription describes his status. Fleet does not think ‘Sri’ integral part of his name but used only as an honorific term, Sri-gupta only a Maharaja, not a paramount sovereign. According to I-tsing he ruled over Magadha and territories extending upto Murshidabad.

**Ghatotkacha 280-319 A.D.**

[1] Styled as Maharaja; no details of his reign available.


[3] Inscriptions of Prabhavati Gupta mention him first Gupta ruler but this is not in conformity with the Allahabad Pillar Inscription.


Chandra-gupta I

Ghatotkacha's son and successor, Chandra Gupta I, who probably ascended the throne in 320 A. D. was undoubtedly the first powerful king of the Gupta family. He increased the power and prestige of the family to a large extent and laid the foundations of the Second Magadha Empire. With his accession to the throne, was ushered a new era of peace and prosperity which came to a close with Buddha Gupta. Unlike his predecessors, Chandra-gupta assumed the grandiloquent title of Maharaja-adhiraja. The main sources of study of the history of his period are:—

1. Kaumudi Mahotsava, probably a contemporary literary work which throws light on his early career, his family, his adoption by the old ruler of Magadha, his marriage with the Lichchhavi princess and his death.

2. Coins of his period provide evidence of his marriage with princess Kumaradevi.

3. Puranas give us the extent of his empire and a glimpse into his administration.

4. The Allahabad Pillar Inscription mentions his status and his abdication in favour of his son Samudra-gupta.

Q. Discuss the problem of identification of Chandra-gupta I with (a) King Chandra of the Mehrauli Pillar Inscription (b) Chandrasena of the drama Kaumudi Mahotsava.

Ans. There has been a great controversy among the scholars about the identification of Chandra-gupta I. R. G. Basak and S. K. Aiyangar are of the view that king Chandra of the Mehrauli Pillar Inscription is no other than Chandra-gupta I. Fleet is also inclined on palaeographical grounds to the view that the inscription may probably refer to Chandra-gupta I.

The Mehrauli Pillar Inscription records that all those who were antagonistic to Chandra confederated and making common cause attacked his territory from the side of Bengal. Chandra, however, was able to defeat them by pressing them back. The Inscription also mentions that he made a successful war against the Vahalika of Bactria (Balakh) by crossing the seven mouths of the Indus. Chandra is further said to have acquired the sole sovereignty of the earth after a long continued effort. Aiyar on the evidence of the above record equates Chandra of Mehrauli Pillar Inscription with Chandra-gupta I. He suggests that "Chandra-gupta I began his life as a ruler of his ancestral dominions along the banks of the Ganges just like his father
and grand-father before him: He must have been a man of achievement as otherwise the credit of the foundation of the empire would not have been given to him. The marriage with the Lichchhavī princess gave him prestige, influence and territory. The new additions rounded off his frontier and brought him into touch with Bengal on the one side and the petty states of Central India and the Punjab on the other. Chandra-gupta's conquest of Bengal thus becomes a possibility. He further holds that his principal achievements were against his neighbours on the north-west. The conquest of Vahālīka took him as far as Sindh and Saurashtra. This does not refer to the destruction of the Sakas but only to his victory over the rulers in that locality and a treaty with them which followed.

The identification of Chandra-gupta I with Chandra of the Mehrauli Pillar Inscription seems to be an over estimate. Aiyanger's view cannot stand the test of logic or historical facts. In the first place, the Vahālīka conquest of Chandra would take Chandra-gupta I as far as Sindh which is quite impossible in the case of the latter. The Allahabad Pillar Inscription of Samudra-gupta shows that his father ruled in the Ganges valley from Prayaga to Pataliputra. Secondly, the boast of the "sole sovereignty of the earth" is not at all applicable to Chandra-gupta I. Thirdly, had the achievements described in the Mehrauli Pillar Inscription been those of Chandra-gupta I, his son Samudra-gupta would certainly have mentioned them in his own records. It seems plausible to hold that the description of the exploits of Chandra of the Mehrauli Pillar Inscription are applicable more to the known facts of the life of Chandra-gupta II than those of his grand father Chandra-gupta I. The identification of Chandra of the Mehrauli does not, therefore, seem logical or historically valid.

Chandasena of Kaumudi Mahotasava and Chandra-gupta I.

Dr. Jayaswal equates Chandasena of the drama Kaumudi Mahotasava with Chandra-gupta I and on the strength of the plot of this drama attempts to reconstruct a detailed account of Chandra-gupta's life.

The drama Kaumudi Mahotasva tells us that at the time of the rise of Chandra called by the Prakrit name of Chandasena in the drama, Magadha was held by an orthodox Kshatriya king named Sundaravarman. This Sundaravarman was an old person having a child of a few years of age named Kalyanavarman. The king of Magadha had adopted Chandasena as his son, most probably before the birth of his son. This fact barred the possibility of Chandasena coming to the throne of Magadha, but he regarded himself as the heir, being the elder) though a Kartika son. He contracted a marriage with a Lichchhavī princess even though the Lichchhavis are described as the
enemies of the Magadha dynasty in the same drama Kaumudi Mahotsava. Chandasena with the help of large armies of the Lichchhavis laid siege to Pataliputra. In a battle which ensued, the old king Sundravarman died and Chandasena established himself as the king of Magadha. Kalyanvarman, the young son of Sundravarman was carried away to Kshkindha hills by his faithful ministers. Chandasena was disliked by the people of Magadha as he was somewhat of a usurper and also because he had failed to adopt himself to the traditional Hindu way of government. He showed a hostile and repressive attitude towards the people of Magadha and put leading citizens into prison. The people of Magadha looked down upon him as a great tyrant and as something like a pa-tricide. Chandasena had thus several forces working against him. The citizens of Magadha raised a cry that he was not a Kshatriya; he had practically killed his aged adoptive father on the battle field; he had called in the aid of the hereditary enemies of Magadha—the Lichchhavis; he had married a lady who was neither a Magadhan nor a Brahmanical Hindu. In the end there was a revolt against him in the cause of the former ruler and as a result Chandasena was ousted and killed.

Such a story does not support the identification of Chandasena of Kaumudimahotsava with Chandra-gupta I. Fascinating as this story is, it is not at all convincing and its historical value is highly questionable. There are only two elements common to the story and what we know of Chandra-gupta I, i.e., a part of his name and his marriage with a Lichchhavi princess. There are many contradictions in the drama itself which make the identification very doubtful.

In the first place, Chandasena of the plot met with a violent death whereas there is nothing to indicate that Chandra-gupta I met with such an end.

Secondly, there is nothing to show that the drama belongs to the Gupta period and also there is reason to believe that it may actually be of a later period.

Lastly, the drama tells us that Chandra-gupta I was killed in the battlefield. This is again contrary to the Allahabad Pillar Inscription where it is recorded that he abdicated in favour of his son Samudra-gupta.

From the above it is clear that the drama is a work of pure fiction. It seems illogical and fantastic to identify Chandra-gupta I either with Chandra of the Mehrauli Pillar Inscription or with Chandasena of the drama Kaumudi Mahotsava.
Points to Remember


2. Identification rejected on three grounds (1) On the basis of extent of the empire. (2) Chandra-gupta cannot be called the 'sole sovereign of the earth.' (3) The achievements of Chandra-gupta I as given by the Mehrauli Pillar Inscription not supported by the records of Samudra-gupta.


4. Identification rejected because (1) Chandasena of the plot of the drama met with violent death but not so in the case of Chandra-gupta I. (2) the drama cannot be said to be a contemporary work. (3) contradicted by the facts, as given in the Allahabad Pillar Inscription.

Q. Discuss the significance of marriage of Chandra-gupta I with the Lichchhavi princess Kumaradevi.

Ans. Perhaps the most important event of Chandra-gupta's career was his marriage with the Lichchhavi princess Kumaradevi. According to Dr. Mookerji, the date of this marriage may roughly be taken to be 308 A.D. The union of Chandra-gupta I with the Lichchhavi family is commemorated by the issue of gold coins which bear on the obverse the standing figure of the king offering a ring to his spouse with the legend Chandra or Chandra-gupta on the right and on the left Kumaradevi or Sri Kumaradevi, and on the reverse we have the legend 'Lichchhavayah' and the goddess (perhaps Simhamalini Durga) seated on a lion. Allan believes that these coins are of medallion nature struck by Samudra-gupta in commemoration of his parents.

Significance.

This matrimonial alliance was a turning point in the history of the Guptas. It is evident from the pride with which the Lichchhavi connection is mentioned by the successors of Chandra-gupta. Even Samudragupta continued to take pride in calling himself, the son of the daughter of the Lichchhavis.

According Dr. V. A. Smith, Kumaradevi brought to her husband, as her dowry, valuable influence which in the course of a few years secured to him a paramount position in Magadha and the neighbouring countries. He further says that it seems probable that at the time of
this fateful marriage, the Lichchhavis were the masters or overlords of the ancient imperial city and that Chandra-gupta, as a consequence of this matrimonial alliance succeeded to the power previously held by his wife’s relatives. Smith asserts that it is certain that Chandra-gupta was raised by the Lichchhavi connection from the rank of a local chief, as enjoyed by his father and grandfather, to such a dignity that he felt justified in assuming the grandiloquent title of a ‘Sovereign’ on ‘Maharaja’ usually associated with the rank of a lord paramount.

Allan differs from Dr. Smith’s view that as a consequence of this matrimonial alliance Chandra-gupta I, “succeeded to the power previously held by his wife’s relatives” and that he obtained possession of Pataliputra. Allan suggests that the pride of the Guptas in their Lichchhavi blood was probably due rather to the ancient lineage of the Lichchhavis than to any material advantages gained by this alliance. Relying on the testimony of I-tsing, he says that the territories of Maharaja Gupta (Sri Gupta) must have already comprised this city. It is also doubtful that Vaisali, the Lichchhavi capital, came under Chandra-gupta I as a result of the marriage settlement, in view of the fact that in the list of the territories over which he ruled, Samudra-gupta omits Vaisali. Another important fact is that Kumaradevi appears as a joint sovereign with Chandra-gupta on the coins which is a unique instance in the history of Gupta coinage. This shows that the Lichchhavis were an independent and not subordinate ally of Chandra-gupta I. It does not seem implausible that a princess of a defeated people, whose powers were destroyed and territory annexed and married to the conqueror as a price of the treaty, should be allowed to figure as a joint sovereign with her husband on the coins, and that alliance with her people should be mentioned frequently in the epigraphs of the victorious king with such a pride and gratitude. But it can be suggested that Lichchhavis must have been of great help to Chandra-gupta in conquering the neighbouring states and to found an empire and assume the title of Maharaja.

Dr. R. C. Majumder, however, says that it is very probable that the Guptas gained politically more than socially out of this matrimonial alliance. He contends that it is not possible to depict exactly the actual position of the Lichchhavis at the beginning of the Gupta dynasty. It is, however, certain that the Lichchhavis ruled over Vaisali at the time of the Buddha but in the times of the Guptas they ruled over the valley of Nepal. Again, it is not certain whether Kumaradevi belonged to the same Lichchhavi family which ruled over Nepal or some other kingdom. There is nothing to prove that the Lichchhavis ruled at Magadha at the beginning of the Gupta rule. He concludes that most probably the Lichchhavis and the Guptas ruled over two contiguous states and the two kingdoms were united by
this matrimonial alliance which enhanced the power and prestige of the new kingdom.

Dr. Banerji holds that Chandra-gupta strengthened his position by the Lichchhavi alliance and was able either to drive out the Scythian Satrap of Magadha or to overthrow the loose allegiance of the chiefs of Magadha to the later Kushans of Mathura or the Punjab.

Dr. R. N. Dandekar has surmised that Pataliputra was not held by the Guptas at the time of Chandra-gupta's accession to the throne but it was with the help of the Lichchhavis that Chandra-gupta defeated the Maukharis king of Pataliputra and established himself there.

Conclusion.

So much emphasis has been laid on the Lichchhavi alliance by Samudragupta that there can hardly be any doubt about its importance. There is little doubt that the Gupta power gained considerably in strength and prestige by the union.

Points to Remember

1. Most important event of Chandra-gupta's career; matrimonial alliance took place probably in 308 A. D., commemorated by the issue of coins in the joint name of Chandra-gupta and Kumaradevi.

2. Successors of Chandra-gupta took pride in the alliance; continuously referred to it in the Gupta inscriptions.

3. Dr. Smith says Chandra-gupta received Pataliputra and other dominions of the Lichchhavis from this alliance and rose to the rank of Lord Paramount.

4. Allan differs from Smith; Guptas gained more socially than politically; Guptas did not acquire Pataliputra from the Lichchhavis; were independent allies of the Guptas.

5. R. C. Majumdar says that Guptas gained politically more than socially; No evidence available about the extent of kingdom of the Lichchhavis; most plausible that Lichchhavis and Guptas ruled over wo adjoining states and territories united because of the matrimonial alliance.


7. Dandekar's view: Guptas captured Pataliputra from the Maukharis with the help of the Lichchhavis.

8. Conclusion: Importance cannot be denied, the alliance added to the power and prestige of the Guptas.
Q. 1. Discuss the extent of the empire of Chandra-gupta I.

Q. 2. What light do the Puranas throw on the extent of the empire of Chandra-gupta I? How far do you regard the Puranic testimony as reliable?

Ans. Chandra-gupta I is regarded as the founder of the Gupta empire. He assumed the lofty title of Maharaja-dhiraja, ‘the king of kings’ which indicates that he ruled over a large territory. However, we do not have any record or inscription which may give us the details of his conquests and the extent of his territory. On the basis of some contemporary accounts, different writers have attempted to reconstruct the extent of his empire. All these suggestions are, however, controversial.

The Evidence of Puranaic accounts.

A well known passage from the Vayu Purana gives the following description of the extent of the Gupta Empire.

Anu-Ganga Prayagam cha Saketam Magadhams tatha
Etan janapadan shrvan bhokshyante Gupta-vamsajah

Pargiter translates it as follows:

“Kings born of the Gupta race will enjoy these territories, namely, along the Ganges, Prayaga, Saketa, and the Magadha”.

Allan is of the view that the above description of the Gupta empire refers to the reign of Chandra-gupta I. It is evident that the Gupta empire then consisted of Allahabad, Oudh and South Bihar, an empire sufficiently large to justify the claim of Chandra-gupta I as Maharaja-dhiraja. Dr. Mookerji also supports this view on the ground that the description of Gupta dominions as given above applies to what it was before Samudra-gupta had achieved his conquests as a result of which he established his paramount authority over a large part of the country. The above passage may, therefore, be taken to describe the extent of the Gupta territory under Chandragupta I.

Dr. R. C. Majumdar, however, differs from the above view. He holds that there are several discrepancies in the passage which render it difficult to accept that the passage indicates specifically the conquests made by Chandra-gupta I. It may equally well apply to the kingdom of Samudra-gupta at a certain stage of his victorious career. Again, he suggests that, “the expression ‘Anu Ganga’ (along the Ganges) is somewhat vague and may be connected with the next word (in the passage) to mean all territories along the Ganges
from its mouth to Prayaga". Besides, the other Puranic texts substitute 'Gupta Guhya', 'Sapta' or 'Mandhanyakajah' for 'Gupta-vamsajah of the Vayu Purana. R. C. Majumdar concludes that considering the various difficulties of interpretation and uncertainties in the text, we cannot assign much importance to the Puranic passage for deducing the extent of the territory ruled over by Chandra-gupta I.

Evidence of Kaumudi Mahotsava.

On the evidence of Kaumudi Mahotsava, a contemporary drama, Dr. Jayaswal comes to the conclusion that Chandra-gupta I acquired the kingdom of Magadha from Sundravarman of Pataliputra. He holds that the Chandasena of the play may be identified with Chandra-gupta I whose marriage with the Lichchhavi princess had helped him to occupy the throne of Magadha. The Lichchhavi alliance is the only point common between Chandasena of the drama and Chandra-gupta I. Other accounts given in the drama have no historical value. The drama condemns Chandasena as a usurper and depicts him as of low caste whom the people of Magadha could not tolerate and whom they drove in exile. The story of the drama must, therefore, be rejected as a work of pure fiction.

Views of some scholars.

Dr. R. D. Banerji has even attributed the conquest of the region of Magadha to Chandra-gupta I. He suggests that he drove out the Scythians from Magadha and liberated it after a great fight. There is, however, absolutely no reliable evidence to show that Chandra-gupta I even fought against the Scythians.

On the basis of the numismatic evidence and some written records, Dr. V. A. Smith has tried to prove that Chandra-gupta and his predecessors enjoyed only a subordinate position before his matrimonial alliance with the Lichchhavis. Chandra-gupta's marriage with Kumaradevi, the Lichchhavi princess brought to him as dowry the kingdom of Magadha. He later extended his dominions along the Gangetic valley as far as the junction of the Ganges and the Jumna. His territories included Trihut, South Bihar and Oudh and certain adjoining districts.

Dr. Raychaudhuri opines that Sri-gupta and Ghatotkacha ruled over Magadha and Chandra-gupta annexed to this state the territories of Prayaga and Saketa. This view is supported on the ground that the Allahabad Pillar Inscription does not mention the conquest of regions extending from Allahabad in the west to the Ganges in the east. On the other hand, it gives the minutest details of territories
and states of north which were subdued by Samudra-gupta.

**Conclusion.**

From the above, we may conclude that it is not easy to settle the extent of the Gupta kingdom in the times of Chandrî-gupta I. But as a working hypothesis, we may suggest that his dominions included the greater part of Bihar and very probably a portion of the Uttar Pradesh on the west and Bengal on the east.

**Points to Remember**

1. No detailed account of Chandrî-gupta’s conquests is available; all the assumptions about the extent of his empire are controversial.


3. Dr. Jayaswal relying on the evidence of the Kaumudi Mahotsava holds Chandrî-gupta conquered Magadha; the story of the drama a work of pure fiction hence cannot be relied upon.

4. R. D. Banerji holds Chandrî-gupta conquered Magadha from the Scythians, no reliable evidence available in support of his assumption.

5. V. A. Smith writes Chandrî-gupta I acquired Magadha as a result of his marriage with Kumuradevi, later conquered Tripura, South Bihar, and Oudh and the adjoining territories.

6. Raychaudhuri holds Sri-gupta and Ghatotkacha ruled over Magadha, Chandrî-gupta added Pa-ya-ga and Saketa.

**Conclusion:** Not easy to settle the extent of the Gupta empire under Chandrî-gupta I.

Q. Discuss critically the Gupta era. How far do you agree with the view of Dr. Fleet that gupta era commenced in 319-20 A.D.?

Ans. Chandrî-gupta I is generally credited with the foundation of a new era called the Gupta Era. Dr. Fleet, after a critical examination of several theories regarding this era came to the conclusion that the initial year of this era may be placed at 319-20 A.D. and that this era began with the assumption of an independent status by Chandrî-gupta I. Dr. V. A. Smith hailed his theory as a great step towards the settlement of the controversy which had so far been
bewildering and confusing to the students of ancient Indian history. He observed that “A great step in adavance was gained by Fleet’s determination of the Gupta era, which had been the subject of much conjecture. His demonstration that the year I of that era is A.D. 319-20 fixes the chronological position of a most important dynasty and reduced chaos to order.”

Dr. Fleet opines that the Gupta era was in vogue among the Lichchhavis and was adopted by Chandra-gupta I after his marriage with Kumaradevi. It gained real significance under Chandra-gupta I and he is, therefore, known as its founder. Fleet based his view point on the statement of Alberuni viz., “the Gupta era was separated from the Saka era by an interval of 241 years,” Rapson and Chaudhari have proved beyond doubt that the Saka era began in 78 A.D. It, therefore, means that the era began in 320 A.D. According to Dr. Bhandarkar, “the evidence in favour of Alberuni’s initial date for the Gupta era appears to be simply overwhelming.”

Views of other writers.

Fleet’s theory, although based on facts and figures has been challenged by various writers. Dr. Shama Sastri holds that the first year of the Gupta era was 200-201 A.D. Shri Govind Pai suggests that this era began in 272-273 A.D. Dr. D. N. Mukherji tries to equate it with the Vikramai Samvat of 58 B.C. on several astronomical grounds and Mr. Sundarwarman holds that the Gupta era started in 284-85 A.D. The views of these writers are generally based on flimsy traditions rather than on definite epigraphic traditions. They do not find any support either from the modern scholars or the contemporary records and stand self-contradicted when judged on the basis of different events of the Gupta period or of epigraphic records.

Evidence in Favour of Fleet’s Theory

It is not only the statement of Alberuni on which we can base this conclusion. It can also be proved on the basis of several other contemporary dates of the Saka and Gupta era and by positive epigraphical evidence in favour of fixing the date of the Gupta era at 319-20 A.D.

1. Mandasor Inscription of Kumara-gupta I

The Mandasor inscription of Kumara-gupta and Bandhuvarman is dated 493 Malva era which corresponds to 436 A.D. The earliest year of the rule of Kumara-gupta which the historians have so far come across is 96th year of the Gupta era. Similarly the last known date of this ruler is 136 Gupta era on the basis of the Bilsad Inscription and
a silver coin. Dr. Fleet holds that Kumara-gupta ruled from 414 to 455 A.D. If we accept Fleet’s assumption, the Mandasor Inscription of 436 A.D. would fall within his reign. In case we accept the view point of Govind Pal or Shama Sastri and make calculation on that basis, the date of Kumara-gupta does not tally with the dates in the Mandasor Inscription.

2. Svami Rudrasimha’s coins

Fleet’s theory may also be supported on the basis of coins of Svami Rudrasimha III, who is presumed to be a contemporary of Samudra-gupta. The coins of Svami Rudrasimha III show that his coinage ended in 274 year of the Saka era which corresponds to 352 A.D. when the power of Samudra-gupta was at its heights and he could be accredited with the conquest of this Kashatrapa kingdom, the period of reign of Samudra-gupta being 330 to 375 A.D.

3. The Ganjam Plates of Sasanka

There is no doubt that king Sasanka was a contemporary of Harsha who ruled from 606 to 647 A.D. The year of the Gupta era recorded in the Ganjam plates is 300 which according to Dr. Fleet’s theory corresponds to 619-20 A.D. and thus falls within the reign of Harsha. This synchronism also firmly supports the assumption of Fleet that the Gupta era commenced in 319-320 A.D.

4. The evidence from Chandra-gupta II

Chandra-gupta II ruled from about 375 A.D. to 414 A.D. It is certain that immediately after his accession he extinguished the Saka power. The last known date of the Saka dynasty is the year 304 of Saka era which corresponds to 382 A.D., while that of Chandra-gupta II is 93rd year of Gupta era which comes to 413 A.D. It is only by the fixation of the year 319-20 A.D. as the beginning of the Gupta era and 78 A.D. as the beginning of the Saka era that these two phases of Gupta and Saka history can be reconciled and brought together in time.

5. The Tezpur Rock Inscription of Hastivarman

Further epigraphical corroboration of Fleet’s theory comes from the Tezpur rock inscription of Hastivarman which is dated year 510 of the Gupta era. In the succession list of the Kamarupa kings, Hastivarman was ninth in line from Salasthaba whose date as known from other sources is 658 A.D. The date of Hastivarman comes to 830 A.D. according to Fleet’s theory. It corresponds well with the date which the succession list would give.
In the light of the above facts and considerations, we may suggest as a working hypothesis, that the first year of the Gupta era was 319-320 A.D. Owing to the paucity of any positive dates it is not possible to decide finally what particular event marked the commencement of this era. It is most probable that this era was counted from the date of accession of Chandra-gupta I. The earliest dates in the Gupta era are found in the inscriptions of Chandra-gupta II. Most of the dates on the coins of the Gupta emperors are recorded in this era and after the fall of the Gupta empire, this era was used in Assam till 829 and in Kathiawar till 1364 A.D. The Bhatarka dynasty in Kathiawar continued to use this era till the reign of their last king Siladitya in 766 A.D. The capital of this dynasty was Valabhi near Bhavnagar. From their capital the dynasty came to be known as the kingdom of Valabhi and the era of the Guptas as the era of Valabhi. The modern scholars thus gave it the name of Gupta Valabhi era.

**Points to Remember**

1. Most acceptable theory that Gupta era began in 319-20 A.D. Fleet's determination.

2. Gupta era separated from Saka era by 241 years as stated by Alberuni; the Saka era began in 78 A.D. the Gupta era thus began in 320 A.D.

3. Fleet's view challenged by Shama Sastri, Shri Govind Pai and D. N. Mulkgorji. The views of these writers based on flimsy tradition and are, therefore, untenable.

4. Fleet's theory supported by certain other records.
   1. The Mandasor Inscription of Kumara-gupta.
   2. Svami Rudrasisimha's coins.
   3. The Ganjam Plates of Sasanka.
   4. The evidence from the records of Chandra-gupta and Saka satraps.
   5. The Tezpur Rock Inscription of Hastivarman.

5. Conclusion:- Gupta era commenced in 319-320 A.D.; the Gupta era taken over by other dynasties, later known as Valabhi Gupta era.
CHAPTER IV.

Samudra-gupta Parakramanka

[335—380 A. D. ?]

Introduction.

Samudra-gupta, the son and successor of Chandra-gupta I, is regarded as one of the most powerful and accomplished rulers of ancient India and the epitome of the Gupta empire—an abridged edition of the glory of the Gupta period. Under his reign, the Gupta empire was firmly established and attained a supremacy equal to that which the Mauryas had exercised before. In striking contrast to Ashoka, the apostle of peace and nonviolence, Samudra-gupta stood for the principle of war and aggression. The one had a contempt for conquests, the other had a passion for them. Samudra-gupta was from the very first fired by the time honoured ideal of a Chakravartin and early in his reign, he embarked upon an elaborate programme of conquest in different directions which has made Dr. Smith give him the title of an Indian Napoleon.

Date.

According to Dr. R. K. Mookerji, if 308 A. D. is taken as the year of marriage of Chandra-gupta with the Lichchhavi princess Kumadevi, the date of birth of Samudra-gupta may be taken as 310 A. D. If we assume that his age at the time of his accession was 25 years, Samudra-gupta could be said to have ascended the throne sometime in 335 A. D. Dr. R. C. Majumder suggests that Samudra-gupta came to the throne sometime between 340 A. D. and 350 A. D. But if we accept the evidence of the Nalanda Plate, Samudra-gupta must have been ruling in 325 A. D., as it states that he ascended the throne before the fifth year of the Gupta era. Some historian hold that the Gupta era commenced with the accession of Samudra-gupta to the throne and if we accept their view, he must have ascended the throne in 320 A. D.

2. Review the information available from the Allahabad Pillar Inscription of Samudra-gupta about his (1) early life (2) education (3) personal accomplishments (4) accession (5) military exploits and (6) conquests.

Ans. The Allahabad Pillar Inscription is one of the most outstanding documents in the annals of ancient India. This magnificent inscription is the first of a series of numerous interesting epigraphic records whose discovery has helped the scholars to reconstruct the history not only of Samudra-gupta but also of the whole Gupta dynasty. This long panegyric of 33 lines was composed by Harisena who combined in himself various important offices of the state. It is engraved on a round monolith sandstone column, 25 feet in height originally erected at Kausambi. The pillar stands at present in the fort at Allahabad. The inscription is engraved on the very same pillar on which the Great Asoka centuries before had his message of peace and piety carved. Dr. B. G. Gokhale writes that “the difference between the two inscriptions on the same pillar separated by the passage of centuries not only pertains to their contents and their spirit but also applies in an equally striking manner, to the language too. Asoka’s inscription is in Prakrit which has a folksy tone and a racy rhythm; Samudra-gupta’s inscription is in classical Sanskrit with its own elegance and mellifluous, cultivated grace and learned tones. The two inscriptions reveal two aspects of Indian history. One concerns the unceasing pursuit of moral grandeur while the other looks at us through its face of war and conquest”.

Date

The inscription is undated. According to Dr. Fleet, the Pillar was inscribed upon after the death of Samudra-gupta. But Dr. Fleet’s assumption is based on misrepresentation of a clause in the inscription. The view that the inscription is posthumous has been disproved. Dr. Buhler holds that the pillar must have been inscribed upon before Samudra-gupta had performed the Asvamedha ceremony, otherwise a mention of such a significant event of his reign would have certainly been made therein. Keeping in view the above facts we can well presume that it must be dated in the interval between Samudra-gupta’s return from the South and the celebration of the horse sacrifice. V. A. Smith suggests that it may be assigned with approximate accuracy to the year 360 A. D. or a little later.
Nature of its contents.

The inscription is absolutely non-sectarian and purely historical in nature. It is a panegyric in Sanskrit composed by Harisena, the poet laureate of Samudra-gupta, written half in prose and half in verse. In the metrical portion, the author follows the Vaidarbhi style characterised by a lucidity of expression and absence of long compounds. In the prose portion, however, we find extremely long compounds, one of them running into 120 syllables. The writer seems to be a poet of uncommon merit as is indicated by the excellence of style and language of the prasthiti. The inscription bears clear evidence of perfection of the Kavya style and is a fine example of classical Sanskrit literature. Some of its verses are as grand as those of Kalidasa.

Historical value of the Inscription.

The inscription engraved on the Allahabad Pillar is undeniably the most precious one in the whole Gupta series of records. It is mainly devoted to the lineage, the conquest and glory of Samudra-gupta and it is upon this single record that the fame of the real founder of the Gupta empire rests. Dr. V. A. Smith writes, “the record composed by his poet laureate survives to-day practically complete and furnishes a detailed contemporary account of the events of the reign, probably superior to any thing else of the kind in the multitude of Indian inscriptions. There is little doubt about its contents being genuine and it appears to be a faithful summarised record of Samudra-gupta’s career and achievements. The account given by this famous inscription is sufficiently corroborated by the Puranas, and other literary and numismatic sources. It would not be too much to say that for the construction of history of the reign of Samudra-gupta, if there was a case when the testimony of a single inscription unsupported by other evidences should be accepted as a sufficient proof, it is the case with the Allahabad Pillar Inscription.

I. The Inscription gives valuable information about Samudra-gupta’s life.

The inscription gives us a very useful knowledge about the career and achievements of Samudra-gupta, one of the great emperors of ancient India. It familiarises us with the traits of his character, his education, his nomination, personal accomplishments and the military conquests which may be studied as under:-

(i) Early life, education and personal accomplishments of Samudra-gupta as recorded in the Allahabad Inscription.

The first eight stanzas of the inscription refer to the early education of Samudra-gupta and his preparation for the future exalted position, which he was destined to fill. The first two stanzas have
From the above account of his conquests we can ascertain the extent of his empire. It extended up to Brahmaputra in the east, the Himalayas in the north, Chambal in the west and Narmada in the south.

(iv) Account of relations of Samudra-gupta with other foreign powers.

Lines 23 and 24 of the inscription record the names of certain foreign potentates who submitted to his suzerainty and purchased peace by acts of homage such as the bringing of presents of maidens and prayers for the charters stamped with the Garuda seal. The foreign powers which rendered such homage to Samudra-gupta were: Daivaputras, Sahis, Sahanushahis, Sakas and Murundas. Similarly people of Simhala and other islands made submission to him. It is not clear what “all other dwellers in the island” definitely implies.

(v) Description of his qualities as a great warrior.

The inscription records that Samudra-gupta achieved all these victories by his prowess and fighting in the front line as a soldier. He was a fearless fighter, “dextrous in waging hundreds of various kinds of battles with the only strength of the prowess of his arms. The beauty of his charming body was enhanced by scars of various kinds caused by different weapons of war such as the blows of battle axcs, arrows, spears, pikes, barbed darts, swords, lances, javelins, iron arrows, scimitars (vaitastika) and many other weapons.” His qualities as a great warrior have also been corroborated by the Eran Stone Inscription and his coins.

II. An account of the political Condition of India.

The Allahabad Pillar Inscription gives a valuable account of the political geography of India in the first half of the 4th century A.D. It records the names of the ruling princes of various states in Northern India. Most of these states have been identified. Again, it also gives us information that there were many republics thriving in the west of the country such as Malavas, Arjunayanas, Yaudheyas, Madarakas, Abhiras, Prarjunas, Sanakanikas and Kharaparikas. It is also evident from the inscription that Lichchhavis must have been a very important and powerful tribe before the rise of Chandra-gupta I because Samudra-gupta took pride in mentioning himself as “Lichchhavi dāhuitra.” It gives names of the various monarchical states flourishing in the east such as the kingdoms of Samatata, Nepal, Devaka and Kartripura. The inscription also gives the names of various monarchical states in the south such as Kōsala, Mahakantara, Pītapura, and Kottura. The
inscription also indicates that the Naga kingdoms were very powerful as Samudra-gupta had to lead a second campaign against the three Naga states whom he had defeated before the conquest of the South. Thus we find that the inscription furnishes a very useful knowledge about the political condition of India.

III. Information about the Gupta kings who ruled before Samudra-gupta.

Line 28 of the inscription not only enumerates the ancestors of Samudra-gupta but also clearly indicates their position as rulers. This passage has greatly helped in solving the controversy about the ancestors of Samudra-gupta and their status. The study of this stanza clearly indicates that Sri-gupta and Ghatotkacha, the great grand father and the grand-father respectively of Samudra-gupta were not powerful kings as they are referred to only as Maharajas. Chandragupta I was the first of the Imperial Guptas who took up the grandiloquent title of Maharaja and was an independent ruler.

Conclusion.

The Inscription with all its merits suffers from some serious drawbacks. In the first places, the Inscription is broken in several important places and thus fails to provide a connected and a clear account of Samudra-gupta’s early career. Again, the account given by Hafisena about the qualities of Samudra-gupta seems to be too exaggerated and dramatic at certain places. But with all these defects, the Allahabad Pillar Inscription stands out as one of the most magnificent and illuminating inscriptions of ancient India. The discovery of the inscription, has brought a great king of ancient India from complete oblivion into light. Without the discovery of this inscription our knowledge about Samudra-gupta would have been very limited.

Points to Remember

1. The Allahabad Pillar Inscription is an outstanding document of ancient Indian history; inscribed on the same pillar on which Asoka’s message of peace and piety carved. The same pillar bears inscriptions of two great emperors who had quite opposite ideals.

2. Date t—Fleet considers the inscription posthumous; this view disproved; may be dated in the interval between Samudra-gupta’s return from the South and the performance of Asivamedha ceremony.
virtually disappeared. The fifth line records that his, "mental dis-
position was always to mix up with the learned people and to remain
the supporter of the real truth of scriptures firmly fixed (in the tenets)
......By the aegis and inspiration imbibed from the collective wisdom
of his learned men, he still shines as a luminary of meridian splendour
in the firmament of the wise by much of poetry (of excellence) and
clear meaning". It is evident that Samudra-gupta kept company with
the learned men and must have received education from them. He
had a deep knowledge of the Shastras and patronised men of letters.
He enjoyed a very high position in the literary circles and attracted
the literary masters from all over the country to his imperial court.
As regards his personal accomplishments the inscription states that
he was a versatile genius. The inscription describes him as, "a prince
of poets 'Kaviraja' which shows that he was not a poet of mean merit.
Besides, he cultivated the sister art of music. The inscription records
that" he put to shame the preceptor of the lord of the gods(i.e.
Brihaspati) by his sharp and polished intellect and Rumburu and Narada
by lovely performance of music". Harishena, his poet laureate records
in the inscription, 'his many wonderful and noble deeds are worthy to
be praised for a very long time'.

(ii) Account of Samudra-gupta's succession as given by the
Inscription.

The fourth stanza of the inscription records] that Samudra-gupta
was one of the younger sons of Chandra-gupta I. Being endowed
with marked abilities and being best fitted for the throne, Chandra-
gupta I appointed him as the heir apparent to the throne, with the
blessings 'Rule over the whole world.' The inscription refers to the
fact that Samudra-gupta was selected by his father in the open court
with all the courtiers being present. The declaration found favour
with some of the courtiers who were enthusiastic in their admiration
of the young prince. But his kinsmen (others of equal birth) were
jealous of the entire procedure and looked pale and melancholy
through the rejection of themselves. The next two stanzas of the
inscription are broken at several important places may be referring to
the ill-will and uprising on the part of Samudra-gupta's brother-led
by Kacha. Samudra-gupta probably defeated his kinsmen by the
prowess of his arms in the battle. They were probably pardoned,
for the subsequent line of the inscription shows that their minds being
filled with gladness and affection, expressed their repentance for
their folly.

(iii) Account of Samudra-gupta's military conquests as
stated in the inscription.

The Allahabad Pillar inscription tells us that Samudra-gupta
followed a remarkably ambitious programme of military conquests. Lines 7, 8, 13, 19, 21 and 23 give details of his military exploits which resulted in a considerable expansion of his empire. Line 13 of the inscription states that he “uprooted” three kings of Aryavarta namely Achyuta, Nagasena and a prince of the family of the Kotas. These three names again occur in Line 23 of the inscription in the list of kings who were violently exterminated in a battle after his southern campaigns.

Lines 19 and 20 describe Samudra-gupta’s campaigns into the South. He conquered and liberated 12 kings of the “Dakshanpath” or South viz; Mohendra of Kosala; Vyaghraja of Mahakantara; Mahendra of Pishapura; Svamidatta of Kottura, Mantaraja of Kaurala, Hastivarman of Vendi; Vishnugopa of Kanchi; Ugrasena of Palakka; Damana of Erandapalla; Nilaraja of Avamukta; Kubera of Devarashtra; Dhananjaya of Kusthalapura and other kings.” The situation of the territories of almost all these kings have been identified.

Line 21 of the inscription records that he “violently exterminated” the following kings of Aryavarta Uttarapatha or the North which were lying close to his kingdom. They were Rudradeva, Mattila, Nagadatta, Chandravarman, Ganapatinaga, Nagasena, Achyuta, Nadin. Balavarman and many others. The exact position of the territories of these kings has not yet been located. The capital of Ganapatinaga only has been satisfactorily identified with Padmavati or Narwar, a city still existing in the Gwalior state. He reduced to the condition of servitude all the kings of the “forest countries” Dr. Fleet supposes that the forest regions were in Central India.

Line 22 of the inscription gives a list of five frontier countries in the east who agreed to pay taxes, to render obedience to him, and to pay their homage to him at his command. These were the kingdoms of Samatata (the delta of the Ganges and Brahmaputra), Kamarupa (Assam), Nepal, Davaka (North Bengal), Katripura (probably Kumaon, Almora, Garhwal and Kangra) and Nepal. Line 22 also describes that he received submission of states in the west which were not kingdoms but republics of the people called “Malavas, Arjunayanas, Yaudheyas, Madrakas, Abhiras, Prarjunas, Sanakanikas and others.”

The Inscription shows that his conquests were necessarily of three different types, i. e. (1) kings who were killed and whose dominions were annexed to his empire (2) kings who were defeated, taken prisoners and then liberated and reinstated as his feudatories (3) the frontier kingdoms and republics who offered submission and personal homage to the emperor in anticipation of his attack.
3. Nature of contents:—absolutely non sectarian, purely historical in nature, partly in prose and partly in verse, language and style of the inscription excellent.

4. Historical importance:—most authentic record, appears to be a fairly faithful summarised record of Samudra-gupta’s achievements.

I. The inscription gives an account of early life, education, and personal accomplishments of Samudra-gupta; was fond of the company of scholars, himself a poet and a musician; (i) gives account of his military conquests in the north, south, east and west of India; Conquests of three types. (iii) gives account of his relations with the foreign states (iv) describes his qualities as a great warrior.

II. The inscription gives an account of political condition of India in the first half of the 4th century A.D.; gives names of monarchical and republican states; tells that Nagas were powerful; shows the importance of the Lichchhavis in the time of Chandra-gupta I.

III. The inscription gives genealogical list of the Gupta kings before Samudra-gupta and the position and status of the first three Gupta kings.

5. Defects: record incomplete, too dramatic and exaggerated account at various places.

6. To sum up, it is the most illuminating record of ancient Indian history; has greatly helped in reconstructing the history of Samudra-gupta.

Q. Discuss the main coin types of Samudra-gupta. How far was his coinage influenced by the Kushan prototype?

Ans. The reign of Samudra-gupta occupies an important place in the history of coinage in ancient India. He was probably the first Gupta ruler to issue coins in such abundance. On account of the large variety of his coin type, he may properly be regarded as the pioneer of Hindu coinage. In the words of R.D. Banerji, “the credit of the reforms in the currency of Northern India belongs to Samudra-gupta like the currency reforms of Farid-ud-Din Ilah Shah” During Samudra-gupta’s reign several new types of coins were introduced and the art of coinage was fully Indianised in types and motifs. His coin types may be studied as under:
1. Standard Type.

The Standard Type of coins was perhaps the first and the commonest type introduced by Samudra-gupta. These coins closely resemble the later Kushan prototype. In this type of coin, on the obverse the king is seen standing in front of an altar, wearing trousers, a coat and a close-fitting cap. In front of the emperor is the celebrated standard of the Gupta empire, Garuda-dhvaja, the standard surmounted by Garuda, which is the emblem of Vishnu who was the tutelary deity of the Guptas. The king's name is written vertically. Surrounding the king's figure is the legend, “the conqueror of unconquered fortresses of his enemies, whose victory was spread in hundreds of battles, conquers heaven.” On the reverse, we find a goddess seated on the throne, holding cornucopia in her left arm and a fillet in outstretched right hand. The goddess in these coins is probably Laxmi.

Dr. Smith suggests that the object in the left hand of the king is Javelin. He, therefore, calls the Standard Type as Javelin Type. Dr. P. L. Gupta and D. C. Chhabra hold that it is neither a standard nor a javelin but a Rajdhana. So they name this type as Rajdhana type.

The Standard type coins are of different sizes and weights. According to Allan the variations of 1 to 6 grams in well preserved specimens of the same type of Samudra-gupta’s coins may be due to variations of the standard in different districts but it also probably shows that little effort was made to strike coins of a uniform standard and that these were considered as medals rather than coins.

A comparison of the features of the Kushan coins with Standard type shows that they agree except in regard to the following: (1) the Kushan peak head-dress is displaced by a close-fitting cap, (2) the trident on the left in the Kushan coins gives place to Garuda standard, (3) the jewellery worn by the king is essentially Indian. But the following Kushan features are still retained (a) the Guptan king is given a Kushan dress (b) his name is written vertically (c) the standard is bound with a fillet as on the Kushan coins (d) the halo round the king's head is also of the Kushan style (e) the offering which Samudra-gupta is seen making at the altar seems to be a copy of similar scenes on the coins of the later Kushan kings.

2. Archer Type.

This type of coins indicates Samudra-gupta's proficiency in the art of archery. These coins seem to be based on the design of the Standard type. The Archer type of coins have been discovered in the eastern parts of the empire at Jaunpur, Bodh Gaya, Bayana and in the Benaras district. The obverse shows the king with a bow in
his left hand and an arrow in his right hand and a Garuda standard on the left. The legend on the obverse is, "After the conquest of the earth, he conquers heaven by his good deeds." The reverse shows the goddess Laxmi seated as on a Standard type coin. A large number of coins of this type were also issued in the times of Chandra-gupta II and it was most probably a very popular type during his time.

3. Tiger Type.

It is a very rare type of his coins and only 6 examples have so far been discovered. This type probably refers to his love for hunting. The obverse shows the king wearing a waistcloth, trampling upon a tiger which falls backwards as he shoots it with bow. The reverse shows the goddess Ganges standing on her Vahana, a Marka (crocodile), holding a fullblown lotus in her left hand. Dr. Raychaudhri suggests that the tiger and the river goddess on the coins may indicate that the sway of Samudra-gupta spread from the Ganges valley to the realm of the Tiger King in Mahakantra.

4. Battle-axe Type.

The Battle-axe type probably refers to Samudra-gupta's martial personality and proclaims the triumphant march of his army. About 23 coins of this type have been discovered at Kanauj, Benaras and Bayana. On the obverse we find the king standing wearing close-fitting cap and holding a battle-axe in his left hand. The goddess Laxmi appears to be seated upon a throne. The legend is, "the holder of the battle-axe, the weapon of the invincible god of death (yama), the unconquered conqueror of unconquered kings achieves victory." He is likened to Yama the god of death, whose power is irresistible. This type of coins were issued by Samudra-gupta to celebrate his conquests in various directions, proving the invincible might of his arms and justifying his title as "the unconquered conqueror of the unconquered kings." It is evident that this type of coins was struck in the later period of his reign.

5. Lyrist Type.

The Lyrist type of coins of Samudra-gupta exhibits his proficiency in fine arts and music. In this type, on the obverse, the emperor is seated on a high-backed couch cross-legged, playing on the lyre (Vina). The legend on this type of coin only gives his name without reference to his martial exploits. On the reverse, we come across the figure of the goddess seated on a wicker stool to the left and the name of the king is inscribed in a vertical line to the right. Samudra-gupta's unique achievement in the art of music depicted in his coins is confir-
med by the Allahabad Pillar Inscription where he is compared to Narada and Tumburu which suggest the musical accomplishments of Samudra-gupta.

6. Asvamedha Type.

Samudra-gupta issued Asvamedha type of coins to commemorate the special occasion of Asvamedha sacrifice which he performed with great splendour after his campaigns in the north and south. These coins confirm his claim as a great champion of the Vedic religion and Brahmanism and his belief in the performance of sacrifices as a means of winning heaven. These coins also bear testimony to his supremacy over other rulers and the proud fulfilment of his ambitious career of conquest. We do not find the name of Samudra-gupta on any coins of this type but these have been attributed to him solely on the ground of their average weight and the legend Asvamedha Parakramah. The Asvamedha type of coins contains on the obverse a figure of a horse to be sacrificed before an altar (Yupa) and the long circular legend "the Maharaja of irresistible valour having conquered the earth now wins heaven" (i.e. by sacrifice etc). The reverse of the coin shows the figure of the chief queen (Mahishi) assigned an important part in the sacrifice and the legend is Asvamedha-parkramah, "he whose valour has been established by the Asvamedha." These coins were issued to be distributed as gifts among the Brahmins who attended and took part in the sacrifice. This type of coins is very rare and only 48 specimens of this type have been found at places between Patna and Saharanpur.

Writers like Allan, R. D. Banerji and R. K. Mookerji attribute the issuing of coins of Chandra-gupta I and Kacha types also to Samudra-gupta.

7. Chandra-gupta Type.

According to Allan, Chandra-gupta coins cannot be attributed to Chandra-gupta I but were issued by Samudra-gupta. He points out that had Chandra-gupta I issued these coins they should have been like Standard type of coins of Samudra-gupta. The Chandra-gupta type coins are more Indianised than the Standard type coins of Samudra-gupta. The Chandra-gupta coins show on the obverse Chandra-gupta standing, wearing a close-fitting cap, trousers and a head-dress, ear-rings, armlets, holding in the left hand a crescent-topped standard with fillet and offering a ring to his wife Kumara-devi who stands on the left, wearing a loose robe, ear rings, and a tight fitting head-dress and the legend Chandra or Chandra-gupta and Sri Kumara-devi or Kumara-devi Srij. The reverse shows goddess (most probably Durga) seated on a lion couchant, her feet resting on lotus. The legend on the reverse is 'Lichchhavayah'. The significance
of this legend according to Dr. Mookerji can be best understood in the light of the appellation Lichchhavi-daughter assumed by Samudra-gupta in the Allahabad Pillar Inscription showing thereby his pride in his mother’s descent from the Lichchhavis."

8. Kacha Type.

The Kacha coins or memorial medals were issued in the name of Kacha probably by Samudra-gupta. These coins resemble the Standard and Archer types of coins of Samudra-gupta. The Kacha type bears on the obverse the king standing, wearing close fitting cap, holding standard surmounted by wheel in one hand and sprinkling incense on the altar with the other hand. The name Kacha is written in a vertical line. The legend is Kacha after conquering the earth, conquers heaven by means of good deeds." The reverse shows the goddess (Laxmi) standing, wearing loose robe, holding a flower in one hand and cornucopia in the arm. The legend on the reverse is, ‘exterminator of all kings.’

Estimate of his coinage.

(a) His early coinage shows a great influence of the later Kushan coinage.

The earliest type of Samudra-gupta’s coins viz., Standard type Archer type, the Battle axe type and Kacha type follow the standard of the later Kushan prototype from which they borrow the following features viz., (a) the king’s name is written vertically, the custom which was to survive till the end of the dynasty (b) retaining the meaningless traces of the back of the throne on the reverse in imitation of the Kushan coinage (c) giving the king the Kushan dress with slight variations.

(b) Samudra-gupta’s later coinage depicts originality and independence in execution.

In the later period of his reign, Samudra-gupta issued other types of coins which show his originality and independence of Kushan models. There is hardly any trace of Kushan influence in the king’s attitude or dress both on the Tiger and the Lyrist types. On some specimens the Kushan peacked head-dress gives place to a tight-fitting cap, but on some others he is bare headed. On the reverse of these coins, the goddess Laxmi is seen in her indigenous form and not like Ardoochho in the Kushan coins. The art of coinage seems to have progressed much during his reign which is revealed by the execution of coins and the mastery acquired by the Gupta artists.
(c) His Coins shows Progressive Indianisation of coinage during his reign.

The progressive Indianisation of coinage during the reign of Samudra-gupta is evident from its relevant features and marks. The Jewellery put on both by the king and the queen is Indian. On the Tiger and the Lyrist types of coins, the king is shown putting on the Indian Dhoti or waist cloth. In place of Ardoochcho, Indian goddesses such as Durga, Laxmi, Sarasvati and Ganga are introduced. On some coins, we find the figure of Garuda, the vehicle of Vishnu, surmounting the standard. The Indian weapons of war and hunting such as bow and arrow (Archer Type), sword and battle-axe (on the battle axe type) take the place of the Kushan standard, the arrow replacing the Kushan altar. The Asvamedha coins are purely Indian and are quite original in conception. There is also a great poetic and artistic originality which is evident in the use of birudas or titles which are composed in classical Sanskrit. Most of the legends on the obverse of his coins seem to have been picked up from the Allahabad Pillar Inscription of Samudra-gupta composed by Harishena, his poet laureate. Samudra-gupta was the first king in India who introduced the engraving of metrical legends on his coins.

Samudra-gupta’s coins depict his personal qualities and the economic prosperity of the country.

The Archer type, the Standard type, the Tiger type and the Asvamedha type of his coins exhibit his warlike and peaceful pursuits. Dr. Altckar and Majumdar remark that they form a suitable and illustrative commentary on his military prowess and military glory as well as his versatile genius which is also evident from the Allahabad Pillar Inscription. The legends on his coins describe him as, “He who has spread his triumph in hundred battles,” “the vanquisher of his enemies”, “the invincible, the matchless warrior and Battle-Axe of Death”. His legends also correspond to the particular aspect of the king figured on each type of the coin and give expression to the bravery and heroism of the king as well as his great literary genius. There is little doubt that the figures of the king are drawn from real life. Again, the personal appearance of king so far as we can judge from his figure on the coins is also fully in keeping with the impression we otherwise form of his tall stature and strong physique.

Gold predominates in the coinage of Samudra-gupta and very few copper coins of his have been found. The weight of his gold coins is about 123 grams and their gold contents as much as 87%. His coins of substantial gold content and excellent craftsmanship should reflect the great prosperity of the country but it seems that this prosperity
had not filtered to the lowest levels proportionately. The common people did not even use copper coins as a medium of exchange and used only Cowries for such purpose.

**Points to Remember**

1. **Samudra-gupta's reign**—a period of a great numismatic activity; he reformed currency; issued new types of coins; Samudra-gupta regarded as the pioneer of Hindu coinage.

**Types of Coins.**

1. **Standard Type**:—the commonest type; resembles Kushan prototype; On the obv. king standing in front of an altar; wearing trousers and a loose fitting cap and a standard of the Gupta empire and on the reverse goddess Laxmi seated on a throne.

   Standard type coins are of different weights and sizes; similarities with Kushan coins; Kushan dress; name written vertically; halo round the king's head, the offering before the altar.

   Dissimilarities:—changes in head dress, and jewellery, Kushan trident replaced by Garuda.

2. **Archer Type**:—Based on the design of Standard type, discovered in Eastern O.P. Obv. —King with a bow and arrow, Garuda standard and legend. Rev.: Laxmi seated.

3. **Tiger Type**:—Probably refers to his love for hunting, Obv. king wearing waist cloth, slaying a tiger with a bow. Rev. goddess Ganes standing on a crocodile, holding lotus in her left hand. Dr. Chaudhri says coin suggests that Samudra-gupta's territories extended from Ganges valley to Mahakantra.

4. **Battle Axe Type**:—Refers to triumphant march of his army; Obv. king standing wearing close fitting cap, holding a battle axe, Laxmi seated upon a throne, the legend, likened to Yama; this type of coin struck in the later period of his reign.

5. **Lyrist Type**:—Shows his proficiency in fine art and music. Obv. king seated on a couch playing on a lyre; Rev. goddess seated on a wicker stool; his musical accomplishment also confirmed by the Allahabad Pillar Inscription.

6. **Asvamedha Type**:—Coins rare; issued to commemorate Asvamedha ceremony; bear testimony to the fulfilment of his career
of conquests. Obv. horse before an altar and the legend. Rev: figure of the chief queen, legend "Asvamedha Parakramah".

7. Chandra-gupta Type:—Attributed to Samudra-gupta; Obv. Chandra-gupta standing wearing close fitting cap, trousers, holding a crescent-topped standard, offering a ring to his wife. Rev: Goddess Durga seated on a lion, feet resting on a lotus, legend, "Lichchhavayah.

8. Kacha Type:—The coins resemble Standard and Archer types. Obv. the king wearing close fitting cap, holding a standard surmounted by a Chakra, sprinkling incense on the altar, name written vertically, the legend "Exterminator of all the kings".

Estimate.

1. The early types show Kushan influence in the writing of name traces on back of the throne and dress.
2. Later coins show originality and independence in execution; hardly any traces of Kushan influence on Tiger and Lyrist types.
3. Progressive Indianisation of coinage shown in the dress, ornaments, weapons of war, goddesses and language on the coins.
4. Depict Samudra-gupta's personal qualities and economic condition of the times.

Q. Discuss the Kacha controversy and give reasons to support your view.

Ans. A small number of extremely rare gold coins of a king named 'Kacha' have been discovered by the archealogists. These coins bear the name 'Kacha' on the obverse and the legend 'Sarvaramjochchbetta, i.e. 'destroyer of all the kings' on the reverse. The study of their standard, fabric and weight suggests that these coins are not far removed in time from Samudra-gupta's reign. The name Kacha does not occur in any official records of the Gupta dynasty. This has given rise to various presumptions among the scholars about the identification of this ruler.

Identification of Kacha with Samudra-gupta.

Dr. Allan suggests that the Kacha coins bear such a close resemblance to those of Samudra-gupta that we can safely conclude that "Kacha was the original name of the emperor and that he took the
name Samudra-gupta in allusion to his conquests". Dr. Fleet supports this view on the evidence of the title 'Saryarajocchhhetta' on the Kacha coins. This epithet applies best to Samudra-gupta in view of his conquests. He holds that Kacha was a personal and less formal name of Samudra-gupta himself. Dr. Mookerji also subscribes to this view, on the ground that the adoption of a personal name in addition to the official name was not an uncommon practice in those days. For example, Virasena, a minister of Chandra-gupta had a personal name Saba and a king Rudra-deva had another name Vyaghara. Again, Samudra-gupta's son Chandra-gupta II had also a second name Devagupta or Devaraja. Some writers are of the opinion that Kacha was the original name of Samudra-gupta and took up the title of Samudra-gupta after he had extended his empire to the 'Samudra' or ocean.

Dr. R. D. Banerji, however, disproves of the identification of Kacha with Samudra-gupta. He writes that "no coins of Samudra-gupta bearing two different names in addition to the birudas (titles) have so far been discovered. The established practice of the Gupta coins is to put the real name of the king on the margin of the obverse or at the foot of the royal figure in a vertical line and his birudas on the reverse or elsewhere." All the different types of coins of Skanda-gupta, Chandra-gupta II or Kumara-gupta give only one actual name such as Skanda, Chandra, Ku or Kumara on the obverse either on the margin or at the foot of the royal figure. The name Devagupta is found on the Yakhataka inscriptions, as a personal name of Chandra-gupta II but that name has never been found on the coins of that king. Regarded in this light the theory of Fleet cannot be convincingly accepted.

It is also suggested that the Kacha coins are more similar in design and decoration to the coins of Chandra-gupta I than to those of Samudra-gupta. There is a significant difference between the coins of Kacha and Samudra-gupta because Garuda is substituted for the Chakra in the coins of the latter.

Kacha as successor to Chandra-gupta I.

Rapson has suggested that Kacha might have been a brother of Samudra-gupta, who might have reigned only for a short period after the death of Chandra-gupta I. This assumption seems to be hardly convincing in the face of the evidence of the Allahabad Pillar Inscription which clearly indicates that Samudra-gupta was selected by his father to succeed him.

Identification of Kacha with Rama-gupta.

Dr. R. D. Bhandarkar attempts to equate Kacha with Rama-
gupta, the word which occurs only once in the drama Devichandra-guptam. He suggests that the word Kacha should be read as Rama on the coins. Dr. Dasrath Sharma also subscribes to this view. But to read Kacha as Rama-gupta and then to attribute these coins to Rama-gupta is certainly going too far. The epithet ‘Sarvarajochchhetra’ on the Kacha coins makes it difficult to identify him with Samudra-gupta’s successor Rama-gupta who is depicted in the drama Devi-chandra-guptam, as a coward who did not hesitate to sell his wife to the foreign invaders i.e. Sakas to save his army or kingdom.

Kacha identified with a relative or a friend of Samudra-gupta who lost his life in the war of independence.

Dr. R. D. Banerji is of the view that the coins bearing the name Kacha were issued by some prince of that name or were memorial medals struck by Samudra-gupta in the memory of his relative or a friend of that name. He further suggests that Kacha “appears to be a son of Chandra-gupta I who had lost his life during the life time of his father very probably in the war of independence.”

Kacha identified as a rival brother of Samudra-gupta who was killed in the war of succession.

Rev. Fr. H. Heras argues that, “a rebellion of Samudra-gupta’s brothers against him in the beginning of his reign is hinted at in the Allahabad Pillar Inscription, this description now being irreparably lost on account of the gaps in the inscription. His brothers seem to be allied against Samudra-gupta, most likely to proclaim king the eldest among them in his stead. Such proclamation was actually carried out and the eldest brother of Samudra-gupta, presumably Kacha, was enthroned; and accordingly the coin was issued in his name, through which only his existence is known to us. But his intrusion did not last long, this being the reason of the small number of his coins and their being all of the same type. Soon Samudra-gupta defeated his brothers, and they finally acknowledged him as the real successor of their father.”

Dr. B. G. Gokhale and Dr. Damdekar fully subscribe to the above view and give the following arguments in support of this identification.

In the first place, it is held by some scholars that if we accept the hypothesis that Kacha was an elder brother of Samudra-gupta who revolted against the king, this might disprove the abdication of Chandra-gupta I in favour of Samudra-gupta. Dr. Gokhale holds that there is little force in such an argument. He writes that the instance of rebellion of hypothetical elder brother against Samudra-gupta even during the life time of Chandra-gupta I cannot be ap inhe-
rent impossibility. There are instances of rebellion of princes against a reiigning monarch as in the cases of rebellion of Salim against the great Akbar, the rebellion of Khusru and Khurram and the war of succession, fought by Aurangzeb against his elder brother Dara Shikoh and father Shah Jahan. There is, therefore, nothing impossible in the assumption that in spite of the abdication of Chandra-gupta I there was a rebellion presumably led by Kacha."

Secondly, it is objected that there is not a single Gupta inscription on record which states that Kacha declared himself king against the claim of Samudra-gupta and the nomination by Chandra-gupta I. Dr. Gokhale writes that, "this may be explained on the ground that the issuance of inscriptions was an occasional matter and it was not considered necessary to issue an inscription in vindication of the fact of rulership. But the issuance of coinage was certainly necessary to legally establish the fact of accession and that is why we find coins of Kacha Gupta though there are no inscriptions referring to him."

Thirdly, there is the question of the substitution of the Chakra standard by Garuda standard in the coins of Samudra-gupta. Gokhale holds that, "this need not necessarily mean different personalities since it can be explained on the assumption that the garuda standard replaced the chakra on Samudra-gupta's conversion to Vaishnavism. But for this we must further assume that the conversion took place fairly early in the reign of Samudra-gupta for the Kacha type of coins are relatively few in number whereas the garuda standard appears on the standard type which is numerous. But could not the paucity of Kacha coins be explained on the ground that the intrusion of Kacha Gupta was a short-lived affair?"

Fourthly, the assumption of lofty titles like, "destroyer of all kings" by Kacha, according to Rev Fr. B. Heras, may be explained as an empty boast made by a pretender contrived more to convey ambition than to reflect actual achievements. Again, Dr. Dandekar opines that the apparent inferiority of gold of Kacha coins may also lead to the assumption of his short intrusion on the Magadha throne.

Fifthly, the fact of Kacha being an usurper mainly barred the possibility of his being mentioned in the later genealogical lists of the Gupta inscriptions. The Gupta inscriptions generally omit the name of a prince who does not belong to the direct line of succession. Further, we may also suggest that had there been any achievement of Kacha worthy of commemoration, it would certainly have been mentioned in the Allahabad Pillar Inscription.
Lastly, Dr. Gokhale writes that, "the text of the Allahabad Pillar Inscription clearly conveys an implication of some dispute regarding succession. The poet who drafted the text was a responsible officer of the empire and he deliberately emphasised the fact of opposition both as a fact and as a proof of his patron's achievements in spite of his opposition to him in the initial part of his reign. It is only on the hypothesis that Kacha was a person different from Samudra-gupta and the possibility that he led a war of succession against Samudra-gupta that certain passages in the inscription become clearly intelligible". Kacha's rule in Magadha was probably short-lived and was easily crushed by Samudra-gupta who established himself on the throne almost immediately after the death of his father.

Conclusion.

From the above discussion about the identification of Kacha we may conclude that Kacha cannot be identified with Samudra-gupta or with Rama-gupta. Probably he was an elder brother of Samudra-gupta who headed a revolt against the latter. It is, however, impossible to make a definite statement because of the conflicting views of scholars.

Points to Remember

1. The discovery of some rare coins of a king named Kacha discovered, name 'Kacha' not mentioned in the official records of the Gupta dynasty; a controversy about his identification.

Identification of Kacha with Samudra-gupta.

Allan says Kacha coins closely resemble those of Samudra-gupta, Kacha original name of Samudra-gupta; changed his name after his conquests. Fleet supports on the evidence of title 'sarvarajochchhetta' on Kacha coins, the title best applicable to Samudra-gupta. Mookerji says the adoption of personal name in addition to official name not unusual during this period. Kacha adopted the title Samudra-gupta after extending his empire to the Sea.

The identification challenged by R. D. Banerji on the evidence of Gupta coins.

Kacha as a successor to Samudra-gupta.

Rapson says Kacha was a brother of Samudra-gupta who reigned for a short period after Chandra-gupta, the assumption unconvincing in the face of evidence of the Allahabad Pillar Inscription.
Identification with Rama-gupta:—Bhandarkar’s view:—Kacha may be equated with Rama-gupta of Devichandra-gupta; assumption invalid; Kacha who was ‘the destroyer of kings’ cannot be identified with a coward like Rama-gupta.

Kacha identified with the elder brother of Samudra-gupta who joined in the war of succession against Samudra-gupta:—View supported by Rev. Fr. H. Heras, Gokhale and Dandekar on the following grounds:—The Allahabad Pillar Inscription hints at a disputed succession (b) Kacha coins especially in the matter of standard cannot be satisfactorily explained. (c) absence of inscriptions of Kacha not a hindrance in the identification of Kacha.

Conclusion.

Kacha cannot be identified with Samudra-gupta or with Rama-gupta.

It is, however, probable that he was an elder brother of Samudra-gupta who revolted against the latter. However, nothing can be said with finality because of the conflicting views of the scholars.

Q. Critically discuss the two Aryavarta campaigns of Samudra-gupta.

Ans. Samudra-gupta was undeniably a great conqueror. Like Mahapadma Nanda and Chandra-gupta Maurya, he seems to have aimed at the political unification of India and to make himself Ekarat ‘the sole ruler.’ Soon after the assumption of sovereignty, he set on a career of conquest and did not take rest till he had overrun the whole of India. At the time of his accession to the throne, Samudra-gupta’s kingdom was merely a conglomeration of territories tucked away in north Bihar and north and west Bengal. By the end of his reign, his empire included almost the whole of Northern India (excepting West Punjab, Kashmir, Sindh, Western Rajputana and Gujarat). Several tributary kingdoms surrounded this directly administered area. He was also recognised as a suzerain by the kings of southern India. A more or less detailed account of his remarkably ambitious programme of conquest has been preserved in the famous Allahabad Pillar Inscription.

Causes responsible for the aggressive military activity of Samudra-gupta.

Though the Allahabad Pillar Inscription gives an account of his campaigns yet it does not give us much direct help in diagnosing.
the causes of his aggressive military activities. Dr. B. G. Gokhale suggests that the general cause of this outburst of aggressive activity may be found in the general philosophy of war and aggrandisement as put forward in the ancient works of policy like the Arthasastra, the epics like Ramayana, Mahabharta and the ancient works on Hindu law like those of Manu, Vishnu and Yajnavalka. It may be well presumed that Samudra-gupta was influenced by the views of Kautilya that territorial expansion was the natural and legitimate business of the prince and there was no greater justification of waging war than the ability to do so and enlarge the size of the kingdom. Some writers, however, hold that he undertook his campaigns not under the principle that kingdom taking is the business of the kings but with a view to build a strongly knit kingdom which might stand against the foreign invasions.

2. The political condition of India was highly favourable to the ambitious designs of Samudra-gupta. The country was at that time divided into a large number of petty states which were very weak in military strength and thus naturally invited aggression and annexation from their most powerful neighbour. The history of India is full of instances of aggression pursued on more or less flimsy pretexts right from the time of the Nalandas to the British conquest of India and Samudra-gupta followed only this tradition of war and conquest.

3. According to Havell, the object of Samudra-gupta's campaigns was to restore in his own person the supremacy of the Mauryan dynasty at the height of its glory under Ashoka the great.

The First Aryavarta Campaign.

Immediately after his accession, Samudra-gupta began to consolidate his power by conquering his neighbouring states. The immediate cause of this campaign may be found in the rising power of the Nagas who were the immediate neighbours of Samudra-gupta. The Puranas disclose that around 325 A.D., the Nagas were an important power and just about that time the Guptas themselves were becoming important. The Nagas of Padmavati who were probably the Bharasivas had conquered territories up to the Ganges and had performed as many as ten horse sacrifices thus revealing their imperial ambition. In the list of the Naga kings of Aryavarta as given in the Allahabad Pillar Inscription there are no less than four Naga names. The position and the location of the territories under their control clearly shows that they constituted the most formidable opposition and a challenge to the rising power of the Guptas and that in any scheme of Gupta expansion, the Naga Gupta clash was inevitable. In his first Aryavarta campaign, Samudra-gupta uprooted the following three kings.
Achyuta.

Achyuta was probably the ruler of Abichhata, the capital of ancient Panchala (modern Ramnagar in Bareilly district in the present state of U.P.). A few copper coins bearing the name of Achyuta discovered in this locality may be attributed to him.

Naga Sena.

We do not know precisely who Nagasena was. According to the Puranas a ruler, Nagasena by name, was ruling from two centres namely Champavati (same as Padmavati near Narwar) and Mathura. Nagasena probably belonged to the Naga family of Padmavati where Naga coins have been discovered. A Nagasena has also been mentioned by Bana in his Harishcharita.

Kota.

A king of Kota family (kota-kula) was captured by Samudra-gupta’s armies at Pushapapura. Some coins bearing the name of Kota have been found in East Punjab and the Delhi region which resemble the Sruta coins of a ruler of Saraswati. It may be presumed that Kota kings were ruling in the Upper Gangetic valley.

In his first campaign, Samudra-gupta uprooted ‘unmulya’ the above three rulers. It evidently implies that after their defeat Samudra-gupta deposed them and possibly annexed their territories thus rendering them harmless for the time being. The Gupta territory now extended over a large tract of the Gangetic valley, from Oudh to Hardwar and from Allahabad to Bhagalpur.

Some writer suggest that ‘Nagasena, Achyuta and a king of the Kota family attacked Samudra-gupta in Putaliaputra as a part of the war of succession. They might have tried to take advantage of Samudra-gupta’s domestic troubles. Jayaswal believes that this battle against the three princes of Aryavarta was fought at Kausambi since it was the most convenient place where the armies of the three kings of Abichhata, Padmavati and Mathura could converge. But there is no positive evidence in support of these views.

The Second Aryavarta Campaign

Two Campaigns or one Campaign?

Most scholars hold the view that Samudra-gupta engaged in only one campaign in the Aryavarta as a result of which he defeated nine kings of Aryavarta named in line 21 of the Allahabad Pillar
Inscription. A close study of the inscription, however, reveals that he engaged in two campaigns in the Aryavarta. The first which is mentioned in line 13 of the inscription in which three kings namely Achyuta, Nagasena, and a king of Kota family were uprooted was launched in the beginning of Samudra-gupta's reign immediately after his domestic troubles had been laid to rest. The second campaign which is chronologically later, is mentioned in the Allahabad Pillar Inscription after Samudra-gupta's famous expedition in the south. The consequent effects of the two campaigns were also quite different and distinct.

Causes of the Second Campaign.

Taking advantage of Samudra-gupta's absence from Aryavarta during his expedition through Dakhshinapatha, the three Naga kings whom he had defeated in the first Aryavarta campaign, broke into open revolt against him. They thus swelled the ranks of Samudra-gupta's enemies. Samudra-gupta had soon to take up arms against the Aryavarta a second time after his return from the south.

Line 21 of the Allahabad Pillar Inscription gives the names of nine kings of Aryavarta who were completely exterminated by Samudra-gupta in the Second Aryavarta campaign. This line of the inscription repeats the names of two kings i.e. Achyuta and Nagasena who were uprooted in the first Aryavarta campaign and seven new kings. It is presumed that the above mentioned kings made a confederacy during Samudra-gupta's absence in the south and so the latter had to fight a second war in Aryavarta, otherwise there seems to be no reason in mentioning Achyuta and Nagasena a second time along with other kings of Aryavarta after the description of the southern campaign. The inscription does not indicate as to where the battle took place but it may be surmised that it was fought near Kausambi where all the kings mentioned in the second campaign could meet.

Most of the kings mentioned in the inscription have been satisfactorily identified.

Rudradeva.

Attempts have been made to identify Rudradeva with Rudrasena I of the Vakataka dynasty. He ruled in the Bundelkhand. The Eran Inscription of Samudra-gupta points to a part of Malwa being a part of his dominions which he might have captured by defeating Rudradeva Vakataka. Being powerful, Rudradeva's name comes first. It is probable that he was the head of the confederacy.
Mattila.

Mattila was a ruler of Bulandshahr and some neighbouring regions. A clay seal bearing his name has been found in Bulandshahr.

Chandravarman.

Chandravarman has been identified with the king of the same name mentioned in the Susuania Rock Inscription in the Bankura district of West Bengal. Some writers hold that he ruled over Pukharan in the Southern Rajputana.

Nandi.

Nandi was perhaps a Naga king who ruled over some territory in Central India. The Puranas mention the name of Sisunandi or Sivanandi who was connected with the Naga rulers of Central India. Debreuile has identified Sivanandi with Nandi of the Allahabad Pillar Inscription.

Balavarman.

Balavarman has not been satisfactorily identified. Some scholars think that he was the king of Assam and was ninth in descent from Bhaskaravarman, the contemporary of Harsha-vardhana. Dr. R. K. Mookerji, however, holds that he cannot be taken as king of Assam on the ground of mere suffix varman and that Assam is mentioned as a frontier state separate from the states of Aryavarta in the Allahabad Pillar Inscription.

Nagadatta.

Nagadatta was probably a Naga king and ruled over the Central Provinces.

Ganapati-naga.

Ganapati-naga was a king of Mathura and his death led to the annexation of Mathura to the Gupta Empire. Dr. R. D. Banerji opines that he ruled at Narwar or Pawaya or Padmavati in the Gwalior State.

Achyuta and Nagasena.

These two kings had already been defeated in the first Aryavarta campaign. In the first campaign they were simply divested of their territories whereas in the second campaign they were slain
and removed for ever as a possible threat to the rising power of the Guptas.

**Estimate of Samudra-gupta’s Aryavarta Campaigns.**

The two Aryavarta campaigns of Samudra-gupta were a great success. As a result of these campaigns, he swept off all the small kingdoms of Aryavarta and brought the whole of it under his paramount authority. Samudra-gupta achieved the political unification of Northern India or Aryavarta and thus built up the Gupta empire. The term Aryavarta may be taken in the sense in which Manu uses the word in his standard legal work ‘Manusamrit’ according to which Aryavarta was the land that lay between the Himalayas and the Vindhyas and between the western and the eastern seas.

Secondly, Samudra-gupta’s victory of Aryavarta made a great impression on his contemporaries. Various states and tribes on his frontiers offered submission to him of their own accord. Among these were the kingdoms of Kamarupa, Samatata and Devaka on the east; the states of Nepal and Kartripura and various autonomous tribes such as Malavas, Arjunayanas etc.

Thirdly, the annexation of the Aryavartas shows that Samudra-gupta could be ruthless when demanded. In his first Aryavarta campaign, Samudra-gupta only divested the two Naga kings of their territories whereas in the second campaign they were slain and removed for ever as a possible threat to the rising power of the Guptas. His policy towards the Aryavarta kingdoms was that of Asuravijay in contrast to Dharmavijay, of lenient treatment after conquest in the south.

Lastly, the conquest and annexation of territories as a result of the two Aryavarta campaigns considerably enlarged the territories directly under the Gupta rule. Samudra-gupta’s empire now included territories of the modern states of Uttar Pradesh, parts of Madhya Pradesh, Bihar and Bengal. His empire thus comprised all the the most fertile regions of Northern India. This was indeed a great achievement of Samudra-gupta and with it the “Guptas emerged from their obscurity of principal satraps into the chronicle of the imperial history of India.”

**Points to Remember**

1. *Samudra-gupta a great conqueror; aimed at political unification of India; carved out a large empire; recognised as the sovereign of Southern India as well.*
Causes of military activity.

1. Influence of ideas of Kautilya, of Hindu epics and ancient legal works.

2. To build a strong empire which could stand against foreign invasions.

3. Political condition of the country favourable to his designs.

4. Aimed at restoring in his person the supremacy of India which Asoka the great once enjoyed.

The First Aryavarta Campaign.

1. Immediate cause:—The Naga power constituted the most formidable opposition to the Gupta power, the Gupta Naga clash inevitable.

2. Kings uprooted:—Achyuta, ruler of Ahichhatra, modern Ramnagar in Bareilly district, Achyuta coins found.

   Nagasena:—ruling from two centres Champavati and Mathura, Nagasena mentioned in Bana’s Harsnacharita.

   Kota:—might be ruling in the Upper Gangetic valley.

3. The territories annexed, Gupta empire extended over a large tract of the Gangetic valley.

4. Some writers hold that a coalition of the above three kings fought against Samudra-gupta, battle at Kausambi, view not supported.

The Second Aryavarta Campaign.

1. In the absence of Samudra-gupta from Aryavarta during his South Indian campaign Naga kings revolted, Samudra-gupta took up arms in the Aryavarta a second time.

2. Kings Defeated:

   Rudradeva:—identified with Rudrasena I of Vakataka dynasty, ruled over Bundelkhand, powerful king, therefore, mentioned first
Mattila: ruler of Bulandshahr.

Chandaravarman: equated with the king of same name in Susunia Rock Inscription: some writers hold he ruled over Pokhara.

Nandi: ruled some territory in Central India.

Balavarman: probably a king in Assam, Mookerji differs.

Nagaśattra: a Naga king ruled somewhere in Central Provinces.

Ganapati Naga: a king of Mathura, Banerji holds he ruled over Padmavati in Gwalior State.

Achyuta and Nagasena also mentioned in the First Aryavarta campaign.

Estimate.

The campaigns a great success; achieved political unification of India. Deep impression on the contemporaries, the frontier kingdoms and republics, and forest tribes offered to submit: Aryavarta campaign was Asuravijay. The Gupta empire included Uttar Pradesh, parts of Madhya Pradesh, Bihar and Bengal.

Q. 1. Critically discuss the Dakshanapatha campaigns of Samudra-gupta.

2. Describe Samudra-gupta's Dakshanapatha campaign, identifying as far as possible the territories overrun by him.

Ans. One of the most significant and marvellous achievements of Samudra-gupta was his conquest of the South. After his victories over the Naga kings during his first Aryavarta campaign, he turned his attention to South India and did not take rest till he had subdued most of the kings of the Deccan. This enterprise stands unique and unrivalled in the history of ancient India for the boldness of design and thorough execution.

Causes.

We do not know precisely what made Samudra-gupta embark upon the plan of conquest of the South. Dr. Shama Sastri, however, suggests that he was influenced by the ideas of Kautilya who had said that a wise king trained in polity, though possessing a small territory
should conquer the whole earth with his ability and the best-fitted elements of his sovereignty. Although his ambition may be considered to be a sufficient justification for this expedition there must be some immediate cause for it as well. Dr. Gokhale suggests that the immediate cause of his campaign may be sought in his desire to perform the Asvamedha sacrifice. In this he was most plausibly influenced by the example of the Naga kings who had performed as many as ten horse sacrifices which though politically not so important were a considerable attraction as a symbol of prestige. Moreover, with the revival of Vedic ceremonies since the time of Pushyamitra Shunga, many Satavahana, Bharasiva and Salankayana kings had performed Asvamedha sacrifices as a testimony of their Brahmanical faith and political prestige. Dr. D. C. Sarkar suggests that Samudra gupta, a new convert to Brahmanism got the inspiration for the performance of the Asvamedha sacrifice from a south Indian king for the south was at that time a land of the Vedic customs. Dr. Gokhale on the other hand, argues that Samudra-gupta was inspired by the example of the Bharasivas who were nearer home than by the example of a southern king. He is of the opinion that Samudra-gupta thought of performing the horse sacrifice after his victory over the two Naga kings and that his south Indian campaign was in the nature of an Asvamedha campaign.

Lines 19 and 20 of the Allahabad Pillar Inscription record his south Indian campaign in detail. He conquered twelve kingdoms of Dakshnapatha to the south of the Narmada and Mahishmati. He released the kings whom he captured and restored to them their territories. Several attempts have been made to settle the precise geographical position of all these places and many of them have almost been correctly identified.

Kingdoms Conquered

Kosala.

The first king to be vanquished by Samudra-gupta was Mahendra of Kosala. Kosala has been identified with south Kosala which includes the districts of Bilaspur, Raipur and Sambalpur, the first two being in Madhya Pradesh and the last one in Orissa. The capital of Kosala seems to have been at Sripur or modern Sirpur.

Mahakantara.

The next on the list is Vyagharaaja of Mahakantara which has been indentified by R. K. Mookerji with eastern Gondavana. The capital of this kingdom was at Sambalpur on the river Mahanadi. Dr. Jayaswal identifies Mahakantra with Kanker and Bastar. Most
probably the kingdom comprised the Jeypore forest tract in Orissa.

Kaurala.

Then came the turn of Mantaraja of Kaurala which has been identified with as many as three different places i.e. with (a) Colair lake (b) Sonapur district in Madhya Pradesh (c) and Korada in South India. The identification suggested by Dr. Bhandarkar that Kaurala is the modern Sonapur district is probably more correct in view of the geographical position of Mahakosala, Mahakantra and Kerala.

Pishtapura.

From Kaurala, Samudra-gupta advanced further into the south and subdued King Mahendra Giri of Pishtapura which is modern Pithapura in the Godavari district of Andhra Pradesh. It is also mentioned in the Aihole inscription of Pulakesin II.

Kottura.

The next king subdued was Svamidatta of Kottura, the place being identified with modern Kothoor in Ganjam district or with Kottura in the Vizagapatam district.

Erandapalla.

After Kottura came the turn of Erandapalla which was ruled by a king named Dwmaha. Erandapalla has been equated with (1) Erandol in Khandesh (2) Erandapalli in Vizagapatam district and (3) Yenndapalli in Vizagapatam district, and (4) Endapilli in Ellore taluq.

From the Orissa coast Samudra-gupta seems to have struck southwards and reached the kingdom of Kanchi where he defeated its ruler Vishnugopa. This appears to be southern most state to which Samudra-gupta advanced in his campaign in the south. Raychaudhuri identifies Kanchi with Conjeevaram near Madras.

Avamukta.

The kingdom of Avamukta was probably ruled by Nilaraja. Scholars hold that he may be connected with Nilapallin in the Godavari district.

Vengi.

The next king subdued by Samudra-gupta was Hastivarman who was most probably a Salankayana king ruling in the Ellore taluk in
the Godavari district in the Andhra Pradesh.

Palakka.

The next target of Samudra-gupta’s campaign was Ugrasena of Palakka which has been identified with Palakkada, to the south of the river Krishna. Ugrasena was possibly a feudatory of the Pallavas.

Devarashtra.

The next king subdued by Samudra-gupta was Kubera of Devarashtra. This kingdom has been identified from a copper plate grant of the eastern Chalukya king Bhima which mentions a village which was a part of the province called Devarashtra.

Kusthalapura.

The last king subjugated by Samudra-gupta in his southern campaign as mentioned in the Allahabad Pillar Inscription was Dhananjaya of Kusthalapura. The place may be identified with Kuttalur in North Arcot district in the state of Madras.

Route of Samudra-gupta’s campaign

The course of Samudra-gupta’s long campaign seems to be some what as given below:

Setting out from his capital city Pataliputra, he passed through the triangular area formed by the districts of Bilaspur, Raipur and Sambalpur in the eastern parts of Madhya Pradesh and north Orissa. From there he struck into the forest tracts of Orissa and then proceeded along the eastern seaboard to the kingdom of the Pallavas of which Kanchi was the capital. From there he followed more or less the eastern tract back to his capital. It has been presumed that Samudra-gupta defeated in one battle the confederacy of the southern princes in the region of the river Krishna. But this assumption seems to be belied by the detailed account of the kings defeated in the south as given in the Allahabad Pillar Inscription.

At one time it was believed that Samudra-gupta’s campaigns covered a large part of South India and that his empire was wider than the Mauryan empire under Asoka. But this view does not hold good now. Prof. Jouveau Dubreuil has succeeded in proving that Samudra-gupta never went beyond Kanchi. The latest reading of the Allahabad Pillar Inscription and identification of some of the places mentioned in it seem to show that the expedition was confined to the limited
area of the East Coast as far south as Kanchipuram. The view
that Samudra-gupta conquered Coimbatore and Malabar districts
of the Madras state and Khandesh is quite wrong.

**Estimate of the South Indian campaign.**

The South Indian campaign of Samudra-gupta was the most
daring and spectacular military feat for during the course of this
campaign he must have marched as many as 800 miles from his capital
leading his troops across hills and dense forests and traversing principalities and kingdoms inhabited by diverse political and cultural
communities. We must recognise that such a march in those days
called for exceptional powers of organisation and leadership. His
exploits were rivalled only after a thousand years by Ala-ud-din Khilji.
It has been rightly remarked that “in boldness of design, and master-
lines of organisation and execution this campaign can be classed with
that of his general prototype, Alexander the great. Only the latter
was on a grander scale in a larger area and large distance.”

Samudra-gupta's treatment of the vanquished states of the south
shows his remarkable foresight and statesmanship. He did not annex
these territories but he restored to the kings their states after the
conquest. He remained content with victories over them and their
nominal subordination. He realised the difficulties of controlling such
a vast empire directly from his remote base in the north-east when the
means of communication and transport were so poor. He fully
realised that the annexation of all the southern territories was some-
thing quite within his power to accomplish but much beyond his
ability to keep a hold on. Later events in the history of India confirm
the soundness of the policy of Samudra-gupta. The Muslim rulers
like Mohd Tugluq and Aurangzeb who tried to maintain their hold
over Southern India from their head quarters in the North met with
a dismal failure. Mohd. Tugluq even went to the extent of shifting
his capital to Devagiri which was a central place but met with disaster.
On the other hand, V. A. Smith writes that Samudra-gupta
returned from the south in 350 A. D., “laden with golden booty like
the Mohamaden adventurer Ala-ud-din Khilji who performed the same
military exploits nearly a thousand years later.”

According to Dr. Raychaudhuri, he followed in the south the
Kautilyan ideal of a Dharma Vijaya, or “Righteous conquest”.
Kingdom taking was not his aim. His aim in undertaking the Southern expedition was only to secure acceptance of his imperial position
and collection of tributes. Dr. Jouveau Dubreuil however argues
that the alleged liberation of south India meant in plain language the
defeat of Samudra-gupta, probably by a confederacy of princes and
observes, "It is no more a new Alexander marching victoriously through South India. It was simply the attempt of a king from the North who wanted to annex the coast of Orissa but completely failed, The French scholar further says that Samudra-gupta was not a boy catching butterflies and setting them free. The view of Dubreuil does not seem to be correct. The reinstatement of conquered kings was not novel for even Alexander treated Porus generously. It is now generally accepted that the confederacy of the Tamil kings is purely imagination.

**Points to Remember**

1. Significant achievement of Samudra-gupta; enterprise unique and unrivalled in the history of ancient India.

2. Causes.

   Policy of aggrandisement; the immediate cause seems to be his desire to perform Asvamedha; influenced by the example of Nagaras, Southern campaign was in the nature of Asvamedha campaign.


   **Kosala** ruled by Mahendra, the place identified with the districts of Bilaspur, Raipur and Sambalpur, capital Sirpur.

   Mahakantara ruled by Vyagharaaja; territory identified with eastern Gondavara, its capital Sambalpur, Jayaswal identifies Mahakantara with Kanker and Bastar.

   Kawalala identified with three different places, Bhandarkar's identification with Sonepur probably correct; ruled by Mantaraja.

   Pishtapura identified with modern Pithapuram ruled by Mahendragiri.

   Kottura identified with modern Kothoor in Ganjam district, ruled by Svamidatta.

   Erandapalla identified with four different places; ruled by king Damana.

   Kanchi ruled by Vishnugopa.

   Asamukta equated with Nilapallin in Godavari district, ruled by Nilaraja.
Vengi identified with Ellore taluk in Andhra Pradesh, ruled by Hastivarman, a Salankayana king.

Palakka located in the south of Krishna river, ruled by Ugrasena who has been identified with a ruler of Palakkada.

Devarashtra ruled by Kubera, the kingdom identified from a copper plate of the eastern Chalukya king Bhima which mentions a village in Elumachi Kalingadesa a part of the province called Devarashtra.

Kusthalapura identified with Kuttalur in North Arcot district, ruled by Dhunanjaya.

Route of the campaign

1. Started from Pataliputra, passed through eastern parts of Madhya Pradesh and North Orissa, march through forest tract of Orissa along the eastern seaboard and went upto Kanchi, back to the capital, wrong to hold that he conquered Coimbatore, Malabar and Khandesh, did not go beyond Kanchi.

Estimate of his campaign

1. Samudra-gupta’s raid into the south is marvellous, traversed large territory in spite of many hurdles, exploits only rivalled by those of Khilji, can be compared with the campaigns of Alexander for boldness of design and masterliness of organisation.

2. His policy statesman like, liberated the vanquished kings, restored their territories, realised the difficulties of controlling the South from his capital, soundness of his policy confirmed by the later events; Aurangzeb and Mohamed Tughluq’s failure to keep a hold on the South.

3. Followed the policy of a righteous conqueror.

4. Views of Jouveau Dubreil that Samudra-gupta failed in his campaign not correct, reinstatement of vanquished kings not a novelty, formation of a confederacy of Tamil kings against Samudra-gupta purely imagination.
Q. Discuss the relations of Samudra-gupta with (A) the Frontier states both Kingdom and Republics. (B) Forest Tribes (Atavika Rajas) and (C) Foreign countries.

(A) Relations with the Frontier States

The succession of Samudra-gupta’s conquests in Northern and Southern India made a deep impression on the frontier states of his empire and they, whether kingdoms or republics, hastened to enter into friendly relations with him. They gratified his imperious commands “by paying all kinds of taxes, obeying his orders and coming to do homage.” The following frontier kingdoms and republics entered into friendly relations with him.

(i) The Frontier Kingdoms

Samatata

Samatata may be located in South-Eastern Bengal bordering on the sea. Hieun Tsang placed it to the east of Tamralipta in the Midnapur district. Its capital was Karmananta which according to N. K. Bhattasali may be identified with modern Kamta in Comilla district.

Davaka

According to N. K. Bhattasali the chief city of Davaka may be identified with modern Dabok in the Nowgong district of Assam. K.L. Barua suggests that Davaka corresponds to the Kapili valley in Assam. Dr. Fleet identified it with modern Dacca. Smith, however, identifies it with the modern districts of Bogra, Dinajpur and Rajshahi.

Kamarupa.

Kamarupa may be roughly taken as lower Assam. A portion of Assam is still known as Kamarupa. Its ruler Pushyavarman or Samudravarman was probably a contemporary of Samudra-gupta.

Nepal.

Nepal was at that time ruled by Jayadeva I, the new Lichchhavi king, who was a relation of Samudra-gupta on his mother’s side. His submission meant virtually the submission of all Himalayan states. It was a great triumph and a proof of Samudra-gupta’s invincible power.

Kartripura.

The identification of this state like Davaka has been a
veritable problem for the scholars. According to Fleet and Allan Kartripura is modern Kartarpura in the Jullundur district. It has also been suggested that it can be identified with Katurajya of Kumaon, Garhwal and Rohilkhand.

(ii) The Republican States

The Republican states on the frontiers of Samudra-guptas on the western and eastern sides which submitted to him but were allowed to remain as feudatories were as under:-

The Malavas.

The Malavas were a warlike tribe which flourished from the time of Panini (500 B. C.). They gave a tough resistance to Alexander in their homeland in the Punjab but were subdued. They later migrated to Malwa or the land of the Malavas. A large number of Malava coins have been found all over the area from the valley of the Sutlej down to the banks of the Narmada. Cunningham suggests that the dates of these coins range from 250 B. C. to 350. A. D. Their coins do not bear dates after the middle of the fourth century A. D. which indicates that they must have ceased to be independent and might have submitted to the arms of Samudra-gupta.

Arjunayanas.

The Arjunayanas may be located in the Bharatpur and Alwar sates where a large number of their coins have been discovered bearing the legend ‘Arjunayanam Jayah’

Yaudheyas.

In the times of Samudra-gupta the Yaudheyas probably occupied Northern Rajputana and South East Punjab and their territory extended along both the banks of the Sutlej on the borders of the modern Bahawalpur state. Their coins have been found all over the area from Saharaapur to Multan. Like the Malava tribal coinage, the Yaudheya coinage also comes to a sudden end after the middle of the 4th century A. D.

Madrakas.

The Madrakas occupied the territory between the Ravi and the Chenab with their capital at Sakala or modern Sialkot in the Punjab now in Pakistan.

Abhiras.

The Abhiras ruled over the Punjab and some parts of Western
Rajputana. A section of their tribe evidently settled in Central India where a region between Jhansi and Bhilsa is known as Ahirwar after their name.

Prarjunas.

The prarjunas are located by Dr. Smith in the Narasinghpur district of Madhya Pradesh. They are also mentioned in the Arthasastra.

Sahakanikas.

The Sahakanikas lived in East Malwa. A chieftain of this tribe who was a son of Vishnudasa has been mentioned as a feudatory of Chandra-gupta II in one of the Udayagiri inscriptions.

Kakas.

The Kakas possibly may be located in the region of Kakanadabota, the ancient name of Kanchi. Kakapura near Bhilsa has been identified as the ancient seat of the Kakas.

Kharaparikas.

According to Dr. Bhandarkar the Kharaparikas are probably identical with Kharpur as mentioned in the Batihgadh inscription of the Damoh district of Madhya Pradesh.

(B) Relations with Forest Countries

The Allahabad Pillar Inscription states that Samudra-gupta brought the forest tribes (Atavika rajas) under his complete subjection. Dr. Fleet suggests that forest regions extended from the Ghazipur district in the U.P. to Jubulpur in the Madhya Pradesh. Dr. Raychaudhuri is of the view that these refer to the wild tribes of Vindhya-vati from Mathura to the Narmada comprising Bundelkhand, Bhagalpore and Rewa. In two inscriptions of Baghelkhand of the years 199 and 209 Gupta era, a king Hastin is mentioned to have ruled over Dabhala together with the eighteen forest kingdoms (Atavirajya). These seem to be, therefore, contiguous to Dabhala which means the territory round Jubulpore. According to R. C. Majumdar the eighteen forest kingdoms may be taken to have denoted the hilly tracts full of dense forest that extended further towards the east, across the whole of Chota Nagpur. The conquest of this region was considered very essential by Samudra-gupta in order to keep open the route of communication between Aryavarta and the South. The Eran Inscription of Samudra-gupta also refers to his conquest of this region.
Relations with foreign powers

Harisena, the composer of the Allahabad Pillar Inscription mentions another category of rulers who were independent and semi-independent potentates and submitted to the hegemony of the Guptas. They purchased peace by self surrender and acts of homage such as the bringing of gifts of maidens and solicited imperial charters stamped with the garuda seal. The foreign potentates who thus voluntarily entered into some subordinate alliance with Samudra-gupta are mentioned below.

Daivaputra-Shahi-shahanushahi

The three titles Daivaputra-Shahi-Shahanushahi were originally adopted by the great Kushan emperors. It has been suggested that they denote not a single Kushan king but three of the smaller states into which the Kushan empire was divided after its disintegration. The rulers of each of these three states appropriated one title for himself according to his status. The title Deviputra seems to be of Chinese origin and the title Shahanushahi is derived from Iranian or Persian Shahanushah.

R. C. Majumdar holds that it hardly seems justified by the available evidence to split up the expression Daivaputra Shahi Shahanushahi into three parts each denoting a separate entity. It is more correct to take Daivaputra-Shahi-Shahanushahi as one word denoting one single Kushan king who ruled over parts of north-western India and Afghanistan.

The Sakas Murundas.

The Sakas were a well known tribe and there is a positive evidence that the Saka (Western) Kshatrapas were ruling over western India in the 4th century A. D. The contemporary Saka ruler of Samudra-gupta was Rudrasimha II. Some writers suggest that the Allahabad Pillar Inscription indicates that these Sakas were of the north-west whose coins were imitated by Samudra-gupta. The discovery of some coins in the Vindhya region shows that there were petty Saka chiefs ruling in this locality. R. K. Mookerji suggests that the Saka submission to Samudra-gupta was not at all sincere and reliable since it was not tendered to his successors.

The Murundas may be identified with Kushans as suggested by Sten Konow.
Relations with Ceylon.

Samudra-gupta maintained very cordial relations with Ceylon. We learn from a Chinese historian that in the beginning of Samudra-gupta’s reign, Megha-Varman the reigning king of Ceylon sent two monks, one of whom is stated to have been his brother, to Bodh-Gaya to visit the sacred places. But the strangers were put to great inconvenience at all the monasteries for want of suitable accommodation. To make proper arrangement for accommodation for future pilgrims from Ceylon to the holy places in India, Megha Varman decided to build a monastery there. He, accordingly, despatched a formal embassy to Samudra-gupta with costly presents coupled with the request that he might be permitted to build a monastery and a rest house at Bodh-Gaya for the Ceylonese students and pilgrims. Samudra-gupta readily granted the permission and subsequently the Ceylonese king built a monastery near the Bodhi tree. Hieun Tsang, who visited India during the reign of Harshavardhana made a mention of the monastery in his account of Bodh Gaya. He records that it was a monastery of three storeys, six halls and three towers enclosed within a wall of 30 or 40 feet high. A statue of the Buddha made of gold and silver, studded with gems of various colours was set up inside the monastery. It was also richly decorated with paintings. Hieun Tsang called this establishment as ‘Mahabodhi Sangharama’. He records that it was accommodating about 1000 monks, all Mahayanists of the Sthavira school. Referring to the old history of the foundation of this splendid monastery, Hieun Tsang records that the Ceylonese king, ‘gave in tribute to the king of India all the jewel of the country.’ The fact that this mission was sent to Samudra-gupta by the king of Ceylon is proved by an expression in the Allahabad Pillar Inscription viz — “bringing gifts from the people of Simhala and all the dwellers in the island.” Harisena seems to interpret these gifts as tributes and construes the Ceylonese king’s prayer for permission to found a monastery into an “application for a charter confirming him in the enjoyment of his territories.”

Hayell writes that “the toleration shown by Samudra-gupta and his Brahmin advisers in allowing a splendid Buddhist abbey richly endowed, to be given a place of honour in his territory proves that the so called Brahmanical reaction ‘was not inspired by narrow sectarian feeling.”

Other Islands.

The Allahabad Pillar Inscription mentions the words “other Islands” who like Simhala asked for imperial charters for the enjoyment of territories”, but these islands are not specifically named therein. It is very probable that they refer in a general way to the
Hindu colonies of Java, Sumatra, and the Malay Peninsula. It is evident from the narrative of Fa-hien that there was a deep and intimate contact between these colonies and India during the Gupta days. It is likely that some of these kingdoms may have established diplomatic relations with the Gupta empire by sending appropriate embassies bearing the customary presents.

Points to Remember

A. Subjection of the Frontier states.

1. Impressed by the victories of Samudra-gupta, the frontier states, both kingdoms and republics, paid homage to him.

[i] The Frontier kingdoms.

Samatata located in the South-Eastern Bengal, Hiuen Tsang placed it in the modern Midnapur district, its capital Karmanta identified with Kamta in Comilla district.

Davaka identified with modern Dahok in the Nowgong district in Assam; identification by Feet, Smith and Barua.

amarupa identified with lower Assam, ruled by Samudravarman in the times of Samudra-gupta.

Nepal ruled by Jayadeva I, his submission was a great triumph for Samudra-gupta.

Kartripura According to Fleet and Allan modern Kartarpur, others identify with Katuriya Raj of Kumaon, Garhwal and Rohilkhand.

[ii] The Frontier Republics

The Malavas a warlike ancient tribe ruled in Malwa, coins show that they ceased to be independent after 350 A. D.

Arjunavanas located in Bharatpur and Alwar states.

Yaudheyas located in northern Rajputana and south-east Punjab, their coins found in the area between Saharanpur and Multan.

Madarakas occupied the territory between the Ravi and the Chenab, capital Sialkot.

Abhiras ruled in some parts of the Punjab and Western Rajputana,
a section of this tribe settled in the region between Jhansi and Bhilsa.

**Prarjunas** located in the Narsinghpur district of Madhya Pradesh.

**Sanakanikas** ruled in East Malwa.

**Kakas** located in the region of Kakanañadabota.

**Kharaprikas** identified with Kharparas mentioned in the Batihagadh inscription of Damoh district in Madhya Pradesh.

### B. Forest Tribes

1. Defeated Atavika Rajas completely, the region extended from Ghazipur district in U. P. to Jabalpur in M. P.

Raychaudhuri identifies with the wild tribes of Vindhyavati from Mathura to Narmada, Majumdar identifies with hilly tracts round the Chhota Nagpur. The conquest considered essential to keep open the route between the South and the Aryavarta.

### C. Relations with foreign powers

Semi-independent and independent states who submitted to the hegemony of Guptas; brought gifts and prayed for charters; submitted voluntarily.

1. **Daivaputra Shahi - Shahanushahi** the title originally adopted by the Kusán emperors, later the title divided among the princes of small territories; probably a single king who ruled over the Afghanistan, Punjab and adjoining lands. Shahanushahi seems the Persian counterpart of Shahnshah.

2. **The Saka Murundas** :- Sakas ruled in Western India in the 4th century, Rudaśimha I, a contemporary of Samudra-gupta. Some writers suggest that these Sakas were of the north-west, their coins imitated by Samudra-gupta, some petty Saka chiefs also located, their submission to the Guptas not sincere and reliable.

   The Murundas identified with the Kushans by Sten Konow.

3. **Ceylon [Simhala]** :- Mṛga Varman of ceylon anxious to be on good terms with Samudra-gupta sent an embassy to him requesting for grant of permission to build a monastery at Bodh-Gaya for the convenience of Buddhist pilgrims from Ceylon, Samudra-gupta readily granted the permission, the monastery erected near Bodh-tree, a splendid building, a statue of the Buddha set up there, Hieun Tsang’s
account, a thousand monks accommodated there, the fact that the
embassy brought presents for Samudra-gupta interpreted as a tribute by
Harishena, Havell says the grant of permission to build the monastery
shows Samudra-gupta’s secular bent of mind.

4. Other Islands :- The names not mentioned, probably refer to
Java, Sumatra and Malay Peninsula, the contact of these colonies with
India during the Gupta period supported by Fahlen’s narratives.

Q. With the help of inscriptions and coins make an esti-
mate of Samudra-gupta (a) as a warrior and a conqueror (b) as a
diplomat (c) as a scholar (d) as a musician (e) as an admini-
strator and (f) as a benevolent king.

Ans. The coins and inscriptions of Samudra-gupta throw a
flood of light on his character and achievements. They reveal that
he was one of the most outstanding personalities of his age and is
worthy of a high place in the galaxy of heroes and rulers of
ancient India. Brilliant as a statesman, he was also endowed
with many qualities which are suited to a life of peaceful pursuit.
To quote V. A. Smith, “he was endowed with no ordinary powers;
he was in fact a man of genius, a ruler of exceptional capacity
and unusually varied gifts”. We get a fairly good account of his
character, achievements and personality from the famous Allahabad
Pillar Inscription. Dr. Majumdar says that ‘We may not accept
all that Harishena says in the inscription at its face value, but even
making due allowance for partiality and exaggeration in the inscription
there is little doubt about the striking personality and great achieve-
ments of this great king of ancient India.” Besides, the Eran Stone
Inscription, the Gaya Copper Plate and a large number of coins struck
by him and numerous references to him in other Gupta inscriptions
provide us with ample material to make a fairly accurate estimate of
Samudra-gupta.

As a warrior and a conqueror.

Samudra-gupta was a born soldier and master of the art of war.
His history is to a great extent the record of his brilliant generalship.
One of the most important factors which contributed to his splendid
victories was that like Napoleon the great he always personally fought
in the front line as a soldier. The Allahabad Pillar Inscription states
that, “he was skilled in waging hundreds of battles, “and his only
ally was his personal heroism.” The beauty of his charming body
was enhanced by the multiplicity of wounds caused by the blows of
of battle-axes, arrows, spears, pikes, barbed darts, swords, lances,
javelines, iron arrows, vitastikas and many other weapons”. The Eran Stone Inscription describes him as possessed of prowess which was invincible “aprativaryaviryah”. His battle—axe type of coins exhibit his martial personality. His Tiger Type of coins state that he was “possessed of a dash and drive of a tiger”. The legends on his other coins describe him as “the vanquisher of his enemies”, “the invincible”, “the matchless warrior” and “the battle-axe of death”. All these speak of the warlike qualities of the great emperor.

The Ashvamedha ceremony which he performed after his glorious martial career speaks for the supreme position which he had attained by the dint of his courage and intrepidity. He had marched from one corner of the country to another and “did not sit quiet till he had over-run the whole of India”. But with all his qualities of a “matchless warrior”, unlike other great conquerors he was not moved by a lust for conquest or annexation of more territories. After he had added many independent kingdoms to his dominions which threatened the unity and peace of the country and had united the whole of Aryavarta of his conception, he never thought of annexing more territories in spite of great temptations. He conquered the frontier states and the kingdoms in the south only to liberate them on terms of peaceful neighbourhood and acknowledgement of his paramount sovereignty. Kingdom taking was not his aim. Dr. Mookerji observes, “he worked for an international system of brotherhood and peace replacing that of violence, war and aggression. That is why his reputation spread abroad as one who vanquished kings whom he reinstated in their kingdoms in a new order of peaceful partnership”. Dr. Gokhale aptly remarks, “the edge of his battle axe of death” was tempered by considerations of morality and culture and in this the personality of Samudra-gupta was unrivalled.” Samudra-gupta thus cannot be labelled as a militarist or an imperialist like Napoleon and other conquerors. He always avoided unnecessary bloodshed which is quite evident from his policy towards the states others than those of Aryavarta.

As a Diplomat

Samudra-gupta was undeniably a great statesman. The pattern of his relationship with the vanquished states clearly reflects upon his statesmanship. Majumdar observes that no doubt he was inspired by the ideal of building an all India empire but he did not attempt the almost impossible task of bringing the whole country under his direct rule. He strengthened his position by establishing a centralised authority which was strong enough to check the disruptive tendencies of smaller states. By his ruthless campaigns he subjugated and annexed the Northern Indian states which were contiguous to his own dominions and carved out a big empire. But his amazing victories did not intoxicate him. He did not follow the Kautilyan policy of unrestrained im-
perialism and did not try to annex the frontier kingdoms like Nepal, Assam and East Bengal which he could easily annex to his empire. This fact was discovered at a heavy price by the Muslim and the British rulers at a later date. He followed the same policy towards the tribal kingdoms and republics on the western frontiers. It seems plausible that he realised the necessity of maintaining them as buffer states against the foreign powers like the Sakas and the Kushans. By pursuing this farsighted policy he increased the defensive strength of his infant empire. For the kingdoms lying in the south he used a different rod. He made them feel the weight of his new empire but at the same time he conciliated them by a wise and liberal policy. Samudra-gupta thus laid the solid and lasting foundations for a great imperial fabric which his successors were to complete later.

As a Poet and a Scholar

Harishena praises Samudra-gupta's scholarly qualities almost in ecstatic terms. He credited him with "Sharp and polished intellect." Paying a tribute to Samudra-gupta's qualities of head and heart, Harishena records in the inscription that "he shines as a luminary of meridian splendour in the firmament of the wise by a large volume of poetry (of excellence) and of clear meaning." He was "accustomed to associate with the learned people; he was the supporter of the real truth of the scriptures; upheld religion in philosophical and practical aspects." He had earned the reputation of 'Kaviraja', the prince of poets by composing numerous meterical works. Samudra-gupta extended his royal favour to the literary figures of his times. It is said that the celebrated Buddhist scholar Vasubandhu was his minister. Harishena, Samudra-gupta's minister for war and peace was himself a great scholar and a poet of no mean repute. The policy of encouragement of literature which Samudra-gupta so ardently followed contributed a great deal to the growth of drama and other literary pursuits during the times of his successors. It is possible that the scholarly qualities of Samudra-gupta praised by Harishena in the Allahabad Inscription may be an exaggeration but on the whole they are a true representation of his character.

As a Musician

Samudra-gupta's proficiency in song and music is curiously confirmed by his Lyre-type coins depicting him comfortably seated on a high backed couch and playing upon a many stringed instrument. The Allahabad Pillar Inscription admiring his proficiency in music records that he put to shame the divine masters of music by his choral skill and musical accomplishments.
As A Benevolent King

Of his charity, the Allahabad Pillar Inscription states that "his benevolent heart was full of compassion for the miserable, lowly, poor and destitute and about their welfare his mind was constantly exercised." His philanthropy manifested itself in vast charities such as "gifts of hundreds of thousands of cows," and gifts of pieces of gold as stated in the Eran stone Inscription. He spent only that money for charitable purposes which he lawfully acquired and was not ill-gotten or the result of plunder. He forgave his foes after he had conquered them. He even re-established many royal families, fallen and deprived of sovereignty and always employed his officers on this difficult task of restitution.

As An Administrator

Samudra-gupta seems to have been an efficient administrator. His system was conducive to both economic prosperity and spiritual greatness of his subjects. Dr. R. D. Banerji writes that he re-organised the system of government and administration. He reformed the official system by rejecting the Scythian terms. Henceforth the ranks of officials, their gradations, powers and titles are altogether different. This system continued to be used with slight changes till the final conquest of Northern India by the Muslims. His administrative system seems to have been much more decentralised than that of the Mauryas. The bureaucracy was totally unlike that of the Mauryas. He reformed currency by issuing pure gold coins instead of the base gold coins and a series of fine copper coins. He struck a new line in numismatics by issuing memorial medals of his father and the Kacha and the Asvamedha coins.

General Remarks.

Samudra-gupta's personality was many sided. He was the "beau ideal of an Indian emperor." He was an intrepid general, a powerful king, a benevolent despot, a farsighted statesman all rolled into one. Dr. Gokhale summing up his character beautifully remarks, "In him there was the flowering of an Indian genius, at once active, idealistic determined and irresistible ... He had the rare distinction of combining within a single life-time the sensitivity of a poetical tradition with a martial ardour which burst forth resounding over many battlefields scattered across the country. In him poetry and plenty resided together in serenity and happiness and the vitality of the Indian cultural tradition expressed itself in new age. In him the two traditions of Indian culture converge for the priestly-hierarchic and the folk traditions lose their separate identity and become one broad cultural stream. It is only at the point of such a confluence that Indian culture manifests its great creativity and the significance of Samudra-gupta lies precisely
in this ability to bring two divergent currents together. He stands at
the threshold of a new age and as the creator of such a new age; his
place in the annals of ancient India is high and secure."

Points to Remember

Introduction.

Samudra-gupta worthy of a high place in the history of ancient India;
a man of genius. Though the account given by Harishena seems to be
exaggerated, yet his accomplishments remarkable; indeed a great king.

Sources: The Allahabad Pillar Inscription, Eran Stone Inscription
Gaya Copper Plates.

A warrior and a Conqueror: A matchless warrior; fought in
the frontling as a soldier; body marked with multiplicity of wounds caused
by various weapons; legends on his coins show that he was a great warrior
and a general, not a ruthless annexationist, Mookerji says he worked for
an international system of brotherhood; avoided unnecessary bloodshed.

A Diplomat: His policy towards the conquered states elastic;
annexed petty states in Northern India which was essential for national
unity; did not follow policy of unrestrained imperialism, created buffer
states on his borders against the Sakas and Kushans; increased the defensive
strength of his infant empire.

A Poet and a scholar: Credited with sharp and polished intellect;
fond of the company of scholars and patronised them, earned the title of
the prince of poets.

A Musician: The Allahabad Pillar Inscription and his Lyre Type
coins depict his proficiency in music.

A Benevolent King: His heart full of compassion for the poor
and the destitute; Colossal charities made by him; even kind to the
vanquished kings, restored their possessions.

An Administrator: A good administrator, reformed administra-
tive system; system not so centralized and bureaucratic as that of the
Mauryas; issued gold coins, struck new line in numismatics.

Estimate: A beau ideal of an Indian emperor; combined in himself
many qualities; occupies a high place in the annals of ancient India.
Write a note on the Eran Stone Inscription of Samudragupta.

Ans. One of the most valuable sources of history of the reign of Samudragupta is the Eran Stone Inscription. It was discovered by General Cunningham near the ruined temple of the Boar at Eran in the Saugor district of modern Madhya Pradesh in 1876-77. It is an inscription on a red stone square block and has survived the ravages of time although at some places it is irreparably damaged resulting in the loss of its dates. The inscription is written in the Sanskrit language and is in the verse style. It records the name of Samudragupta but does not mention any of his ancestors which shows that it belongs to the times of Samudragupta. Dr. Jayaswal holds that all the verses in the inscription refer to Samudragupta but Dr. Fleet entertains doubts about the seventh verse. He opines that it relates to a feudatory of Samudra gupta whom he granted the titles of Maharaja and Rajan. The inscription on the whole gives us an account of the personal qualities of the great king.

The first part of the inscription is completely broken which may probably be mentioning some of the ancestors of Samudra-gupta.

The Eran stone inscription corroborates a lot of information which we gather from the Allahabad Pillar Inscription. It records that he surpassed all other rulers of his time in charity and benevolence. He made gifts of pieces of gold to Brahmans probably in connection with his horse sacrifice. He was the equal of gods like Dhana and Antaka—the gods of pleasure and anger respectively. Regarding his martial qualities, the inscription describes him as possessed of prowess which was invincible ( aprativaryavirayah ). This epithet is repeated in his Asvamedha coins. The Eran Stone Inscription also confirms that he subjugated a large number of rulers by the prowess of his arms and forced them to accept his overlordship. It records that as a result of his conquests, he had no antagonist of equal power in the world, "by whom the whole tribe of kings upon the earth was overthrown and reduced to the loss of the wealth of their sovereignty". After he was satisfied with the devotion of the powers whom he subjugated, he like a brave man not only pardoned them but also tried to console them in every possible way for the loss of their position by accepting his suzerainty.

The inscription refers to a lady who was a "virtuous and faithful wife," "who was provided with innumerable elephants and horses in addition to hordes of money and grain. She visited in delight the houses of her kith and kin and was surrounded by her sons and grandsons". It is held that she was possibly Dattadevi, the wife of Samudragupta. Fleet holds that the inscription does not refer to Samudra-
gupta’s wife but probably refers to the wife of a feudatory of Samudra-
gupta.

The inscription states that Samudra-gupta established some 
monuments at Eran then known as Ariakina now a village in the Sau-
gar district. He established this city for his enjoyment and to aug-
ment his fame which had already spread in the whole of India and in 
the neighbouring countries.

The study of this inscription thus supplements our knowledge 
about Samudra-gupta. It also confirms most of the information which 
we get from his coins and from the Allahabad Pillar Inscription. The 
inscription also shows that he ruled over at least the north eastern 
corners of Malwa.

Points to Remember

1. The Eran Stone Inscription a valuable source of study of history 
of Samudra-gupta; supplements and confirms our knowledge which we 
gather from other sources.

2. It relates to the personal qualities of the king, as a warrior, as 
a philanthrop.

3. The Inscription probably also gives information about Datta-devi; 
Fleet differs.

4. The inscription also records that Samudra-gupta founded the 
city of Ariakina. (Eran).

RAMA GUPTA

Q. Discuss critically the problem of Rama-gupta.

Ans. Rama-gupta is perhaps the most controversial figure in the 
history of the Gupta period. The official genealogies of the Guptas 
invariably mention that the immediate successor of Samudra-gupta 
was his worthy son Chandra-gupta II. The earliest known date of 
Chandra-gupta II’s reign is 380 A.D. as indicated by the Mathura 
Pillar Inscription. But of late, new light has been thrown on the 
genealogy of the Guptas by the discovery of some more literary and 
epigraphic material. It has been contended that a king named Rama-
gupta, an elder brother of Chandra-gupta II interveped between
Samudra-gupta and Chandra-gupta II. The evidence on the subject may be studied as under:

1. Evidence of a passage from the drama Devi Chandra-guptam.

The assumption that Samudra-gupta was succeeded by Chandra-gupta has been challenged by a story of one Rama-gupta as depicted by a Sanskrit play, the Devi-Chandra-guptam by Vishakhadatta. The fragments of this lost work have been preserved in the newly discovered work on dramaturgy ‘Natyadarpana’ written by Ramchandra and Gunachandra.

The story of the drama aims to make us believe that the great Samudra Gupta was succeeded by his son Rama-gupta. Rama-gupta was a weak and imbecile ruler, “a boneless wonder.” Encouraged by his weakness, the Sakas invaded his kingdom. Rama-gupta agreed to save the situation by surrendering his queen to the Saka aggressor. But his brother Chandra-gupta II, would not tolerate such a humiliation. He, therefore, thought of a strategem. He went disguised as Dhruvadevi to the court of the Saka king, where he assassinated the invader. On his return, he was naturally hailed as the restorer of the honour of the Gupta family. He later murdered his brother Rama-gupta too and married his widowed sister-in-law Dhruvadevi.

Although the drama is not available in its complete form, yet the following three main historically significant facts can be gathered from the above incident.

1. Samudra-gupta was immediately succeeded by Rama-gupta who was a cowardly and imbecile king.

2. There was a war between Rama-gupta and a Saka king in which the former was compelled to make a humiliating peace.

3. The Sakas were later defeated by Chandra-gupta II.

The above conclusions derived from the study of the drama Devi-Chandra-guptam have been further corroborated by the following other sources.

2. Other Evidence in support of Rama-gupta story.

The earliest evidence available on the subject is a passage of Harshacharita by Bana in which he states that Chandra-gupta in the guise of a woman killed the lord of the Sakas and later on married his own brother’s widow. The echoes of the above story also come from
the Sanjan Copper Plate. Inscription of Amoghavarsha I of 781 A.D. It is stated in this inscription that "the donor in the Kaliyuga, who was of the Gupta lineage having killed his brother seized his kingdom and wife." The story is repeated with some variations in the Kavyamimamsa of the poet Rajasekhara (900 A.D.) and in the Sringara-Prakasa of King Bhoja of Dhar. Dr. Altekar has drawn the attention of the scholars to the story of Rawwal and Barkmaris in an Arabic folklore Majumul-ut-Twarikh translated in Persian by Abul Hassan Ali in 1026 A.D. which in turn was a translation of a Hindu work. Rama-gupta has been mentioned in this book as Rawwal and Chandragupta Vikramaditya as Barkamaris. The story is almost akin to the plot of Devi-Chandraguptam.

Was Rama-gupta the immediate successor of Samudra-gupta?

Divergent views are held by the historians about the identification of Rama-gupta. On the strength of the above evidence, writers like Altekar and Dandekar hold that Rama-gupta was the immediate successor of Samudra-gupta. Dandekar suggests that the Chandragupta of the play Devi-Chandraguptam is Chandr-gupta II. It can be proved from the fact that the name of Chandr-gupta II's queen in the Gupta records and the name of the widow of Rama-gupta whom Chandr-gupta is shown to have married in the drama after killing his brother are one and the same. Dandekar also contends that the whole incident as related in the drama Devi-Chandraguptam was so much current that Visakhadatta dramatised it and no less than four different authors referred to it.

On the other hand, some scholars hold that Rama-gupta was not the immediate successor of Samudra-gupta. They have gone to the extent of saying that there was no king at all among the Gupta rules bearing the name of Rama-gupta and the one who is a controversial identity, was either some chief of Malwa or Mathura or his name has not been correctly described.

In the first place, some critics hold that the whole story as given in the drama Devi-Chandraguptam is unconvincing. It can hardly be believed that the inheritor of the mighty and splendid empire of Samudra-gupta was so weak that he could be so easily vanquished by a Saka king in such a way that he was prepared to surrender his wife to purchase peace. Such a humiliating peace could not be expected from a Gupta king. The code of honour in the time of the
Guptas was much higher than in the later days when the Hindus laid down their lives to vindicate their honour and women jumped into blazing fire. Sylvian Levi points out that, the later historical dramas like Devi-Chandraguptam cannot be considered as trustworthy sources of history. Even the drama Mudrarakshasa is not considered as a reliable source of Maurya history.

Prof. Nilkanth Shastri holds that whatever may be the truth behind the story of the drama of Devi-Chandraguptam which sounds incredible in parts, the mere fact that Rama-gupta is mentioned as Raja in a drama is not enough to secure him a place in the imperial succession, and until stronger evidence is available, Chandra-gupta II should be taken to have succeeded Samudra-gupta. He further suggests that the requirements of the story can be met if he is taken to have been a viceroy on the frontier under his father and to have been defeated in a battle with Piro.

Secondly, the Gupta inscriptions describe Chandra-gupta II as Tatadararya. The term indicates that he succeeded to the throne by the choice of his father. If we accept this view the question of Rama-gupta intervening between Samudra-gupta and Chandra-gupta II does not arise. It cannot also be believed that Rama-gupta captured the throne by force. While Chandra-gupta has been described as a very strong and powerful person, Rama-gupta on the other hand is depicted as a coward and boneless wonder. There was little chance of Rama-gupta succeeding against Chandra-gupta II.

Thirdly, it has been pointed out that the details of the story of Rama-gupta as given in Bana’s Harishcharita, the Kavyamimansa of Rajasekhara and the Rashtrakuta inscriptions differ from one another regarding the place of incident, the identification of the ‘other’s wife’ and also the victim of the strategem of Chandra-gupta II. The Harishcharita merely states that “in his enemy’s city the king of the Sakas while courting another man’s wife was butchered by Chandra-gupta concealed in his mistress’ dress.” The other details not found in Bana’s account were added later in the days of Amoghavarsha and Govinda IV.

Fourthly, it is contended that it is too much to believe that Chandra-gupta II could have married the widow of his elder brother. Dr. Altekar opines that no doubt the murder of a brother and marriage to the widow may be shocking incidents but they are not inherently impossible. The marriage with an elder brother’s widow was permitted by several works on Hindu law. Dr. Altekar refers to the authority of various religious and literary works such as Atharvaveda, Baudhayana Dharamsutra, Vashishta-Arathsastra, Narad Smriti
etc. But against the views of Altekar it is pointed out that the India ofAtharvaveda period was different from the India of the age of Guptas when such marriages were condemned.

Fifthly, it is held that there is no reference to Rama-gupta in any of the Gupta inscriptions and there is no coin in existence of any king bearing his name, which is a serious matter in the acceptance of the Rama-gupta story. But against this view, it is contended that the silence of inscriptions can be easily understood for the official epigraphic records would understandably avoid a reference to the disgraceful acts of a Gupta monarch if such a one ruled at all. It is also suggested that the personal rule of Rama-gupta was so short and troublesome that he could not issue any coins or construct any epigraphic monuments himself. The omission of his name in the inscriptions of his successor Chandra-gupta II and in the later Gupta inscriptions is due to the fact that the epigraphic lists are usually genealogical and not dynastic and they often omit the names of collateral predecessors. For instance, the genealogical lists given in the Bilsad Stone Inscription of Kumar-gupta I or the Bhitari and Bihar Stone Pillar Inscription of Skanda-gupta donot record the name of Govinda-gupta a son of Chandra-gupta and Dhruvadevi. Again, the Bhitari seal in which Kumar-gupta II while tracing his genealogy from Maharaja Gupta gives the name of his father Pura-gupta immediately after Kumar-gupta I, and omits the name of Skanda-gupta, who although an Imperial ruler of Magadha was of a collateral branch in relation to the Gupta sovereign who was the author of inscription.

Lastly, Dr. Bhandarkar has attempted to identify Rama-gupta with Kacha. He suggests that the name Rama-gupta which occurs only once in the passage quoted from drama Devi-chandraguptum, is a misreading of the Kacha-gupta, the real name of king. He points out that Ra of Rama if studied very closely seems to be 'Ka and the word Ma is most probably Cha. Jayaswal is of the view that Rama-gupta and Kacha-gupta are two different names of the same king. This view, however, is hardly acceptable. Rama-gupta and Kacha-gupta are two different personalities. Rama-gupta from all available records seems to have been a very coward and weak king who even agreed to surrender his wife to a Saka chief. From the records of the Kacha, however, we gather that he was an exterminator of all kings. Those two names, therefore, cannot be mistaken for one personality.

Conclusion

From the above we may conclude that it is fairly certain that a story revolving round the ignominious defeat of a king Rama-gupta and the resourceful action of his valiant brother Chandra-gupta
leading to the safeguarding of honour of the family was current in the 6th century A.D. We cannot precisely assume that this story related to a king of the well known Gupta family. It is also possible to agree with Levi that the drama is full of romantic fictitious matter and as such we cannot treat it as a serious historical evidence. It seems difficult to accept the Rama-gupta story. Rama-gupta remains a fictional figure and can be rescued from the realm of oblivion only if some further inscriptive and numismatic evidence in his favour becomes available. We may suspend our judgement on him till such evidence is discovered.

Points to Remember

1. **Rama-gupta** is a controversial figure; on the evidence of the drama Devichandra-guptam, Harishcharita of Bana, Sringara Prakasa of Bhoja, Sanjan Plates of Amoghavarsa and the Majumal ut-Twarikh, it is believed that Samudra-gupta was succeeded by Rama-gupta.

2. Divergent views held by the scholars about the identification of Rama-gupta.

   [i] The whole story of Rama-gupta unconvincing; the inheritor of the mighty Gupta empire could not be weak a person like Rama-gupta who surrendered his wife to a Saka chief, the code of honour in the Gupta period much higher than in the later days.

   [ii] Chandra-gupta described as Tatparigrihiva meaning selected for the throne by his father, the question of Rama-gupta intervening between Samudra-gupta and Chandra-gupta II does not arise.

   [iii] Details of the Rama-gupta story given in various works and inscriptions differ.

   [iv] Difficult to accept that Chandra-gupta could marry his brother’s widow, Atrekar says it was not impossible, such a marriage allowed by Hindu law.


   [vi] Against the point that there is no reference to Rama-gupta in genealogical lists, it is argued that the lists omit the names of collateral predecessors, lists not dynastic.

   [vii] Bhandarkar identifies Rama-gupta with Kacha, Jayaswal holds Rama-gupta and Kacha-gupta two different names of the same person, views unacceptable.

**Conclusion:** Rama-gupta remains a fictional figure, he can be rescued from obscurity only when further numismatic and epigraphical evidence becomes available on the subject.
CHAPTER V

Chandra-gupta II Vikramaditya

Introduction.

Chandra-gupta II, a son of Samudra-gupta by Dattadevi ascended the throne sometime between 375 and 380 A.D. He was probably chosen out of many sons by his father Samudra-gupta as the best fitted to succeed him. On the basis of some literary evidence, some scholars hold that a king named Rama-gupta intervened between Samudra-gupta and Chandra-gupta II. It is, however, difficult to accept their view unless we have some inscriptive and numismatic evidence in support of their presumption.

Chandra-gupta II is also mentioned in some inscriptions by other names viz., Deva Gupta, Deva Sri or Deva-Raja. He assumed the proud title of Vikramaditya and was probably the original Raja Bikram of Ujjain, whose court, according to some Indian legends was adorned by nine gems headed by Kalidasa. During the reign of Chandra-gupta, the Gupta empire reached its farthest limits, art and literature made great strides and the prosperity of the empire reached its zenith. His period of rule, in brief, represents the most glorious period in the annals of early India.

Period of his Reign.

The earliest date of Chandra-gupta II’s reign as recorded in the Mathura Pillar Inscription is G.E. 61=380 A.D. The inscription indicates that it was erected in the 5th year of the reign of Chandra-Gupta II. It means that his reign commenced in 375 A.D. His latest known date as indicated by the Sanchi Stone Inscription is G.E. 93=412 A.D. The earliest dated record of his son and successor Kumar-gupta is the Bilsad Stone Inscription of G.E. 96=A.D. 415. We can, therefore, safely assume that Chandra-gupta II’s reign ended sometime between 412 and 415 A.D. probably in 414 A.D. It is obvious that Chandra-gupta II ruled for a period of about 40 years.
Q. Describe critically the conquests of Chandra-gupta II with special reference to his Western Saka campaign.

Ans. Chandra-gupta II Vikramaditya, was a man of imperial instinct. He carried on the policy of 'world conquest' which he had inherited from his 'ever victorious' father. No doubt, Samudra-gupta bequeathed to his son a considerably large empire but it was not necessarily unified under one ruler. Sakas, the hereditary enemies of the Guptas still retained their hold in Western Malwa, Gujar and Kathiawarh. Soon after his accession to the throne, Chandragupta II undertook the task of strengthening and consolidating his empire on firm footing. He did not renew the invasion of the kingdoms of the south but he preferred to make himself master of the whole of northern India. He waged a ceaseless war against the Saka rulers and did not sheathe his sword till he had completely annihilated their power. By the end of his reign, his effective rule extended over the whole of northern India, including the maritime provinces of Malwa, Gujar and Kathiawarh. His important military achievements may be studied as under:

The Vahlika and Vanga Campaigns.

Some writers opine that Chandra-gupta, soon after his accession turned towards the Saka and Kushan powers of the North West and conquered and annexed their dominions, the task which his father Samudra-gupta could accomplish partially. This suggestion is based on the proposed identification of the king Chandra of the Mehrauli Pillar Inscript with Chandra-gupta II. This inscription refers to a king Chandra who having crossed in warfare the seven mouths of the rivers Sindhu, conquered the Vahlika. This Vahlika denotes Bacteria or Balakh. It shows that the king Chandra crossed the seven rivers of the Punjab and carried his victorious arms as far as Balakh beyond the Hindu Kush mountains. Some scholars locate Vahalika in the Beas valley bordering Kashmir.

The same inscription also records that the king Chandra defeated a confederacy of hostile chiefs in Vanga. It seems to denote the territory lying between the two streams of the Ganges viz., Bhagirthi and the Padma.

It is, however, not possible to regard as certain the proposed identification of the king Chandra of the Mehrauli Pillar Inscript with Chandra-gupta II. No doubt, the description of exploits of
Chandra seem applicable more to the known facts of life of Chandra-gupta II than that of any other known king, but in the absence of any corroborative historical record we cannot definitely credit Chandra-gupta with these military exploits of Chandra simply on the basis of the evidence of Mehrauli Pillar Inscription. Dr. Majumdar, however, writes that the Kushan type of coins with the name Chandra, indicate his supremacy in the North West Frontier Province.

The Western Saka Campaign.

The greatest military achievement of Chandra-gupta II, however, was his conquest of the Saka satrapies of Western Malwa and Gujarat. The Eran Stone Inscription of Samudra-gupta shows that Eastern Malwa had already passed under the Gupta rule. But the Western Saka straps of Malwa and Gujarat though eclipsed temporarily by the Yakatas were becoming an important factor in the contemporary politics. Feeling perhaps that the domination of the foreigners in this region was an insult to the national honour of his country, Chandra-gupta II undertook a series of campaigns against the Sakas towards the end of the 4th century A.D. Dr. V. A. Smith writes, "the motives of an ambitious king in undertaking an aggressive war against a rich neighbour are not far to seek; but we may feel assured that differences of race, creed and manners supplied the Gupta monarch with special reasons for desiring to suppress the impure foreign rulers of the west".

Chandra-gupta II must have made Eastern Malwa as the base of operations against the Saka kingdoms in Western India. The Udayagiri Cave Inscription of Chandra-gupta II records that the king accompanied by Saba, his minister of peace and war came to Udayagiri in the Eastern Malwa while he was seeking to "conquer the whole world". The second Udayagiri Cave Inscription of Gupta Era 82 indicates how the chief of Sankanika tribe was acknowledging Chandra-gupta II as his suzerain. The Sanchi Inscription of Gupta Era 93 also records that the authority of Chandra-gupta II was well established in that region administered by his officer named Amarkadava. The above inscriptions give a clue to the successive steps in the line of march of Chandra-gupta II towards the west. It is probable that Chandra-gupta II before entering upon the Saka campaign protected his rear by a matrimonial alliance with the Yakataka king Rudra-deva II who was rising in power in Central India during that period.
The actual conquest of the Saka territories of Western Malwa and Gujarat is indirectly attested by the silver coins of Chandra-gupta II. The Saka rulers of India were perhaps the first to issue silver coins in India. No Indian ruler issued silver coins before Chandra-gupta II who coined them in imitation of the Sakas after he had defeated them and occupied their territories. The latest issue of silver coins of the last Western Kashatrapa king Rudra-simha III who was probably killed by Chandra-gupta II is dated 300(+10)Saka era = 388 A.D. and the earliest date given on the silver coins of Chandra-gupta II is 90 Gupta era which Allan thinks is equivalent to (319+90-10)=399 A.D. This leaves no doubt that the conquest of the Western Kashatras and issue of the silver coins by Chandra-gupta II must be between 388 and 399 A.D. Dr. Smith opines that year 395 may be assumed as a mean date for completion of the conquest of the Western Kashatras. Dr. Majumdar suggests that the Udya-grih inscription of Gupta Era 82, the Sanchi inscription of the Gupta year 93 and the coins issued by Chandra-gupta similar in design to those of the Western Kashatras indicate that Chandra-gupta II’s campaign was planned and that he completed the conquest of Saka dominions during the closing decades of the fourth century and the first decade of the 5th century A.D.

An allusion to the victory of Chandra-gupta II over the western Kashatras also occurs in Bana’s Harishchandra. According to this testimony Chandra-gupta II killed his Saka adversary by stratagem and not in open fight. The Harishchandra refers to the scandalous tradition that “Chandra-gupta in the disguise of a woman coveted by the lustful Saka king, killed him on the spot in his own capital.”

Results of the Saka war.

The conquest of the Western Saka satraps of Malwa, Gujarat and Kathiwar was the greatest military achievement of Chandra-gupta II. The annexation of these territories pushed the boundary of the Gupta empire right uptoo the shores of the Arabian sea. It greatly enhanced the political prestige of Chandra-gupta and earned him the title of Sakari or ‘The Slayer of the Sakas’.

Secondly, the brilliant victory of Chandra-gupta II over the Sakas put an end to the domination of the foreigners who had occupied the soil of India for several centuries. It has been rightly remarked, “the victory of Chandra-gupta over foreigners marked the consummation of the political aspect of the national renaissance which was the most characteristic feature of the Gupta period.”

Thirdly, the effects of the extension of the Western frontiers were immense on the overseas trade of the country. The famous ports of
Cambay, Porbandar, Verawal and Davarka were opened up and the Gupta empire was placed in touch with the seaborne commerce with Europe through Egypt. Dr. R. D. Banerji writes that once more the road from Patliputra and the great manufacturing cities of Northern and Central India was opened right up to the sea. The fine cotton textiles of East Bengal, the silks of Western Bengal, indigo from Bihar, the golden embroideries and Kinkhews of Benaras, the scents from the hill states of Himalayas, camphor, sandal and spices from the South India were brought to the ports of the West coast and exported to the European countries. The western traders poured Roman gold into the country in return for Indian products. The country became prosperous and there was a great rise in the income of the state. The effect of this great wealth of the country is still noticeable in the great variety and number of the coins of Chandra-gupta II. Besides, these commercial relations of India with the European countries also inevitably led to the exchange of cultural ideas. Dr. V. A. Smith aptly remarks that this direct touch with the seaborne commerce with Europe through Egypt brought Chandra-gupta II and his subjects under the influence of the European ideas which travelled with the goods of the Alexandrian merchants.

Fourthly, side by side with the seaborne trade, the inland trade also received a great fillip. With the unification of Northern India under one great ruler, the merchants could transport goods right across the country without having to pay vexatious customs duties at the frontier of each petty state on the way. Previously, these levies hampered business a good deal, they raised the prices of articles and left little margin of profit for the merchants, caravan leaders and importers of goods at the ports.

Lastly, with the conquest of the Western Satraps, Ujjain the greatest city of Western India fell into the hands of the Guptas. It was made the second capital which soon developed into a famous centre of learning and a link between the West and the heart of Aryavarta.

Points to Remember

Chandra-gupta II a great conquerer, strengthened and consolidated the empire, conquered the maritime provinces of Malva, Gujrat and Kathiawar.

The Vahlika and Vanga campaigns:-

Some writers holds Chandra-gupta II conquered Vahlika (Balakh or Bactria) and Vanga, the territories between Bhagirathi and Padma.
The view based on the identification of the king Chandra of Mehrasuli Pillar Inscription with Chandra-gupta II. The view difficult to accept.

**The Western Saka Campaign** :- The Udaygiri Inscription of G.E. 82 and Sanchi Inscription of G. E. 93 give a clue to the line of march of Samudra-gupta into Malwa; defeated Rudrasimha III, the Western Saka chief; the conquest of Western Saka satraps by Chandra-gupta II proved by the coins of the Western Sakas and those of Chandra-gupta II; the conquest took place sometime between 395 and 400 A. D. Bana's Harish-\-charita also refers to the conquest of these territories by Chandra-gupta II

**Results :-** (a) Gupta borders extended upto the West Coast, (b) political prestige of the Guptas enhanced, (c) tremendous rise in the seaborne trade of India with the European countries (d) exchange of cultural ideas with western countries (e) inland trade also flourished, (f) Ujjain rose into prominence.

Q. “Matrimonial alliances occupy a prominent place in the foreign policy of the Guptas”. (Rajchandhri) Discuss.

Q. Discuss the historical significance of matrimonial alliances of Chandra-gupta II.

**Ans.** It is an important characteristic of the Gupta rulers to make wise political marriages, as part of their foreign policy. Dr. R. C. Majumdar observes, “the political marriages occupy a prominent place in the foreign policy of the Guptas as of the Hapsburgs and Bourbons of Europe”. The marriage of Chandra-gupta I with the Lichchhavi princess Kumaradevi was a turning point in the history of the Guptas. It materially strengthened the position of Chandra-gupta I in Bihar and greatly helped him in laying the foundations of the Gupta empire. His son Samudra-gupta after his conquest of Aryavarta, sought alliances with the ruling families whose help he needed to consolidate his power in the newly acquired territories and to prepare the ground for fresh conquests. He accepted the presents of maidens from the Saka chiefs and other foreign powers which as Dr. Majumdar writes, “served to consolidate the nascent Gupta power as Rajput marriages strengthened that of the Tamurid sovereigns at a later date”.

Chandra-gupta II followed in the footsteps of his grandfather and entered into two very historically significant matrimonial alliances with the ruling families of his times to further his political ends. He
himself married Kubera-naga, a princess of the Naga family of Narwar and the off-spring of this marriage was his daughter Prabhavati. Although, the Nagas had been defeated by Samudra-gupta, yet they had retained some power in the Central India with Padmavati as their capital. He won over the friendship of the old royal family by this wise marriage. The Nagas were probably of great use to Chandra-gupta II in consolidating his newly established imperial position.

Chandra-gupta II married his daughter Prabhavati with Rudra-sena II, the Vakataka king of Central Deccan. The Vakatakas were at this time the only rival power, of which Chandra-gupta II was probably afraid. His matrimonial alliance with the Vakatakas was a masterstroke of diplomacy. By means of this alliance, he protected his left flank. Dr. Smith has rightly pointed out that, "the Vakataka Maharaja occupied a geographical position in which he could be of much service or disservice to the northern invaders of the dominions of the Saka satraps of Gujrat and Saurashtra". After the death of Rudra-sena II, his widow Prabhavati ruled the Vakataka kingdom as regent of her sons. It gave the Guptas a chance to increase their influence in the Vakataka court. Prabhavati was the de facto ruler of the Vakataka kingdom during 390-410. It was during the regency of Prabhavati that the Guptas accomplished the conquest of rich and fertile Saka territories of Malwa and Gujrat. Chandra-gupta’s firm alliance with the Vaktas enabled him to concentrate all his forces against the Sakas. We can well presume that Prabhavati, the dowager queen gave all possible assistance to her father in his campaign against the Western Sakas.

An inscription of the Kadamba ruler Kakusthavaran of Kuntala records that he married his daughter to the Gupta and other kings. It has been suggested that Chandra-gupta II arranged a marriage between his son and successor Kumar-gupta I and a daughter of Kakusthavaran, the most powerful potentate of the Kadambas. Dr. R. C. Majumdar writes that although we cannot be sure whether the alliance was made by Chandra-gupta II or his successor, yet it proves beyond doubt the traditional policy of the Guptas to make matrimonial alliances with the most powerful and distinguished royal families in different parts of the country.

It is thus evident that the Guptas entered into these matrimonial alliances with the ruling families deliberately with political motives. Dr. Raychoudhri calls these alliances as “the trump cards” of the Gupta sovereigns. The advantages derived by the Guptas from these alliances were immense: they enabled them to occupy Magadha; they cemented their friendship with the Nagas; ensured them the full support of the powerful Vakatakas in subjugating the Western Sakas and above all helped them in fulfilling their ambition of achieving a supreme position in India.
Points to Remember

1. The matrimonial alliances occupy a prominent place in the foreign policy of the Guptas; the marriage of Chandra-gupta I with the Licchhavi princess strengthened his position in Magadha. Samudra-gupta received the gifts of maidens from the foreign powers; helped him in the consolidation of his position.

2. Chandra-gupta II made two matrimonial alliances with the Nagas and the Vakatakas; the Vakataka alliance useful in annihilating the Saka power in Malwa and Gujarat. Increase of Gupta influence in the Vakataka court after the death of Rudrasena II.

3. Kumara-gupta probably married the daughter of a Kadamba ruler; another manifestation of their traditional policy.

4. These alliances called as "the trump cards" of the Guptas.

Q. 1. Who was 'Chandra' of the Mehrauli pillar Inscription? Give reasons in support of your answer.

2. Discuss the identity of the 'Chandra' of the Mehrauli Pillar Inscription.

3. Narrate the exploits of king Chandra of the Mehrauli Pillar Inscription and identify him.

Ans. An inscription on an iron pillar which now stands in Mehrauli, a village near Delhi, records in pure Sanskrit verses written in Gupta characters of the 5th century A. D., the exploits of a king named Chandra. The pillar was brought to the present site from its original location on a hill near Beas by an unknown ruler of Delhi who according to Dr. R. K. Mookerji seems to have been fired by the same enthusiasm which led Feroze Shah Tuglaq to remove to Delhi the two pillars of the great Ashoka.

The inscription is undated and the tone of Stanza 4 definitely points to its posthumous character. The object of this epigraph seems to be to commemorate the erection of the pillar Vishnudhvaja on a hill called Vishnupada (near Beas) by a king named Chandra. The inscription does not give us any information about the lineage of this king.

The study of this celebrated inscription throws light on the following achievements of the king Chandra.

(a) Conquest of the Vanga country by his battling alone against a confederacy of hostile chiefs united against him.
(b) Conquest of the Vahlikas in a running fight by getting across the seven mouths of the river Indus.

(b) Spread of his fame as a great conqueror up to the southern seas. "(perfumed the southern ocean by the breeze of his prowess)."

(d) Achievement of sole sovereignty of the earth acquired by his prowess which he enjoyed for a long time.

Theories about the identification of King Chandra.

The identification of Chandra of the Mebrauli Inscription has been a frequent source of controversy among the scholars. Attempts have been made to identify this Chandra with persons so far removed as Chandra-gupta Maurya, Chandra-gupta I, Chandravarman Pushkarna and also with Chandra-gupta II.

(a) Identification of Chandra with Chandra-gupta Maurya

A recent suggestion based on mere conjectures and argued forcibly by some scholars is that Chandra of Mebrauli Pillar Inscription may be taken to be Chandra-gupta Maurya. It has also been suggested that the pillar was erected by Samudra-gupta after 600 years, who regarded Chandra-gupta Maurya as his ideal hero. It is contended that Chandra-gupta Maurya conquered the Vahlika territories and advanced as far as the sea. He ruled for a long time and his reign is a glorious record of splendid triumphs. Dandekar holds that this evidence is not sufficient to identify Chandra with Chandra-gupta Maurya. The same description may equally rather surely apply even to Chandra-gupta II. Further, the inscription shows that Chandra was a Vaishnav, whereas Chandra-gupta Maurya was a disciple of Kautilya of the orthodox Brahmanical faith till he became a follower of the Jaina faith. Lastly, Dr. Dandekar suggests that "the very assumption that Samudra-gupta revived the pillar after 600 years is based on mere conjecture in order to get rid of paleographical objections.

(b) Identification of Chandra with Chandra-gupta I.

Dr. Fleet, Basak and Ayingar identify Chandra with Chandra-gupta I. This view, however, seems to be doubtful and improbable. The Mebrauli Pillar Inscription credits Chandra with the conquest of Bengal which does not seem possible in the case of Chandra-gupta I. It is certain that some parts of Bengal were conquered by Samudra-gupta and not by Chandra-gupta I. There is not the slightest hint in the Allahabad Pillar Inscription that any part of Bengal formed a part of Gupta empire during the reign of Chandra-gupta I. Secondly, king Chandra is said to have
conquered Vahllikas which would take his territories as far as Sindh, Punjab and further north west which seems very improbable in the case of Chandra-gupta I. The Allahabad Pillar Inscription shows that Chandra-gupta I’s territories were confined to the Gangetic valley from Pataliputra to Paryaga. The territories further north and west of Paryaga, the Doab (territories between the Ganges and the Jamuna) and probably some portions of the Punjab were added by Samudragupta. Moreover, the boast of the sole sovereignty of the earth seems quite untenable in Chandra-gupta I’s case. (For details see pages 28-29 of this book).

(c) Identification of Chandra with Chandravarman of Pushkarna.

Hariprasad Shastri and R.D. Banerji maintain that Chandra of the Mebrauli Inscription was Chandravarman a king of Pushkarna (in Rajputana). The identification is based on the evidence of the Susania Rock Inscription. But the only common feature of the Susania Rock Inscription and the Mebrauli Pillar Inscription is that both of these are Vaishnav records. Again, the geographical position of Pushkarna (in Rajputana), the Susania Rock (near Raniganj in Bihar) and the Vishnapada (near Bera) render the proposed identification improbable. Lastly, the Susania Rock Inscription says nothing about the military achievements of Chandravarman. On the contrary, the Mandasor Inscription seems to refer to him as a mere local chief, Chandravarman of the Susania Rock Inscription may be identified with Chandravarman of the Allahabad Pillar Inscription of Samudra-gupta who was defeated along with other kings of Aryavarta. Thus the third theory regarding the identification of Chandra of the Mebrauli Pillar Inscription also seems to be untenable.

(d) Identification of Chandra with Chandra-gupta II

Scholars like Jayaswal, R.K. Mookerji, D.C. Sarkar and Dandekar identify Chandra of the Mebrauli Inscription with Chandra-gupta II Vikramaditya. They hold that this identification is valid on deeper historical grounds. The following facts may be considered in favour of this identification.

In the first place, the language of and expression on the coins of Chandra-gupta II show a striking similarity with those occurring on the Mebrauli Pillar Inscription.

Secondly, it is contended that the Mebrauli Pillar Inscription presents a script which is very similar to that of the Allahabad Pillar Inscription, the Brahmi of the northern class of the 5th century A.D. Dandekar suggests that the language and style of the stanzas in the Mebrauli Inscription are such as Kalidasa, who was patronised by Chandra-gupta II, would have employed.”
Thirdly, it is pointed out that the copper coins of Chand a-gupta II record his name simply as Chandra. This point removes an important objection to the identification of name Chandra with Chandra-gupta II.

Fourthly, the Mehrauli Inscription suggests that king Chandra’s political influence extended to the southern countries, that he was the lord of a great empire and that he was a great Vaishnav. All these facts are also applicable to Chandra-gupta II’s case.

Fifthly, the passage of the Mehrauli inscription which states that Chandra crossed the seven mouths of Indus and conquered the Vahlika does not offer any difficulty in the identification of the Chandra with Chandra-gupta II. Dr. Dandekar holds that it was necessary for Chandra-gupta II to win a victory over Balakh if he were determined to annihilate the Kushan rule in India completely. Bactria in fact was the real base from where the Kushans reinforced their power. It was, therefore, necessary for Chandra-gupta II to cross the seven mouths of Indus to conquer Balakh; and the conquest of these territories was one of the main achievements of Chandra-gupta II.

Dr. R. K. Mookarji writes that the Mathura Pillar Inscription of Chandra-gupta II shows that the last outpost and the stronghold of the Saka Kushan power at Mathura fell into the hands of the Guptas. This conquest was made by Chandra-gupta II after he had subdued the Sakas of Western Malwa and Gujrat. He undertook the expedition against the Vahlikas by getting across the seven mouths of the river Indus. Chandra-gupta II, “thus followed in the wake his father’s conquest of the territories of Devaputras, Shahis and Shahanushabis who. represented the remnants of the retreating Kushan power in the north-west up to Balakh but his conquest remained to be completed by his son.”

Lastly, the Mehrauli Pillar Inscription suggests that Chandra conquered Bengal. Chandra-gupta II also conquered Bengal, which is proved by the fact that this province was held by his descendants after him.

**Conclusion.**

From the study of various guesses and theories regarding the identification of the Chandra of Mehrauli Pillar Inscription it seems more plausible to take him as Chandra-gupta II. It is, however, impossible to accept this identification as final. The king Chandra remains an illusive personality and “an isolated figure in Indian history in which it is difficult to assign his proper place.”
Points to Remember

1. The Mehrauli Pillar Inscription records in Sanskrit the exploits of a king Chandra; the pillar originally located near Bess removed to Delhi later.

2. The inscription undated; posthumous in character; records the erection of the pillar Vishnudwipa.

3. The Inscription records the following achievements of the Chandras:
   (a) Conquest of Vanga country
   (b) conquest of Vahlitas
   (c) spread of his fame unto the southern sea
   (d) achievement of sole sovereignty of the earth.

Identification of Chandra: King Chandra - a controversial figure, difficult to assign his proper place in the Indian history.

Identification with Chandra-gupta Maurya: Some scholars identify Chandra with Chandra-gupta Maurya, the pillar erected by Samudra-gupta in memory of Chandra-gupta Maurya; Chandra was a Vaishnava whereas Chandra-gupta Maurya a disciple of orthodox Brahmanical faith, identification based on mere conjectures.

Identification of Chandra with Chandra-gupta I: This view held by Fleet, Basuck and Ayinvar; Chandra credited with the conquest of Vanga (Bengal) and Vahlita (Sindh, Punjab and North West), Chandra-gupta I cannot be credited with such great achievements, the sole sovereignty of the earth not applicable to Chandra-gupta I.

Identification of Chandra with Chandravarman of Pushkarna: Harparshad Shastri and R. D. Banerji support this theory on the basis of Susania Rock Inscription. The only common features of the Susania Rock and Mehrauli Pillar Inscription is that both are Vaishnava records, the Mandasor Inscription refers to Chandravarman only as a local chief; Chandravarman of Susania Rock Inscription may be identified with Chandravarman of the Allahabad Pillar Inscription who was defeated by Samudra-gupta.

Identification of Chandra with Channa-gupta II

The identification seems valid on deeper historical grounds.

Grounds of Identification: (a) Similarity of the language and expression on the coins of Chandra-gupta II and the Mehrauli Inscription
   (b) Script of the Mehrauli Inscription and the Allahabad Pillar Inscription similar
   (c) Copper coins of Chandra-gupta II simply bear the name of Chandra (d) Chandra extended his empire up to the south; lord of an empire; was a Vaishnava; all these facts applicable to the life of Chandra-gupta II (e) Chandra captured Vahlita (Balakhi) and Vanga (Bengal)
Conclusion: No theory of identification of Chandra can be accepted with certainty, Chandra remains an illusive personality.

Q: What light does the account of travels of Fa-hien throw on the condition of India during the reign of Chandra-gupta II.

Q: Write an account of Fahien's travels with special reference to the social and economic condition of the age.

Ans. The history of the reign of Chandra-gupta II is illuminated by the valuable account of Fahien, the celebrated Chinese pilgrim, who travelled in India in the beginning of the 5th century A.D. with the main object of studying authentic Buddhist sacred books. A large part of his account is taken up with legends about the Buddha and the holy sites and monuments connected with Buddhism. It is only incidental that he speaks of the people and their civilization. But even these casual remarks are of immense help in elucidating a subject of which our knowledge is otherwise very meagre, vague and poor. In fact, his casual way of referring to the condition of life itself is a sufficient guarantee of truth. But his work suffers from serious defects as well. As his main interest was to collect Buddhist canonical texts and as he was much absorbed in the holy things, he does not even care to note the name of the emperor in whose dominions he spent several years. Further, some of his statements are too general and exaggerated to be accepted without caution. But in spite of all these drawbacks in his work, he is trustworthy when he records what he saw.

Route of his Journey.

Fahien started for India in 390 A.D. He braved the perils of journey through the dangerous regions of Gobi desert and mountainous tracts of Khotan, the Pamirs, Swat and Gandhara and then reached Taxila. During his stay in India, he travelled widely. He visited almost all the then known places of Buddhist sanctity. From Taxila he reached Peshawar and then entered the Punjab and moved towards south-east visiting a number of sacred towns like Mathura, Samkasya, Kanauj, Kausambi, Kasi, Kusinara, Sravasti, Kapilvastu, Pataliputra, Nalanda etc. He remained in India till 414 A.D. It was in this year that he took a ship from the port of Tamralipti (Tamluk, in the Midnapur district) for his homeward journey. He visited Ceylon, Java and Sumatra on the way and returned home.
Fahien's account of the government and society during the reign of Chandra-gupta II.

Fahien's account known as Fo-kun-ld or Record of Buddhist Kingdoms does not tell us anything about the political condition of India or the splendour of the imperial court or the achievements of Chandra-gupta II but occasionally he turns from his pious quest to observe the condition of the government and the society during those days.

The character of the Gupta government.

Fahien's account gives us a glimpse of the administration of the Middle Kingdom which formed the heart of Chandra-gupta II's dominions. He writes that towards the south of Mathura, there was a country called the Middle kingdom (of the Brahmins). The country was studded with wealthy towns and the people were numerous and happy. Fahien has nothing but praise for the Gupta administration which according to him was mild and benevolent and the people were singularly free from bureaucratic tyranny. The government followed the policy of 'let alone' (laissez faire) towards its subjects and did not interfere with the lives of the people. They were not required to have their households registered or to attend to any magistrates or their rules. They were not troubled with passport regulations or as the pilgrim puts it bluntly. "Those who want to go away, may go those who want to stop, may stop." The administration of the criminal justice seemed to him milder as compared with the Chinese system. The king in the administration of justice used no corporal punishments. Criminals were simply fined lightly or heavily according to the gravity of the offence. Capital punishment was never inflicted. Persons guilty of rebellion, an expression which probably included brigandage, suffered amputation of the right hand, but such a penalty was exceptional. Inspite of the mildness of criminal law, travel was evidently reasonably safe. The state revenue was derived mainly from the rents of the crown lands. The royal officers were paid a regular fixed salary and had no occasion to live on the people.

Social and Economic condition of the people

The account of Fahien shows that the people in general were highly cultured, wealthy and prosperous. They led a highly moral life and vied with one another in the practise of Dharma. He writes, "Throughout the country no one kills any living thing, nor drinks wine, nor eats onion or garlic. The only exception is that of the Chandalas ... ... ... In this country they do not keep pigs or fowls, there are no
dealings in cattle, no butcher's shop or distilleries in their market places ... only the Chandalas go hunting and deal in flesh". The statement though exaggerated, reveals that the sentiment of 'Ahmisa' non-violence was very strong in the Middle Kingdom. It is regretted that the prejudice against the Chandalas was very strong even in this enlightened epoch. Fahien writes the Chandalas were named evil men and dwell apart from others and if any one of them entered a town or market place, he was obliged to strike a piece of wood so that the 'pure' might avoid contact with them.

Fahien further writes that since the time of the Buddha, "the kings, elders and gentry, built shrines and gave land, houses, gardens with men and bullocks for cultivation. Binding title deeds were written out, which subsequent kings did not dare disregard".

Fahien writes that the cowrie shells were used as a medium of exchange. This statement, however, does not seem to be correct. He probably refers to petty transactions which he had the occasion to make. He does not seem to have met with gold coins which would only be required for large transactions. That the gold coins were actually in circulation is evident from the references to donations of 'dinaras' and 'Savarans' in various Gupta inscriptions.

That the people in general were content and patient and had limited criminal tendency is testified to when the pilgrim says that he travelled all over the country without any molestation on the highways.

There were rest houses on the highways which provided ample and comfortable accommodation to the travellers. He observes, "Rooms, with beds and mattresses, food and clothes, are provided for resident and travelling monks without fail, and this is the same in all places."

About the climate of the country, Fahien observes that in the Middle Kingdom the climate "is warm and equitable, without frost or snow."

Dr. R. Mookerji writes that the account of the Middle kingdom which was the stronghold of the Brahmins, as given by Fahien shows, "how the people were allowed by government considerable individual freedom not subject to vexatious interference from its Officers in the shape of registration, or other restrictions; economic liberty with unfettered mobility of labour, so that agriculturists were not tied to holdings like serfs; and humane criminal law. The moral progress and public spirit of the people are shown in their liberal endowments and educational institutions. These endowments took the form of permanent
grants of lands, with full apparatus necessary for their cultivation by men and bullocks. This shows that these cultural institutions had to maintain efficient agricultural departments to make out of their landed properties, cultivated fields as well as gardens or orchards, enough income to meet their expenditure. Monetary grants in aid of schools and colleges were unknown in those days. The ways of life were based on the cult of non-violence, with vegetarian diet, ruling out heating spices like onion or garlic, also distilleries, piggeries, and butcheries.

**Splendour of Pataliputra.**

Regarding Pataliputra, Fahien, who stayed there for three years, records that even in the 5th century A.D., this ancient city retained its splendour as an imperial capital and its importance as a great centre of learning and religion. On the occasion of his visit to Pataliputra, the pilgrim felt amazed at the sight of magnificent Ashoka palace which was at that time still in existence and was so cunningly constructed of stone that it was reputed to have been the work of a super human agency. He further writes that there existed in the city two imposing and elegant monasteries one occupied by the followers of the Hinayana faith and the other by those of the Mahayana sect. The monk residents in both the establishments together numbered about six or seven thousand, whose learned exposition of law and disciplined monastic life attracted seekers after knowledge from all parts of India. Fahien spent three years here in learning Sanskrit and was happy to obtain certain works on monastic discipline as taught by various schools of the Buddhist faith, for which he had sought elsewhere in vain.

Fahien found the city flourishing and the people rich and of charitable disposition. He also testifies that the heads of Vaishya families established houses for dispensing charity and medicine. He found in the capital an excellent free hospital endowed by benevolent and educated citizens, in which the poor patients were supplied food and medicine free of charge according to their needs. Fahien describes with great admiration the splendid procession of richly adorned images of the Buddha and Bodhisattvas carried on some twenty huge cars all constructed according to a certain pattern but differently painted and decorated. The people of the city organised such a procession every year on the eighth day of the second month. It was attended by the singers, musicians and followers of all the sects including Brahmans. Fahien observes that similar processions were common in other parts of the country. There were arrangements for all sorts of games and amusements for the people and in the evening the city was illuminated with lamps.
Certain Localities Unprosperous.

Dr. V. A. Smith suggests that while the general prosperity and tranquility of the country under the rule of Chandragupta II are abundantly proved by the express testimony of Fahien, and by his unobstructed movements in all directions during his stay in the country, yet certain parts of the country did not share in the general well-being and retrogressed in population and wealth. The city of Gaya which was once a flourishing centre was deserted and came to be surrounded by jungles. The holy places of Bodhagaya six miles to the south of Gaya, were empty and desolate and an extensive tract of country near the foot of the mountains, which was thickly populated in the 5th century B.C., was now sparsely populated. The great city of Sravasti, the ancient capital of Kosala had no more than two hundred families. At Kapalavastu, there was no government or people: wild elephants and lions made it difficult of access. At Kapalavastu and also at Kushinagar lived a few monks and their lay attendants who clung to the sacred spots and derived meagre subsistance from the alms of rare pilgrims. It is difficult to suggest the causes of decay of these territories.

Religious Condition.

Fahien was a Buddhist pilgrim and he came to India with a set purpose of collecting Buddhist scriptures and of visiting the sites hallowed by the memory of the Buddha. He, naturally, therefore, speaks more enthusiastically of Buddhism than of any other faith. During the course of his journey of about 500 miles from the Indus to Mathura, Fahien moved from monastery to monastery and speaks of great monastic establishments. It appears from his account that Buddhism was in a flourishing condition in the Punjab, Mathura and the Bengal. At Mathura, he counted twenty monasteries tenanted by three thousand monks. In the Middle Kingdom, however, Buddhism was by no means popular. In these parts of the country this faith seemed to be on its last legs. In each of the principal towns of the Middle Kingdom the pilgrim just saw one or two monasteries and sometimes even none. Important Buddhist places in this territory which in the time of Asoka had a large population had lost their importance and were in a desolate condition. The devout pilgrim was disappointed to find that Kapalavastu, Kushinagar and Bodhagaya were in ruins and deserted and the few families concerned with the monks were the only population.

Brahminism was predominant in the Middle Kingdom as it is clear from the fact that the ruler was a devout Vaishnav. The evidence
of the coins and inscriptions also supports this fact. In this time of Brahminical revival Fahien gives no hint of any form of religious persecution or any attempt on the part of the orthodox Hindu rulers to deprive the Buddhists of their endowments or privileges. The Gupta inscriptions show that some high officials of Chandra-gupta like Saba Virasena and Amarkardava were Saiva and Buddhist in their persuasions. The epigraphic records of gifts to the Buddhist community even by government officials also bear testimony to their tolerant policy.

Moreland and Banerji opine that the most probable conclusion to be drawn from Fahien's observation about the religious condition of the country taken as a whole, is that Hinduism predominated in the bulk of the Gangetic plain; Buddhism had more adherents in the east and in the west than in the centre of the country, but there is not sufficient grounds for describing it as predominant in either region. When we supplement the pilgrim's observations by the few scraps of informations available in other sources, the view appears to be justified that, while Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainaism existed side by side, they were not ordinarily in actual conflict.

Conclusion.

The celebrated account of the Chinese pilgrim, thus gives us valuable information about the government, the religious and economic condition of the country, the habits and manners of the people and the chief cities of India during the reign of Chandra-gupta II. Dr. V. A. Smith while making an estimate of Fahien’s account writes that although the particulars recorded by Fahien are insufficient to gratify the curiosity of the 20th century, yet suffice to give a tolerably vivid picture of the state of the country. The picture is a pleasing one on the whole and proves that Vikramaditya was capable of bestowing on his people the benefits of an orderly government in sufficient measure to allow them to grow rich in peace and prosper abundantly.” The importance of the work of Fahien, is further enhanced in view of the fact that there are few contemporary sources which throw any light on the condition of the society and government during this period.

Points to Remember

Introduction: - Fahien, a Chinese pilgrim visited India in the beginning of the 5th century A.D. to collect Buddhist literature; incidently speaks of the society and government in the times of Chandra-gupta II, his work though suffers from some defects, useful and trustworthy.
Route of the Journey: - Traversed through the deserts of Gobi; crossed the mountainous regions of Pamir, Swat and Khotan reached Taxila. In India visited Mathura, Kanauj, Svrasthi, Kapilavastu, Valsali, Pataliputra, Gaya and Turamali. On his homeward journey visited Ceylon and Java.

Account of the Middle kingdom

Fahien gives no information about the political condition of India or the achievements of Chandra-gupta II; only gives some information about the condition of the people and the government.

Gupta Administration: - Gives an account of Middle Kingdom the heart of the Gupta empire, country studded with wealthy towns; government followed a policy of ‘let alone’; no restrictions on the movements of the people; punishments mild, officers received fixed salaries.

Social and Economic conditions: - People prosperous and happy, the people generally abstained from meat and liquor, Chandalas despised. Economic prosperity; liberal endowments in the form of permanent grants of land. Climate of the Middle Kingdom was temperate; travel safe.

Splendour of Pataliputra: - A magnificent city, its inhabitants rich and happy; numerous charitable institutions endowed by benevolent citizens; a free hospital in the city. Fahien deeply impressed at the sight of magnificent Ashoka palace which still existed; two large monasteries one of the Hinayana and the other of the Mahayana sect in the city, noticed a Buddhist procession of images mounted on decorated cars, attended by the people of all faiths.

Some Localities Unprosperous: - Some territories deserted and desolate, Gaya and large tracts on the foot of mountains lay waste; Gaya Kapilvastu, Kusinagara. Arvasti once largely populated and flourishing, now ruined; only a few m mk families lived there.

Religious Condition: - Buddhism in a flourishing state in the Punjab and along the course of Jumna; at Mathura alone 20 monasteries; Buddhism, however, declining in other parts of the country, evident from the desolate condition of many Buddhist holy places; also not popular in the Middle kingdom, the king Vaishnav; government followed a policy of religious toleration; communal harmony.

Conclusion: - Fahien’s account a valuable source of information about the government, society, economic and religious condition of the
country. The importance of the account enhanced as no other contemporary source of information about this aspect of history of this period available.

Q. 1. Critically describe the main types of coins of Chandra-gupta II.

2. "The reign of Chandra-gupta II is remarkable for its numismatic activity" Altekar.

Discuss the main types of coins his coins and their bearing on the history of his reign.

Ans. The reign of Chandra-gupta II is one of the glorious periods in the history of coinage in India. He abandoned the issuing of many types of coins which were in circulation during the reign of Samudragupta and introduced a number of original artistic types such as the Lion Slayer Type, the Horseman Type and Chhatra Type. The coins of most of these types are original in conception and show no foreign influence whatsoever. His gold coins show a definite effort to leave the standard of the later Kushans and to approach that of the heavier standard of the Indian 'suvarna.' In his coins the throned goddess is now replaced by purely Indian type of goddess seated on a lotus. His reign, in fact, witnessed the issuing of coins of best specimens of Hindu period. Chandra-gupta II was the first Gupta sovereign who introduced silver coinage which was later extended by Kumar-gupta I and Sikanda-gupta. He also struck copper coins of various types. Dr. Altekar, therefore, rightly remarks that the reign of Chandra-gupta II is remarkable for its numismatic activity.

Dr. Altekar opines that Chandra-gupta II because of his conviction in Vaishnavism did not perform Ashvamedha sacrifice and stopped the issuing of Ashvamedha coins. He also seems to have abandoned circulating Battle-Axe Type and the Lyrist Type of coins.

Chandra-gupta II issued various types of coins in accordance with the need of a large empire. We find a great variety in his different types of coins. His coins may be classified under the following heads.

**Gold Coins of Chandra-gupta II.**

**The Archer Type.**

The commonest type of coins issued by Chandra-gupta II appears
to be the Archer type. A large number of coins of this type have been discovered all over the Gupta empire. They show a great variety. In these coins the obverse shows the king standing, holding a bow in left hand and the arrow in the right hand and a Garuda standard bound with a fillet on left. The king’s name is given in a verticle line and the legend is Mah-rajadhira-ja Sri Chandra-gupta. On the reverse is shown goddess Laxmi her feet resting on flower. These coins prove the king’s preference for the bow and arrow over other types of weapons of war.

Couch Type.

The Couch type coins of Chandra-gupta II are very rare and only seven specimens have so far been discovered. In this type, the obverse shows the king wearing waist-cloth, seated upon a couch holding a flower in his right hand while his left hand is resting on a edge of a couch. The reverse shows goddess Laxmi seated on the throne holding lotus uplifted and her feet resting on lotus. A single specimen of another variety of this coin has been discovered which shows the king and queen seated on a couch.

The coins of the couch type were most probably issued in the early period of his reign. This type suggests that like his father, Chandra-gupta II’s martial spirits were not incompatable with an artistic and intellectual temperament. The Couch type resembles his father’s Lyrist type but in the former type instead of a Lyre he holds a flower in uplifted right hand and the legend Rupakriti (an embodiment of beauty) which probably emphasises his intellectual and physical accomplishments.

Chakra Vikrama Type.

Only one coin of this type was found in Bayana Hoard of Imperial Gupta coins. In these coins, the obverse shows a figure of Chakra looking like a halo round the deity who must be god Chakrapursha. The god is shown offering to the king the boon of parakarmah as is indicated by the legend Chakravikrama appearing on the reverse. This type of coins aim to depict the direct communion of the king with the almighty and hints at the belief of the king in the theory of the Divine Right of Kings. They also indicate the king’s inclination towards Vaishnavism.

Horseman Type.

Chandra-gupta II was the first Gupta sovereign who introduced
the Horseman type of coins which became the usual or general type in the time of his son and successor Kumar-gupta I. The total number of coins of this type so far found in various districts of the Uttar Pradesh and at Bayana is about 144. The obverse shows the king riding a fully caparisoned horse, his dress includes waistcloth with long sashes which fly behind him and jewellery. On some specimens he has a bow in the hand while in others a sword at the left side. The reverse shows goddess seated on a wicker stool, holding a fillet in the right hand and a lotus with leaves and roots behind her.

Lion-Slayer Type.

The coins of this type are of high artistic merit. It was a freak but widely issued type. In this type, the obverse shows the king attacking a lion with a bow and arrow. There are different varieties of this type which depict the different postures in slaying the lion. According to Dr. Smith the Lion-Slayer type of coins may be divided into three categories.

Lion Combatant Type
Lion Trampler Type
Lion Retreating Type

The reverse shows the goddess seated on a lion, holding a fillet in out-stretched hand and a cornucopia in the left. It has been suggested that the goddess is Durga with whom is associated the lion, her Vahana or vehicle. She rides the lion as an embodiment of Shakti. But due to the presence of the lotus some writers suggest that she is Luxmi. The legend on this type of coins is "The moon among kings, brave as a lion, whose fame is far-spread, invincible on the earth conquers heaven." The lion appears to show the conquest of Surashtra, the abode of lion.

Chhatra or Umbrella Type.

There are two main varieties in this type of coins in which the obverse legend differs. The Chhatra type introduces new features viz., the figure of a dwarf carrying the royal parasol. The obverse shows the king casting incense on altar. Behind him is shown a dwarf holding a Chhatra over the king's head. On the reverse we find Laxmi with a noose in her right hand and a lotus in the left and standing on a lotus. In the first class of these coins the legend is Maharaja Sri Chandra-gupta but on the second it is Kshitim avajitya sucharitair-divam Jayati Vikramadityah. In the first variety, the legend is in verse and in the second it is in prose.
Silver Coins.

Chandra-gupta II was responsible for the introduction of silver currency. Dr. R. D. Banerji remarks that Chandra-gupta II was compelled to issue a silver coinage for the provinces of Gujrat and Malwa just as the Mughal emperor Akbar was compelled to issue a new type of rupee for his recently conquered province of Gujrat. The silver coinage of Chandra-gupta II was an exact copy of the late Western Saka coinage. The obverse of these coins show the king’s bust, the date in Brahmali numerals, the whole surrounded by traces of meaningless and degenerate Greek letters. The reverse introduces Gupta features, the Garuda, the family crest of the Guptas in place of Chaitya and the circular legend Parmabhangavata Maharajadhiraja Sri Chandra-gupta Vikramaditya. In another variety of coins of this type the legend is Sri-gupta kulasya Maharajadhiraja-Sri Chandra gupta Vikramankasya. The characters of the legend are very much affected by the peculiar numismatic alphabet of the Kathiawar.

The Silver coins of Chandra-gupta II are extremely rare though he ruled for a long period.

Copper Coins.

Dr. R. D. Banerji writes that “the copper coinage of Chandra-gupta II is much better known and more varied than that of his father Samudra-gupta.” The general type of copper coins show on the obverse king and on the reverse Garuda. But there are variations in the figuring of both the Garuda and the king. The king’s bust is shown three quarters or in some varieties half length with perhaps a flower in right hand. The Garuda is seen nimbathe, standing facing with outspread wings, or with two human arms or without any, or standing on an altar or holding a snake in his mouth or merely holding it.

There is also Chhatra type of copper coins. It shows king at altar, with dwarf attendant holding a Chhatra over his head. Some varieties of copper coins omit the king but retain the Garuda, with the obverse legend Sri-Chandra completed by the legend Guptah on the verse. In some varieties the legend is simply Chandra without the suffix Sri. There is Vase Type of copper coins in which the name on the obverse is Chandra and on the reverse Garuda is replaced by a flower vase with flowers hanging down its sides.

Some copper coins of Chandra-gupta II are extremely small, being approximately about one-third of an inch in diameter.
Estimate.

Thus we see that Chandra-gupta made remarkable innovations in the coinage of the country. The study of his coins give us much insight into the history of his reign. His gold coins reflect the pomp, power and prosperity of his empire and to some extent also his striking personality. His Lion-Slayer type of coins have a special significance. According to Dr. R. K. Mookerji, the issuing of this type of coins by Chandra-gupta II celebrates his conquest of region of Gujrat and Malwa which is still the abode of lions to this day in India. Again, the use of the new title Bhagavata on this type of coins goes to prove that Chandra-gupta II did not remain worshipper of Shakti after he had accomplished his programme of conquests. This type of coins also reflects, the personal habits of the king. The legend Paramabhadra appearing on his Horseman type of coins indicates that his personal religion was Vaishnavism. The Couch type of his coins shows his artistic and intellectual accomplishments. The silver coins of Chandra-gupta II indicate his conquest of Malwa and Gujrat and also help us in fixing the approximate date of conquest of these territories. Lastly, his copper coins of Vase type which bear the name simply as Chandra has made some scholars to identify him with the Chandra of Mehrauli Pillar Inscription.

Points to Remember

The reign of Chandra-gupta II remarkable for numismatic activity; he abandoned many old types; introduced new types; made many innovations; produced the best specimens of Hindu coinage; his coins show a large variety.

Archer Type: The commonest type; Oby. king standing with a bow in the left hand and an arrow in his right. Rev. goddess Laxmi; many varieties in this type.

Couch Type: Rare type; obv. king seated upon a couch holding a flower in the right hand, his left hand resting on the edge of a couch. Rev: a goddess seated on the throne. Another variety shows king and queen seated on a couch.

Chakra Vikrama Type: A single coin of this type discovered from the Bayana Hoard; obv: God Chakra-purusha giving some boon to the king and the king receiving it; this type hints indirectly at the theory of Divine Right of Kings.

Horsemman Type: Chandra-gupta II perhaps the first Gupta
sovereign to issue this type of coins. Obv. king riding a horse carrying a sword or a bow. Rev. goddess seated on a wicker stool holding a noose in her right hand, a lotus in the left.

**Lion Slayer Type:** This type is of high artistic merit. Obv: king attacking a lion with bow and arrow, in other varieties the king attacking a lion with a sword; three categories (i) Lion Combatant type. (ii) Lion Trampler type. (iii) Lion Retreating type. The Rev: probably goddess Laxmi and the legend.

**Chhatra or Umbrella Type:** Two varieties in this type obv. the king making oblations, behind him a dwarf holding a Chhatra over king’s head. Rev. Laxmi with a noose in her right hand and a lotus in left, the legends differ in the two varieties.

**Silver Coins:** First gupta king to introduce silver coinage, issued in imitation of Western Sakas after the conquest of Gujrat and Malwa. Obv. the king’s bust, date in Brahmi numerals; legend in meaningless Greek letters. Rev. shows a completely Gupta design, Garuda and the legend.

**Copper Coins:** Various types of copper coins discovered; general type has many varieties, obv: bust of the king Rev. Garuda, variations in figuring of both king and Garuda. Vase Type records Chandra-gupta II’s; name simply as Chandra; also issued Chhatra Type of copper coins.

**Estimate:** Chandra-gupta II’s coinage gives much information about his reign. His gold coins depict his power, personality and position.—Lion-Slayer type celebrates his conquest of Malwa and Gujrat the abode of lion, Couch Type shows his artistic and intellectual temperament, his silver coins help in fixing his date of conquest of Gujrat and Malwa; the Vase type of copper coins help in identifying Chandra-gupta II with the Chandra of Mehrauli Pillar Inscription.

**Q.** Write notes on the following inscriptions:

1. Udhayagiri Cave Inscriptions of Chandra-gupta II.
3. Mathura Stone Inscription of Chandra-gupta II.
5. Gadwa Stone Inscription of Chandra-gupta II.
Udayagiri Stone Inscriptions.

Udayagiri Stone Inscription of 401 A.D. (G.E. 82)

This inscription of Chandra-gupta II was discovered by General Cunningham in a cave in Udayagiri hills near Bhilsa. Udayagiri is a small hill with a small village of the same name near it. There is a cave temple here called the Chandra-gupta cave temple. The inscription is inscribed in the upper part of a smoothed panel, over two figures, one of the four-armed god Vishnu, attended by his two wives and the other of a twelve armed goddess probably Laxmi. The inscription is dated year 82 i.e. 401-402 A.D. The date is given partly in numerical symbols and partly in words.

The main object of the inscription was to record the gift of two sculptures above which the inscription was engraved by a Maharaja of the Sanakanika clan, who was probably a feudatory of Chandra-gupta II. Dandekar suggests that this Sanakanika seems to have belonged to the tribe of the same name referred to in the Allahabad Pillar Inscription of Samudra-gupta. Dr. Banerji is, however, of the view that the donor Sanakanika chief, whose name is mutilated was Virasena.

The inscription has some historical significance. It provides us with some knowledge about the state religion. It also brings the date of conquest of Malwa and Gujrat by Chandra-gupta II much earlier than that ascertained from numismatic evidence.

Second Udayagiri Cave Inscription.

The Second Udayagiri Inscription has been ascribed by Fleet to Chandra-gupta II's time. The inscription is unfortunately undated. It records the excavation of the cave which served as a temple of god Siva, by order of a person Virasena also called Saba, a king's minister of peace and war who is described to have attained this position by hereditary rights. The minister is also mentioned as Sandhivigra-hika, a man of learning and an inhabitant of Pataliputra. The last line of the inscription records that minister Saba was accompanying the king (Chandra-gupta II) who came to this place while the latter was "seeking to conquer the whole world."

Sanchi Stone Inscription.

This inscription was discovered at Sanchi, a place in the north-east Malwa. This record was inscribed sometime in 412-13 A.D. (G. E. 93) and is the last known inscription of Chandra-gupta II.
The inscription records the grant by Amarkardava, an officer in the government of Chandra-gupta II, of a village and a sum of money to the great Buddhist Vihara at Sanchi, for the subsistence of five Buddhist monks and lighting of a lamp. The inscription is very useful from historical point of view. Besides giving date and confirming Chandra-gupta II's occupation of Malwa, the inscription records the important fact that Chandra-gupta's more familiar name was Devaraja. The inscription proves that although Chandra-gupta II was a Vaishnav, he was tolerant towards other religions and even helped them with gifts and donations.

Mathura Stone Inscription of Chandra-gupta II.

It is an important Stone Inscription of Chandra-gupta II which was discovered by general Cunniingham in 1853 A. D. Inspite of the fact that a few of its lines have been irreparably lost, it is useful from the historical point of view.

The inscription is undated. It states that Chandra-gupta II was a son of Samudra-gupta by queen Dattadevi. It also records that Chandra-gupta II was Tatprigrihata i.e. was selected for the throne out of all his sons by Samudra-gupta. It thus contradicts the views of scholars who hold that Samudra-gupta was succeeded by Rama-gupta.

The inscription throws light on the religion of Chandra-gupta II. From an image of Vishnu on this inscription we can safely conclude that he was a devout Vaishnav. This record also makes us acquainted with the position of Chandra-gupta II and his ancestors. It helps us in linking his name with his grandmother and clan of the Lichchhavis to which she belonged. It also supports the conclusion about the position of the Lichchhavis. Further, it records that Sri gupta and Ghatotkacha, the great grandfather and grandfather respectively of Samudra-gupta were only Maharajahs and did not enjoy any independent position.

The inscription also gives valuable information about Samudragupta and corroborates what we learn from other sources. It records that he had no rival of his calibre in the world and his fame spread upto the four oceans. He was the supreme authority from the Northern mountains to the Southern seas and from the eastern to the western ocean. It also shows that Samudra-gupta performed the Ashvamedha ceremony in right royal epic fashion. He has been compared with gods like Dhana Varna, Indira and Antaka.
Mathura Pillar Inscription of the Gupta Era. 61.

The inscription was discovered in a garden near the Harding bridge at Mathura. The record is inscribed on a small stone pillar and consists of seventeen lines. The inscription is dated Gupta Era 61 which is written both in numericals as well as in words. It also contains the regnal year but unfortunately this part of the inscription is damaged and the regnal year cannot be read with absolute certainty. Some scholars read it as Prathma or the first while others read it as Panchama or the fifth year of the reign of Chandra-gupta II.

The inscription is Saiva one and on one side of the pillar is to be found a naked figure of a Saivagana which may be taken to be Bhairva. The inscription opens with the name of Bhattaraka-Maharaja-Rajadhiraja Chandra-gupta, the worthy son (Saputra) of the Bhattaraka Maharaja-Rajadhiraja Samudra-gupta. The object of this inscription is to record the building of a Saiva temple, named Kapilasevara by a Saiva ascetic. The last lines of the inscription contain a request to the emperor to protect the grant made for the worship of the deity and for charity at the temple.

The real significance of the inscription lies in the fact that it supplies us with a very early date in the reign of Chandra-gupta II as G.E. 61 corresponding to 375 A.D. which before the discovery of this inscription was supposed to fall in the reign of Samudra-gupta. It also substantially supports the view of Dr. Smith that Chandra-gupta II came to the throne in 375 A.D.

Gadhwa Stone Inscription of Chandra-gupta II.

This stone inscription of Chandra-gupta II was discovered at Gadhwa in the Allahabad district in 1870-71 and is now preserved in the Imperial Museum Calcutta.

The inscription is badly damaged at some places and the name of Chandra-gupta II cannot be read. But the date and the titles, Parmabhaagvata and Maharajadhiraja which are still preserved in the inscription, clearly indicate that it belongs to the reign of Chandra-gupta II.

The inscription is in Sanskrit and is in prose style. It mentions a date in the reign of Chandra-gupta II i.e. 407-408 A.D. There is also a mention of Pataliputra, but there is nothing in it to indicate that it was the capital of Chandra-gupta II's empire. The inscription also records the gift of ten dinaras made by Chandra-gupta II in charity to the
Brahmin community.

**Points to Remember**

**Udayagiri Cave Inscription** :- *An inscription in Udayagiri Cave near Bhilsa dated G. E. 82–410-11 records the gift by a Maharaja Sankanika of two sculptures, one of Vishnu and the other of Laxmi; the inscription throws light on the state religion, helps in ascertaining the date of conquest of Malwa and Gujarat by Chandra-gupta II.*

**Second Udayagiri Cave Inscription** :- *The inscription undated: records the excavation of a cave to serve as a sanctuary of god Saiva by order of Virasena; it also describes how the king, accompanied by Virasena, came to Udayagiri in pursuit of his world conquest.*

**Sanchi Stone Inscription of 93 G. E. = 412 A. D.** :- *Records the donation by Amarkadava to a Buddhist monastery of a village and some money for the subsistence of 5 monks and lighting a lamp; the inscription records Deva Raja as another familiar name of Chandra-gupta II, confirms his conquest of Gujarat and Malwa.*

**Mathura Stone Inscription** :- *discovered by Cunningham in 1853, throws light on the genealogy of the imperial Gupta sovereigns; corroborates much information what we gather from either epigraphical and numismatic records.*

**Mathura Pillar Inscription of 61 G. E.** :- *Newly discovered near Harding Bridge Mathura; gives date both in regnal year and Gupta year; the inscription damaged and regnal year cannot be read clearly; records the building of a Saiva temple; the inscription supplies an early date i.e. 61 G. E. in the reign of Chandra-gupta II.*

**Gadhwa Stone Inscription of Chandra-gupta II** :- *records a date in the reign of Chandra-gupta II i.e. 407–408 A. D., the titles in the inscription indicate that it belongs to the reign of Chandra-gupta II, not very important from historical point of view.*
CHAPTER VII
KUMARAGUPTA I MAHENDRADITYA

Q. Write a short account of the reign and achievements of Kumara-gupta I.

His Reign Period.

Kumara-gupta I was the son and successor of Chandra-gupta II. A large number of his dated coins and inscriptions help us in fixing his reign period with more or less certainty. The earliest date of his reign as stated in the Bilsad Inscription is G.E.96=A.D.415. The latest known date of his reign found on one of his silver coins is G.E. 136=455 A.D. It is, therefore, evident that Kumara-gupta I ruled from 415 to 455 A.D. He thus enjoyed a long reign of about 40 years.

Extent of his Empire.

Very little is known about the political career of Kumara-gupta I and the events of his reign, but his extensive coinage and the wide distribution of his numerous inscriptions indicate that he was able to retain intact the vast dominions which he had inherited from his father. They also suggest that the strength, unity and prestige of the empire remained unshaken during his reign. The Mandasar Stone Inscription of Malwa Era 493 seems to indicate that Kumara-gupta I also added some territories to his already vast empire. The inscription records that Kumara-gupta I defeated a king named Bandhuvarma and made him acknowledge the Gupta suzerainty. His empire extended from North Bengal to Kathiawar and from Himalayas to Narmada. His coins seem to indicate that his influence at one time extended southwards most plausibly as far as the Satara district of the Deccan.

Asvamedha Sacrifice.

Certain gold coins of Kumara-gupta I indicate that he like Samudra-gupta performed the Asvamedha sacrifice as an assertion of his paramount sovereignty. Unfortunately contemporary inscriptions do not throw any light on his conquests but it may safely be said that he would not have performed the Asvamedha sacrifice without having gained some victories in the battlefield.
Disturbances in his reign.

Kumara-gupta I maintained peace in the country for over thirty years but towards the close of his reign, the empire was temporarily eclipsed by the invasions of his powerful enemies. It is difficult to determine the exact nature of the conflict and to identify the enemies of the Gupta empire. A passage in the Bhutari Pillar Inscription is the only source of our information about these disturbances but unfortunately this passage is not free from difficulties. According to Dr. Fleet, the enemies of the Guptas were Pushyamitra. But according to the new reading of the passage of the inscription, the hostile chiefs are simply referred to as enemies in general. If we accept the reading as Pushyamitra, it is not easy to locate the tribe. They have been mentioned in the Vishnu Purana and Jaina Kalpa sutras. It is suggested that they were living in the valley of Narmada or near the source of the river but it is by no means certain.

But whoever might have been the invaders, they were strong in arms and treasure and must have constituted a great menace to the Gupta empire. Kumara-gupta I appointed Skanda-gupta, (who was then crown prince) to accomplish the onerous task of dispelling the invaders. The crown prince had to suffer great hardships in crushing the adversaries. The Bhutari Pillar Inscription records that Skanda-gupta had to spend a whole night sleeping on the bare earth in the battle-field. Inspite of possible poetic fancies and exaggerations in the inscription, the statement leaves no doubt that the task of restoration of the fallen fortunes of the empire was not easy. Skanda-gupta was successful in dispelling the invasions of the foreign invaders. A contemporary poet writes, "the unsullied fame of the exploit was sung with great gratification in all quarters by all down to children". The severity of the struggle may be judged from the fact that the poet refers no less than four times to the ruined fortunes of the Gupta empire and their restoration by Skanda-gupta. The full programme of subjugation of the adversaries of the empire was, however, not accomplished by Skanda-gupta in the lifetime of his father. Kumara-gupta I presumably died when his army was still fighting against the enemies.

His ministers and other officers.

From the study of Kumara-gupta I’s inscriptions we gather that he had a well established system of administration. They also reveal the names of some governors and officers of the various provinces of the empire. The Tumain Inscription of 435 A. D. mentions prince Ghatotkacha, a member of the royal family, as governing the province
of Airikina (Eran, East Malwa) which included Tumbavana. The first Damodarpur Copper Plate Inscriptions of Kumara-gupta I of the year 443 A.D. points out that a governor Chiradatta was ruling ver Pundravardhana Bhukati or North Bengal. Under him there was Kumaramatya named Vetravarmar who served as a deputy governor of the district of Kotivarsha. The Mandasor Inscription of Kumara-gupta I and Bandhuvarma of Malwa era 493 indicates that Bandhuvarma was a viceroy or a feudatory cheif of Kumara-gupta I and was ruling at Desapur in Western Malwa. Govinda-gupta, probably a younger brother of Kumar-gupta I was also a governor in this region. The Karamdande Inscription of Kumara-gupta I mentions Prithvisena, who a minister of Kumara-gupta I and was afterwards appointed commander-in-chief and was probably stationed in Ouch.

Religious Condition.

Kumara-gupta I himself was a staunch Brahmanist but he seems to have scrupulously followed his father’s policy of religious toleration. The fact is evident from his treatment with various religious sects which have been referred to in his inscriptions. During his reign, the worship of Kartikya, of Buddha, of Shaiva in the linga form and of the Sun as well as that of Vishnu flourished peacefully side by side. The Bilasad Inscription of 415 A.D. speaks of worship of god Swami Mahasena (Kartikya) whose worship was very popular in those days. The Manukwar Inscription of G.E. 129 records the construction of an image of the Buddha by Bhikshu Buddhamitra who was probably the teacher of Vasubandhu. The Mandasor Inscription describes the construction of a superb temple of the Sun by a guild of silk-weavers. The Gangdhar Inscription of 423 A.D. records the construction of a Vishnusthanam by the two sons of a minister of the local king of Malwa named Visvavarma. The Bagram Copper Plate Inscription of 447 A.D. mentions the grant of a piece of land to the temple of god Govinda swami (Vishnu). The Udayagiri Cave Inscription of 425 A.D. refers to the construction of an image of Jina-vara Parsva. Another inscription mentions the installation of a Jain Tirthankara by Kumara-gupta I at Mathura in the G.E. 113 = 432 A.D. All the above records show that different religions of the country were flourishing side by side under public support.

Several inscriptions of Kumara-gupta I also record the creation of charitable endowments. The Gadhwa Inscription records the gift of twelve gold coins (Dinars) for a charity house. The Damodarpur Plates of Kumara-gupta I and Kalaikuri Inscriptions refer to grant of land to Brahmins for performing Agnihotra and Panchamahayajnas.
Economic Prosperity.

The inscriptions of Kumara-gupta I give us a clear glimpse of the economic life and the revenue administration of the country during his reign. The earlier part of his reign was by far the most prosperous period in the whole of the Gupta history. Manju-sri-Mulakalpa describes Kumara-gupta I as an excellent sovereign. The Mandasor Inscription of 493 Malwa Era indicates that the commerce and trade were flourishing under the system of Sherinis or self-governing guild organisations. The inscription also seems to suggest that the western Malwa was rapidly developing into a great centre of silk and cotton goods trade and that the silk wares of the weavers of Mandasor had such a fine finish that they captured the entire market of central and northern India in a short time.

Art and Architecture.

R. D. Banerji writes that the immense received by the western overseas trade and influx of foreign gold into the country manifested itself in a great revival of art. It was in the reign of Kumara-gupta I that Gupta architecture and sculpture received its final form. The Gangdhar Stone Inscription mentions Visvaraman equipping his city built on the bank of Gargara with wells for irrigation, tanks, temples and halls of gods, drinking-wells and parks of various kinds, causeways and reservoirs of water. The Mandasor Inscription gives a glowing account of the district of Lata which was adorned with temples and Assembly-halls of the gods and Viharas. It also describes that the city of Desapura was decorated with rows of storeyed mansions like rows of aerial chariots and with paintings. The houses were very high resembling the peaks of white clouds lit up with forked lightning or the lofty peaks of Kailash mountain. There was a Sun temple, the broad and lofty spires of which resembled a mountain. The temple had later to be repaired and then it became one of the beauties of this beautiful city, 'like the Moon shining in cloudless sky or the Kaustubha blazing on the breast of Sarnin.'

Some beautiful specimens of sculpture were also produced in his reign. The Jaina image from Mathura of 114 G. E. = 433 A.D., the Buddha image discovered at Manukwar dedicated in 443 A.D., the copper images of the Buddha discovered at Nalanda and Sultanganj in Bhagalpur district together with images discovered at Sarnath near Benaras are the best known examples of sculpture of Kumara-gupta's reign. Dr. Banerji opines that the influence of art is also to be distinctly seen in the coins of Kumara-gupta I, which are the finest of the entire Gupta series.
His coinage.

Kumara-gupta I issued a large number of coins of different types and varieties. The new types introduced by this emperor include the swordsman type, the elephant rider type and the peacock type. Some of his coins are reminiscent of his early hunting exploits. He continued the issue of silver coins of the Western Kashtrapa type initiated by his father but he was compelled due to great financial pressure during the wars against the foreign enemies to mint this type on silver platted copper instead of pure silver. (See next question.)

His Estimate.

Though Kumar-gupta I’s coins indicate that he compared himself with the ‘General of the Gods’ but the general trend of events of his reign and the subsequent description of the Gupta Empire during the reign of his successor indicate that he was not an intrepid leader of men like his grandfather or a notable general like his father. The credit of having preserved the vast empire intact for a long time, however, is evidently due to him. His period was a period of ‘fruition of the empire.’ Samudra-gupta and Chandra-gupta II had sown the seeds, Kumara-gupta I reaped the harvest. The government remained free from internal and external dangers for a long period of more than thirty years and concentrated on several administrative reforms. Although his military accomplishments were not remarkable yet his achievements in the field of administration were renowned. During his reign, the Indian art and architecture also attained the height of excellence. Dr. R. C. Majumdar while making an estimate of Kumara-gupta I writes, “The reign of Kumara-gupta is regarded as devoid of interest and importance. But in forming a true estimate of his character and achievements we must give full importance to certain significant details which are generally overlooked. The numerous inscriptions of this age mention only one military campaign towards the end of his reign, while they all clearly indicate a peaceful and stable administration from the Arabian Sea to the Bay of Bengal under his personal authority. Only a strong and benevolent administration could have kept the vast empire so thoroughly in check. The repulse of the Hunas and other enemies shortly after his death proves the efficiency of the imperial army and that it was preserved for nearly 40 years even under peaceful conditions reflects no small credit upon Kumara-gupta. On the whole, it is not unlikely that more credit is due to Kumara-gupta’s administration and personality than is usually given to him by modern historians. His reign is generally looked upon as a mere dark background against which shine brilliantly those of his two predecessors and immediate successor. But for aught we know this may be unfair to him and not
in consonance with strict historical truth."

Points to Remember

Kumara-gupta I ruled from 415 to 455 A.D.; His empire extended from North Bengal to Kathiwarh and from Himalayas to Narmada; his influence also extended probably upto Satara in the Deccan; performed Asvamedha sacrifice probably after gaining some victories on the battlefield.

His war :- The later period of his rule eclipsed by the invasions of foreign invaders, probably Pushyamitra, difficult to identify the enemies and the exact nature of the conflict. Kumara-gupta I appointed Skanda-gupta to dispell the adversaries, Skanda-gupta routed the enemies after suffering great hardships.

Administration :- A well established system of administration; his inscriptions reveal the names of his ministers and officers; Ghatotkacha a prince of the royal family governed Anrikina; Chiradatta ruled over North Bengal; Vetravarma a deputy governor of districts of Kritivarsha; Bandhuvarama viceroy of Western Malwa, prithivena a minister of Kumara-gupta I, who was later appointed commander-in-chief.

Religious condition :- Kumara-gupta I a tolerant ruler; all religions flourished side by side, the inscriptions show the erection of temples of Kartikya, the Buddha, the Sun, Vishnu. Vara Parsava (Jaina) the inscriptions also record the creation of charitable endowments.

Economic Prosperity :- His reign the most prosperous period in the Gupta history, commerce and trade flourished; Western Malwa great centre of silk and cotton goods trade.

Art and Architecture :- The Gupta art and architecture received its final form during Kumara-gupta I’s reign, magnificent buildings, temples and works of public utility constructed, sculpture also progressed, beautiful sp cimems of art and architecture produced.

Coinage :- Issued a large number of coins, issued original types viz; swordman type, peacock type, elephant-rider type; Issued very inferior quality of coins during the closing years of his reign due to the financial crisis.

Estimate:- Kumara-gupta not a great king like his grandfather, or his ather, his reign period a ‘period of fruition’, made administrative reforms, art, and architecture progressed; views of R. C. Majumdar.
Q. Describe the main coin types issued by Kumara-gupta I.

Ans. Kumara-gupta I is noted for his great numismatic activity. He issued a large number of gold and silver coins of different varieties pointing to the vast extent of territories within which they were in circulation. He extended the silver coinage of Western Kashatrapa type which was originally issued by Chandra-gupta II. He also issued separate coinage for circulation in Central India. Dr. R. D. Banerji remarks that the Gupta coinage reached the highest point of excellence and variety during the reign of Kumara-gupta I. Dr. Majumdar, however, holds that the art of coinage began to decline in the reign of Kumara-gupta I. No doubt, he issued various new types of coins viz., the swordsman type, peacock type, and the elephant-rider type, but his coins show a definite artistic deterioration which was later accentuated by the declining fortunes of the empire.

Kumara-gupta I’s coins may be classified under the following heads:

**Archer Type.**

The Archer Type of coins was the commonest type issued by Kumara-gupta I. R.D. Banerji holds that this type of coins of Kumara-gupta were a class by themselves and were of high artistic merit. Some writers, however, opine that this type of coins are not of such a high standard as his coins of some other categories. In this type, the obverse shows the king standing with a bow in his left hand and an arrow in his right. The reverse shows the goddess seated on a lotus. There are several varieties in this type according to the obverse legend. The legend on the reverse in all the varieties is the same viz., Sri Mahendrah.

**Swordsman Type.**

This type is original and very finely executed. In this type, the obverse shows the king standing wearing waistcloth, casting incense at the altar before him, his left hand rests on the hilt of a sword. On the reverse, the goddess Luxmi is seated on a lotus holding a fillet in out-stretched right hand and a lotus in her left hand which rests on hip. The circular legend on the obverse has been read as follows. "Kumara-gupta having conquered the earth wins heaven by good deeds." The legend on the obverse is Sri Kumara-guptah.

**Asvamedha Type.**

Asvamedha Type coins of Kumara-gupta suggest that like his grandfather Samudra-gupta, he performed the Asvamedha sacrifice. Kumara-gupta’s Asvamedha Type coins are rarer than the coins of the
same type of Samudra-gupta. These coins also indicate that Kumara-gupta I made some new conquests which led him to celebrate this ceremony. In this type, the obverse shows horse standing wearing breastband and saddle before sacrificial pillar. The legend is uncertain. The reverse indicates a queen standing (Mahishi Ananta Devi) holding Chowrie over right shoulder. The reverse legend indicates that Kumara-gupta by his conquest of heaven, receives the status of god Indra and assumes the appropriate new title Sri Asvamedhamahendra.

**Horseman Type.**

It is the most numerous type of gold coins of Kumara-gupta I. This type shows six varieties in their legends. In this type, on the obverse the king is shown riding on a fully caprisoned horse, holding different types of weapons. On the reverse the Goddess Luxmi is sitting on a wicker-stool and holding a lotus in the left hand. In some coins we find the goddess feeding peacock with a bunch of fruit with her right hand. These coins can be classified into two categories and each category into further varieties. This type seems to have been very popular in those days and a large number of such coins have been discovered.

**Lion-slayer Type.**

It is a rare type of the gold coinage of Kumara-gupta I. This type of coins were also issued by Samudra-gupta. But the coins of this type of Kumara-gupta I are not so artistically executed as the similar coins of his predecessors. There are two varieties in this type of coins. In the first variety the king is seen fighting the lion while the second shows the king trampling on the lion. The legend is "Kumara gupta unconquered being the lord of the earth wins heaven."

The legend indicates that Kumara-gupta had to fight many foreign adversaries but always emerged successful. He was known as the lord of the world but he wins the heaven sums up activities of the king which won a place for him in the next world.

**Tiger-slayer Type.**

This type seems to be partly influenced by the similar type of Samudra-gupta and partly by Kumara-gupta's own horse man type of coins. The obverse of these coins shows king shooting a tiger which falls backward, his foot trampling the tiger. The legend is "the glorious king whose strength and valour is like that of a tiger." The reverse shows goddess Luxmi standing feeding peacock with fruit.
This type gives an idea about the personal strength of the king. The figure of the king indicates that he was not at all nervous before a dashing tiger. It proves the fact that the king was a determined person.

**Peacock Type.**

Dr. R. D. Banerji remarks that this type is remarkable as being the most beautiful ever issued by a Gupta mint master. This type has also been called Kartikya type. These coins signify king's special respect for this Hindu deity. On the obverse the king is seen feeding a peacock from a bunch of fruit held in right hand. The reverse shows Kartikya riding on his peacock. The Kartikya (king) is shown holding a spear in his left hand, scattering some thing by his right hand before an object which is not clear. The legend is "Victorious by his merit is Mahendra Kumarah". It points out that the king was more proud of his own achievements than of the fortunes he had inherited.

**Pratapa Type.**

This type is also known as Apratigya type or king and two queens type. The obverse shows a male figure wearing long loose robe, with arms on breast, on his left a female figure wearing loose robe and helmet with shield on left arm. On the right of the male figure is also a female wearing loose robe holding out right hand and resting left hand on the hip. There is a Garuda behind the central figure. The reverse shows goddess Luxmi holding a lotus. There is a long legend which has not been read.

**Elephant-rider Type.**

This type is unique in the whole of Gupta coinage. On the obverse the king is shown holding goad in right hand and seated on an elephant. Behind the king is seated an attendant holding a Chhatra. The reverse shows the Luxmi standing facing on lotus flowers. There are legends on the reverse and the obverse which have not been completely read. This type throws light on the spirit of sportsmanship of the king. The elephant is also associated with goddess Luxmi on whose head it pours water according to the Hindu tradition. According to Sanskrit tradition the king has always a state elephant as a symbol of his sovereignty. The Chhatra is another token of sovereignty of the king.

**Elephant-rider Lion-slayer Type.**

This type of coins have been discovered in the Bayana head of imperial Gupta coins. This type shows a lion being attacked by the ruler and the elephant. The king is shown sitting on the horse and furiously advancing with a dagger in the hand to attack the lion.
The reverse shows goddess holding some object in her hand which is not clear and a peacock at some distance looking at or towards her.

**Rhinoceros-slayer Type.**

This type has also been discovered at Bayana. It gives an indication of the sportsman spirit of the king. The obverse shows the king on a horse wearing a buttoned coat and trousers and learning to attack the rhino by the sword. The reverse shows a goddess standing on a crocodile and a lotus in her hand. A female attendant is standing behind her and is holding a parasol over the head of the goddess. The legend reads “Lord Kumara-gupta is always victorious who saves himself from the rhino by means of a sword.”

**Chhatra Type.**

This type of coins of Kumara-Gupta I seem to be modelled on the lines of the same type issued by his predecessors. This type seems to be rare and only two specimens have so far been found. On the obverse of these coins the king is shown making oblations while an attendant with a Chhatra in his hand is standing behind the king. The legend is, “the king is the ruler of the world.” Some writers suggest that the person holding the umbrella is not a woman but a man, because of the dress worn by her. The legend on the coins is, “the king is the ruler of the world.”

**Lyrist Type.**

Kumara-gupta I also issued Lyrist Type of coins in imitation of his grandfather Samudra-gupta. On the obverse, the king is shown playing on a musical instrument while the queen is sitting on a cushion by his side and is smelling a flower. There is another variety in this type of coins in which the king is seen offering a bunch of flowers to the queen.

**Silver coins.**

Kumara-gupta I issued silver coins in a greater number and variety than his father Chandra-gupta II. His silver coins may be broadly divided into the following general classes with variety in each.

The first class closely resembles the coins of Chandra-gupta II. In these coins the corrupt Greek letters still survived and they bear a striking resemblance to the silver coins of the later Western Kshatrapas. On the reverse there is well executed Garuda with seven stars above it and the legend Parmabhagvata Maharajadhiraja Sri Kumara-gupta Mahendraditya. These coins seem to have been struck for use in
Kathiawarh only.

The second class of silver coins are smaller in size and thicker than the first. They do not copy so closely the features of the Kshatrapa coins. The bust of the king on the obverse and the figure of Garuda on the reverse are very rudely executed. These coins omit the Greek letters and the seven fillets. They appear to have been in circulation in the hilly districts which separate Malwa from Northern Gujrat.

In the third class the Kshatrapa features reappear. This type contains the bust of the king on the obverse and the corrupt Greek letters. On the reverse there is a figure of Garuda.

The fourth class of silver coins comprised a new type of coins for use in the central parts of the Gupta empire in the Gangetic valley. These coins omit the Kshatrapa features and bear the true portrait of the king on the obverse and a peacock standing with outspread wings on the reverse. In these coins the Greek letters were replaced by a date in Brahmi letters. This type of coins was imitated by the Maukharis of the Uttar Pradesh and Vardhanas of the sixth and seventh centuries A. D.

The fifth class comprises of silver platted copper coins of Valabhi fabric. They have been found in large numbers in Kathiawrah and were issued during a period of great financial stress on Gupta imperial treasury. These coins show traces of degenerate Greek legends on the obverse and the figure of Garuda on the reverse. The surrounding legend is Paramabhangvata-Rajadhiraja-Sri Kumara-gupta Mahendraditya.

Copper Coins.

The copper coins of Kumara-gupta I are very rare and only two specimens are known so far and they present two types. In the first the king is seen standing towards the left and on the reverse the Garuda. The reverse legend is 'Kumara-gupta.' In the second type the obverse shows an altar and on the reverse the figure of the goddess seated on lion couchant. The obverse legend is Sri Ku.

Historical value of his coinage.

The coins of Kumara-gupta are indeed a valuable source of the history of his reign. They make us acquainted with the social, economic and religious condition of the country. The legend on the coins speak of the victories of the king over his adversaries. He is described as 'the lord of the earth who has conquered the earth.' His Asvamedha gold coins indicate that he added some territories to the empire which he had inherited from his father. The silver and copper
coinage of Kumara-gupta I indicates the financial pressure on the Gupta imperial treasury due to foreign invasions in the end of his reign. Some legends on his coins indicate that the glory of the Gupta empire was at its height during his reign. The legends on his coins also speak of the personal qualities of the king. Some of them describe him as “the glory of Gupta family upon which he shed lustre like moon,” and attribute to him “the invincible valour of both the lion and the tiger. They compare him to Vishnu and Simha the embodiments of supreme power.

Points to Remember

Kumara-gupta I’s reign witnessed great numismatic activity, issued new types of coins, extended silver coinage of his father, R. D. Banerji holds his coins are of great artistic merit, but Majumdar holds the art of coinage declined during his reign.

Archer Type: R. D. Banerji holds this type of high artistic merit, other writers differ, Obv. king standing, bow in the left hand and an arrow in the right. Rev. goddess luxmi seated on a lotus, many varieties in this type.

Swordsman Type: This type original, finally executed, Obv. king standing casting incense on altar, his left hand rests on the hilt of the sword. Rev. goddess Luxmi seated on a lotus, holding a fillet in right hand and a lotus in her left. Legend, ‘Kumara-gupta having conquered the earth wins heaven by good deeds’.

Asvamedha Type: A rare type, Obv. horse standing before a sacrificial pillar, Rev. a queen standing, the legend Sri Asvamedhamahendra.

Horsemans Type: Many varieties in this type, a popular type, Obv. king riding a fully caprisoned horse with different types of weapons, six different types of legends on different varieties, Rev. goddess Luxmi sitting on a wicker-stool.

Lion-slayer Type: This type of coins also issued by Samudragupta. Two varieties in this type, Obv. in the first variety king fighting a lion while in the second variety trampling on a lion.

Tiger-slayer type: This type influenced by Lion-slayer type of Chandragupta II and partly by Kumara-gupta’s own horseman type. The obv. king shooting a tiger Rev. Goddess Luxmi feeding peacock with fruit, this type shows the king as one getic and determined person.
Peacock Type: Most remarkable type, Obv. king feeding a peacock from a bunch of fruit. Rev. the goddess riding on a peacock.

Pratapa Type: also called Apratigha type, Obv. a figure of a king and of two queens on his sides. Rev. goddess seated facing on lotus.

Elephant-rider Type: This type issued for the first time by Kumara-gupta I, represents the mastery the Indians had attained in the art of coinage. Obv. king driving an elephant, an attendant sitting behind holding a Chhatra over him. Rev. goddess Laxmi seated on a flower.

Elephant-rider-Lion slayer Type: In this type obv. shows lion being attacked by the ruler and the elephant. Rev. goddess holding some object in her hand, and a peacock at some distance looking up towards her.

Rhino-slayer Type: This type found in the Bayana hoard of Gupta coins, Obv. king on the back of a horse, attacking rhino by the sword. Rev. goddess on a crocodile, with lotus in her hand.

Chhatra Type: Only two coins discovered, nothing new in this type, Obv. king making oblations, attendant with a Chhatra standing behind the king.

Lyrist Type: Coins in imitation of Samudra-gupta. Obv. king playing on a musical instrument, a queen sitting on a cushion by his side.

Silver and Copper Coins.

Issued silver coins in a greater number than Chandragupta II, coins divided into five general classes, the first three types meant for circulation in the Western India, issued silver plated copper coins. Also issued copper coins. Only two coins of two different varieties discovered.

Estimate of his coinage: His coins give valuable information about the social, economic and religious condition of the country, also give information about the personal character and achievements of Kumara-gupta I.

Q. Discuss the problem of succession to the Gupta throne after Kumara-Gupta I.

Ans. The Bhitari pillar Inscription of Skanda-gupta indicates that Skanda-gupta was the son and immediate successor of Kumara-
gupta I. But the discovery in 1889 of the Bhitari copper seal of Kumara-gupta III revealed the names of three more Gupta kings. The seal curiously enough omits to mention Skanda-gupta in the genealogical list of the Gupta kings. On the other hand it indicates that Puru-gupta succeeded Kumara-gupta I. This has given rise to a great controversy among the scholars about the question of the succession on the Gupta throne after Kumara-gupta I.

I. Skanda-gupta as the immediate successor of Kumara-gupta I.

Scholars like V. A. Smith, Panna Lal, Raychaudhuri and R. K. Mookerji hold that Skanda-gupta was the immediate successor of Kumara-gupta I. Smith, Allan and Raychaudhuri further suggest that Skanda-gupta had no male heir and was succeeded by his brother or half brother Puru-gupta who was followed by Narasimha-gupta. Narasimha-gupta was succeeded by Kumara-gupta II of Sarnath Inscription who was succeeded in turn by Budha-gupta. This view is also supported by historians like Allan, B.C. Sen and R.N. Dandekar. R.C. Majumdar also seems to agree to this view but refuses to admit that Skanda-gupta and Puru-gupta were two different persons. R. D. Banerji also supports the above view but with some slight modifications. This view is the most popular and also most accepted.

Dr. B. P. Sinha has, however, raised the following objections against the above view.

In the first place, B. P. Sinha rejects the chronological list of Gupta rulers as given by the above writers. He holds that it is impossible to believe that so many rulers could have passed in succession during a short span of eight or nine years. The last known date of Skanda-gupta is 466-67 A. D. and the first known date of Budha-gupta is 475-76 A. D. There is, therefore, no other alternative but to accommodate all these rulers within this short period i.e. 467-475 A. D. Dr. Raychaudhuri has tried to over-rule this objection of B. P. Sinha. He holds that there is nothing abnormal in this. In Vengi three Eastern Chalukya monarchs ruled for eight years and in Kashmir six kings and three generations ruled within a short period of six years. Dr. Sinha however, does not consider this analogy applicable as the examples are from very small and local kingdoms. He holds that although the Gupta kings were facing an embarrassing situation during this period yet there were no court rivalries and the nobles were not strong enough to dethrone a king according to their sweet will. He further holds that it is difficult to explain the continued existence of the fairly large Gupta empire down to the reign of Budha-gupta if the changes in the succession were so rapid. Again, the recent discovery of a seal of Vishnu-gupta at Nalanda has created further complications. The rulers who have to be placed in this
period now are Puru-gupta, Narasimha-gupta, Kumara-gupta II, Vishnu-gupta besides the other rulers viz., Dvadasaditya, Prakasaditya and Ghatotkacha-Gupta. All these rulers according to the available records must have ruled before Budha-gupta. If we agree with the views of Allan and Smith we are to crowd all these rulers within a short span of eight or nine years which is absurd. In view of the lack of any positive evidence, it is difficult to accept the theory in spite of the fact that it has been advanced and supported by some eminent authorities.

II. Skanda-gupta identical with Puru-gupta

Mr. Hoernle was the first scholar to suggest that Puru-gupta and Skanda-gupta were the names of one and the same person. This view is also supported by R. C. Majumdar and Krishna Dev. The supporters of this theory hold that the Bhitari seal indicates that Puru-gupta was the son and immediate successor of Kumara-gupta I. The Bhitari pillar inscription on the other hand records that Skanda-gupta was succeeded by Kumara-gupta I. Both Skanda-gupta and Puru-gupta are mentioned as ‘Tatapanudhiya’ in relation to Kumara-gupta I in the Bihar Stone inscription of Kumara-gupta I and the Bhitari seal of Kumara-gupta IIII respectively. It is, therefore, evident that Skanda-gupta and Puru-gupta were the names of one and the same person.

Secondly, in his account, Takakusu identifies paramartha Vikramaditya, the patron of Vasubandhu with Skanda-gupta. Takakasu’s account also mentions that Skanda-gupta was the father of Baladitya, who was the crown prince. The contemporary records indicate that Baladitya was the earlier name of Narasimha-gupta who was the son of Puru-gupta. It thus shows that Skanda-gupta was the same person as Puru-gupta.

Thirdly, according to Arya-Manjusri-Mulakalpa, Mahendra or Kumara-gupta was succeeded by Sakara or Skanda-gupta and that Sakara had more than one names. It also records that Skanda-gupta was followed by Baladitya. As Baladitya (also called Narasimha-gupta) succeeded Puru-gupta, it may be safely concluded that Skanda-gupta was the same person as Puru-gupta with different name.

Fourthly, it is contended that Skanda-gupta was the name of the ruler as crown prince. But later he came to be styled as Puru-gupta in recognition of the great services that he rendered to his family by inflicting a crushing defeat on the powerful Hunas.

Lastly, Dr. Majumdar holds that all the coins attributed to
Pura-gupta are exactly similar to those of Kumara-gupta I.

The views of the above writers have been forcefully refuted by B. P. Sinha, B. C. Sen and R. D. Banerji.

According to Dr. Sinha, the arguments advanced in support of the theory are interesting but deceptive. He writes that the account of Arya-Manju-Sri-Mulakalpa under reference is a religious book and does not appear to have been written for historical purposes. Further, this account is not a contemporary work but seems to have been written in the mediaeval age on mere heresy and, therefore, cannot be relied upon.

2. Dr. Sinha also does not agree with the view that Skanda-gupta changed his name to Puri-gupta after defeating the Hunas and the Pushyamitras. The other name of Skanda-gupta was Devaraja. No historical record mentions Puri-gupta as the second name of Skanda-gupta.

3. The theory is hardly convincing on the ground that while Puri-gupta is referred to by the title of Sri Vikramah or Vikramaditya, Skanda-gupta is always mentioned as Karamaditya on his coins.

4. Dr. Sinha also rejects the identification of Parmaratha Vikramaditya with Skanda-gupta as given by Takaksu in his account. He holds that the dates of the incident as given in this account are not clear and hence the theory can hardly be relied upon.

5. Dr. Dandekar holds that the evidence of coin type as put forward by R. C. Majumdar itself goes directly against the suggested identification of Puri-gupta with Skanda-gupta. He argues that when a dynasty is on its decline the general tendency of the coin type formulae and legends is to become fixed and stereotyped. Further, in the history of the coinage of the Imperial Gupta dynasty there is not a single instance in which the two personal names of the same emperor have been used on his coins. Under these circumstances it is unconvincing to assume that Skanda-gupta and Puri-gupta were the names of one and the same person.

III. Skanda-gupta succeeded by Kumara gupta II of the Sarnath Inscription

According to N. K. Bhattachari, Skanda-gupta and Puri-gupta were brothers. Puri-gupta was a child of 4 or 5 years when his father Kumar-gupta I died. Kumara-gupta I was succeeded by Skanda-gupta followed by Kumara-gupta (II) of Sarnath Inscription. The next king was Budha-gupta who was succeeded by Bhanu-gupta, the latter being followed by Puri-gupta. Mr. Bhattachari further suggests that
Puru-gupta must have been of advanced age when he succeeded Bhanu-gupta. He must have died soon after his accession and been succeeded by Narasimha-gupta in about 515 A.D. According to Bhattasali, “Puru-gupta patiently waited for a chance to ascend the throne not available till 50 years after the death of his father at the best computation, in the meanwhile watching the successive reigns of at least four kings Skanda, Kumara, Budha and Bhanu”.

The theory as advanced by Bhattasali has, however, been rejected by B.P. Sinha. He holds that in accordance with the chronological order there would be a gap of about 50 years between Skanda-gupta and Puru-gupta which is certainly a very long period for Puru-gupta to wait for the throne. Again, the theory seems to be hardly convincing on the ground that the contemporary record clearly indicates that Skanda-gupta died without a male heir. Puru-gupta then immediately could have occupied the throne rather than wait for his turn after so many other rulers.

IV: Theory of partition of the Gupta empire after Kumara-gupta I between Skanda-gupta and Puru-gupta

R.G. Basak has put forward the theory that after the death of Kumara-gupta I, the Gupta empire was split up into two rival branches. The first line was ruled by Skanda-gupta who was succeeded by Kumara-gupta II of the Sarnath Inscription. The latter was succeeded by Budha-gupta who in turn was followed by Bhanu-gupta. The second line of the dynasty was headed by Puru-gupta who established an independent kingdom somewhere in South Bihar. Puru-gupta was succeeded by Narsimha-gupta who was followed by Kumara-gupta of the Bhitari Seal Inscription. The second lineage survived for several decades till it was overthrown by internal dissensions and external aggressions. Basak supports his view point on the basis of a passage in the Junagarh Rock inscription which states that “the goddess of fortune and splendour, of her own accord selected (Skanda) as her husband having discarded all the other sons of the king as not coming upto her standard”. Basak writes that this passage implies that the greater part of the empire went to Skanda-gupta, who was selected by the “goddess of fortune as her husband” in spite of the fact that Puru-gupta had a better claim to the throne being a son of Kumara-gupta I form his chief queen Ananta-devi. Skanda-gupta through courtesy allowed his brother Puru-gupta to carry on as an independent ruler in a region of the empire. The successors of Skanda-gupta also did not disturb the successors of Puru-gupta.

The theory as advanced by Basak is unsound in view of the following facts.
In the first place, Dr. Dandekar writes that there is not the slightest evidence for assuming that there was any kind of disruption in the Gupta dynasty in the later half of the 5th century A.D. Secondly it is not possible on such assumption to say exactly what happened to these two lines of Gupta rulers in later history or to ascertain how long they continued to exist side by side.

Secondly, Dr. Sinha writes that it is difficult to accept the theory of Mr. Basak in the face of the fact that there was a great rivalry and jealousy between Puru-gupta and Skanda-gupta and also between the mothers of two princes during the life time of Kumara-gupta I. The suggestion that Skanda-gupta and his successors were allowed to rule independently in a part of the empire is hardly convincing. It is certain that Budha-gupta ruled from Bengal in the East to Malwa in the west and had no rival in the whole of Northern India. It is not clear how Budha-gupta or any of his predecessors allowed the successors of the line of Puru-gupta to exist independently when the rulers of the latter group had established their rule after a revolt against the authority of Skanda-gupta. To support his viewpoint Dr. Sinha holds that there are many instances of wars of succession even in the earlier Indian history. It is stated that Asoka ascended the throne after murdering his 99 brothers. Samudra-gupta had to fight against his brother Kacha for the Gupta throne. Again, Chandra-gupta II murdered his brother Rama-gupta to occupy the Gupta throne. Keeping in view these hard facts of the early history it is difficult to believe that the successors of Skanda-gupta or Skanda-gupta himself were so broad-minded as to tolerate an independent kingdom, parallel to their own especially when they were strong enough to crush it.

V. Skandagupta not the immediate successor of Kumaragupta I.

Dr. Sinha in his monumental work, "The Decline of the Kingdom of Mahidha" has put forward the view that there was a war of succession among the sons of Kumara Gupta I immediately after his death. The rivals for the Gupta throne were Skanda-gupta-Puru-gupta, Ghatotkacha-gupta and presumably Chandra-gupta III. Skanda-gupta does not seem to have been the rightful heir to the Gupta throne because he was not a son of Kumara-gupta I from his chief queen. Presumably Puru-gupta had a better claim to the throne as he was a son of Kumara-gupta I from Mahadevi Ananta-devi, the chief queen of Kumara-gupta I. On the basis of this better claim, Puru-gupta must have succeeded to the throne immediately after the death of Kumara-gupta I. The other claimants must have declared their independence in their respective regions where they had been appointed as governors by their father during his life time. This must have resulted in internal anarchy and disorder especially when the country was already facing the revolt of the Pushyamitradas and the Hunas were
knocking at the gates of India. Puru-gupta who was the immediate successor to the throne could not control the situation. Skanda-gupta soon rose to the occasion. After defeating the Hunas and Pushyamitrás, he put forward his claim to the throne. He defeated and killed Puru-gupta and hastened to convey the news of his victory to his mother whose name was most probably Devki. This theory seems plausible on the ground that Skanda-gupta died without a son and was succeeded by the children of Puru-gupta. In order to take their revenge, Puru-gupta's sons made it a point to omit the name of Skanda-gupta from all the official records. That is why the records of later Gupta kings do not mention the name of Skanda-gupta. Skanda-gupta might have marched against his two brothers Ghatotkacha-gupta and Chandragupta III and defeated them one after the other.

Three objections have been raised against the views put forward by B. P. Sinha.

In the first place, Dr. Dandekar holds that the last known date of Kumara-gupta I is 136 G. E. The first known date of Skanda-gupta is also the same. How then, could there be any interval between the death of Kumara-gupta I and accession of Skanda-gupta to the throne for Puru-gupta to intervene. Dr. Sinha, however, tries to rule out this objection. He says that it is possible that Kumara-gupta I died sometimes in the earlier part of the year and the accession of Skanda-gupta took place in the later part of that year. Puru-gupta was destined to rule for only a few months. Skanda-gupta being busy in fighting against the Pushyamitrás and Hunas, could not immediately return to court to press his claim and thus Puru-gupta got the chance to rule for a few months.

Secondly, it is suggested that the coins of the later period of the reign of Skanda-gupta are debased and are of inferior quality when compared to those of the earlier period of his reign. Skanda-gupta's superior type of coins which he issued during the earlier part of his reign resemble and are in no way inferior to those of Kumara-gupta I. The critics also hold that inferior quality of coins of the later period of Skanda-gupta resemble and are of equal weight to those of Puru-gupta. It thus shows that Puru-gupta succeeded Skanda-gupta and was not his predecessor. Dr. Sinha has also met this objection. He says that the chemical examination of the coins of Skanda-gupta has revealed that the coins of Skanda-gupta were of an almost equal purity throughout his reign. The notion that the debasement of currency took place in his later years is wrong.

Lastly, Shri P. L. Gupta holds that if Skanda-gupta was the successor of Puru-gupta, he would not have spared the latter's sons after he had captured the throne. Skanda-gupta died without a son
and was succeeded by the children of Puru-gupta. Mr. Gupta argues that it is a matter of history that after one's accession, a king never permits the children of his rival to survive. Dr. Sinha admits that there are some elements of truth in the argument advanced by P. L. Gupta yet it cannot be accepted as a gospal truth. Skanda-gupta defeated all his rivals and like a truly brave man, spared the children of his brother, as they were not an immediate danger to his government.

**Conclusion.**

From the study of the above theories about the question of succession to the throne after the death of Kumara-gupta I, we feel that it is difficult to come to any definite conclusion. Dr. Sinha has tried to clear the mist but his approach also suffers from contradictions and inconsistencies. The problem will remain unsolved till fresh material about the later history of the Guptas is available.

**Points to Remember.**

Divergent views held by scholars about the order of succession to the Gupta throne after Kumara-gupta I, the main problem is who come to the throne first Skanda-gupta or Puru-gupta.

1. Smith, Allan, Panna Lal, Raychaudhuri, R. K. Mookerji and Dandekar hold that Skanda-gupta was the immediate successor of Kumara-gupta I. Smith, Allan and Raychaudhuri suggest that Skanda-gupta was in turn succeeded by Puru-gupta, Narasimha-gupta and Kumara-gupta of the Bhitari Seal. This view most accepted; Refuted by Sinha; impossible to accommodate four kings in a short span of 8 years i.e. 467-75 A.D., Raychaudhuri's reply, there is nothing abnormal in it. Sinha holds the conditions in the later Gupta age different from the times from which analogy given by Raychaudhuri.

2. Hoernle, Krishan Dev and Smith identify Skanda-gupta with Puru-gupta on the evidence of (a) the epithet Tatpani-thyata (b) Marju-Sri-Mulakalpa. (c) Account of Tatakua (d) similarity of the coins of Skanda-gupta and Puru-gupta. The views rejected by Sinha, B.P. Sen and Dandekar.

3. N. K. Bhattasili holds Skanda-gupta succeeded by Kumara-gupta II of Sarnath Inscription., Puru-gupta of 5 years of age at the time of death of Kumara-gupta; Puru-gupta had to wait for 50 years to come to the throne. Bhattasili's arguments seem to be unsound.

4. Basak suggests that Gupta empire split into two branches after Kumara-gupta I, One line consisting of Skanda-gupta, his son Kumara-
gupta of Sarnath Inscription, his grandson Budha-gupta. The second line consisting of Puru-gupta, Narasimha-gupta and Kumara-gupta all of the Bhitari Seal. The views of Basak rejected by B.P. Sinha and Dandekar.

5. Sinha holds Skanda-gupta not the immediate successor of Kumara-gupta I; Puru-gupta a better claimant immediately succeeded to the throne; Skanda-gupta braver and abler, war of succession among the sons of Kumara-gupta I; Skanda-gupta triumphant; killed his rivals. Puru-gupta ruled only for a few months. Various objections raised against the views of Sinha; Sinha's defence powerful.

Conclusion. The views highly controversial, difficult to come to any final decision till more historical records on the subject discovered.
CHAPTER VII.

Skanda-gupta Vikramaditya.

Skanda-gupta, the last great king of the Gupta dynasty succeeded to the throne in 455 A.D. He assumed the title of Vikramaditya in imitation of his grandfather Chandra-gupta II. Right from beginning of his reign he had to face a sea of troubles. Even as a crown prince, Skanda-gupta had to fight against the powerful enemies of the empire most probably the Pushyamitras whom he successfully subdued. After his accession to the throne, he had to deal with the more formidable enemies, the Hunas. He stemmed the tide of their invasions, postponed the impending disaster and revived the falling fortunes of the empire. The numismatic evidence shows that he performed Asvamedha sacrifice but whether it commemorated any new conquest we do not know. He reformed the debased coinage of the time of Kumara-gupta by issuing coins of pure gold. He also issued silver and copper coins. The last ten years of his reign were spent in comparative peace but towards the close of his reign, a fresh swarm of Hunas poured into India and overwhelmed his empire. This time the forces of the empire seem to have been divided because of internal dissensions and consequently failed to resist the onslaughts of the barbarians. Some writers hold that he lost his life while trying to stem the mighty flood of the invaders. He died in or about 468 A.D. and with him the glory of the Gupta empire departed.

Q. Describe the main events of the reign of Skanda-gupta.

Q. 2. Reconstruct the story of Skanda-gupta on the basis of his inscriptions.

Ans.- Several important inscriptions of Skanda-gupta have been made available to us by the efforts of the archaeologists which greatly help us in reconstructing the history of his time. Of those, the most valuable is the Bhitari Pillar Inscription. Besides, the great Junagarh Rock Inscription, the Indrapura Copper Plate of 465 A.D., the Kahaum
Stone Pillar Inscription of 460 A. D., the Gadhwa Inscription of 467 A.D., the Bibar Inscription and the Kosam Siva Parvati Pedestal Inscription of 458 A.D. throw a flood of light on the achievements, personal equalities and political history of the reign of the last great ruler in the glorious galaxy of the Gupta sovereigns.

Succession.

According to the Bhitari Pillar Inscription, Skanda-gupta was the immediate successor of Kumara-gupta I. It records that Skanda-gupta was selected to the throne on the ground of his both fidelity to his father (adhering to the feet of his father like the bee to the lotus), and his superior military qualifications. To add to the evidence, the Junagarh Rock Inscription states that "Luxmi, the goddess of fortune, after examining by turns with due deliberation and seriously reflecting on the roots of all his virtues and foibles, fixed her choice upon him and rejected all other sons of the sovereign". The epigraphic record indicates that there were some troubles over the succession, and the other sons of Kumara-gupta I most probably Pura-gupta, Ghatotkacha-gupta and Chandra-gupta III set up rival claims for the throne but little is known of the nature of the conflict and it is difficult to arrive at any definite conclusion.

The dangers to the Empire.

The Bhitari Pillar Inscription records that as the Crown Prince, Skanda-gupta was deputed by Kumara-gupta I, as the sole hero of the Gupta dynasty to deal with the invasions of the enemies of the empire most probably the Pushyamitras. Skanda-gupta seems to have suffered much hardships in subduing them. A passage from the Bhitari Pillar Inscription tells, "By whom, when he prepared himself to restore the fallen fortunes of his family, a (whole) night was spent on a couch that was the bare earth and then having conquered the Pushyamitras, who had developed great power and wealth, he placed his left foot on a foot-stool which was the king (of that tribe himself)". Some writers have expressed doubts about the reading of the name Pushyamitra and hold that it should be read as Ayudhya-mitra. R. D. Banerji and Dandekar suggest that a close examination of the original shows that the suggested reading is not possible on account of the impossibility of the second syllable being yu. The inscription shows that during the progress of the Pushyamitras, Kumarragupta I died and the Gupta fortune was overwhelmed and Skanda-gupta gained a complete victory over his enemies.

Closely upon the heels of engagement with the Pushyamitras followed a greater menace to the safety of the Gupta empire and this
was the on rush of the Hunas, a race of fierce barbarians Skanda-gupta successfully repulsed their invasions. The Bhitari Pillar Inscription tells, “He shook the earth (dhara kamptia) in subduing the mighty Hunas with whom he came into close conflict.” Further, who when (his) father had attained the skies, conquered (his) enemies by the strength of his arm, and established again the ruined fortunes of his (lineage) and then crying “the victory has been achieved” went to report it to his mother” “just as Krishna did to Devki”.

The Junagarh Rock Inscription contains some references to Skanda-gupta’s struggle against the Mlechchhas. His war with Mlechchhas probably refers to his fight with the Hunas.

Dr. R. D. Banerji and Dandekar hold that the Bhitari Pillar Inscription proves that as the Crown Prince Skanda-gupta saved the Gupta empire from total destruction at the hands of powerful Pushyamitraka, who were probably the first wave of the Hunas to reach the plains of the Punjab. It also shows that after his accession to the throne, Skanda-gupta had defeated the second wave of the Hunas and had thus saved Northern India from complete destruction at the hands of the barbarians. R. D. Banerji holds that the defeat of the Hunas at the hands of Skanda-gupta is not referred in any other inscription of his reign.

Skanda-gupta deserves high praise for his great victory against the Hunas. He was undoubtedly the first hero in Europe and Asia to vanquish the Hunas. Full significance of the task performed by him can only be understood against the background of contemporary events. Dr. R. C. Majumdar writes, “If we remember that the cruel devastations of the Hunas had spread from the Danube to the Indus, that their leader Attila, who died in 453 A. D. was ‘able to send equal defiance to the courts of Ravenna and Constantinople’ and that thirty years later they overwhelmed Persia and killed its king, we can well realise the value of the great victory of Skanda-gupta over them. All over the vast empire the people must have heaved a sigh of relief at the great deliverance. This heroic achievement that saved his kingdom from the scourge of a cruel barbaric invasion justified the assumption of the title of Vikramaditya by Skanda-gupta.”

Selection of Frontier Officers.

A passage in the Junagarh Inscription indicates that after he had defeated his enemies, he set about organising his empire by appointing governors in all the provinces. As the defence of the frontiers of the state had become a serious problem, he took care that the most com-
petent officers should be appointed as the governors of frontier provinces. Central India and Saurashtra seem to have been the most vulnerable parts of the Gupta empire, the inscription records that “he deliberated for many a day and night before making up his mind as to who among his various generals could be entrusted with the important task of administering the lands of Saurashtra. Eventually he appointed a very faithful and valiant officer named Parnadatta as the governor of the western provinces and Sarvanga Vishyapati as the governor of the Doab and Bhimvarman as the ruler of the Kosam region.

His Religion.

Skanda-gupta himself was a devout Vaishnav but like his predecessors, he showed remarkable tolerance towards other religions. The people followed the noble example of the king. His tolerant spirit in religious matters is evident from his various inscriptions. The Kahaum Stone Pillar Inscription (No. 15) records the erection of five stone images of the Jain Tirthamkaras by one Madra, who is described as “full of affection for Brahmins, religious preceptors and ascetics”. Similarly the Indor Copper Plate Inscription records the establishment of a temple of the Sun by two Kshattriyas, who were merchants at Indrapura (Indor, Bulandshahar district of U. P.). A certain Brahmin named Devavishnu made a gift for the maintenance of a lamp in this temple. The donor made a permanent deposit with the local guild for meeting the cost of oil for lighting the lamp daily out of its interest without diminishing its original value.” The Bihar Stone Inscription of Skanda-gupta records the erection of a column called Yupa or pillar and the erection of a group of temples dedicated to gods headed by god Skanda and also to the Divine Mothers.

Repair of the Sudarsana Lake.

A remarkable event of the reign of Skanda-gupta was the restoration of the great dam of the Sudarsana Lake which had been built during the reign of Chandra-gupta Maurya. The Junagarh Rock Inscription tells that in 456 A. D. the embankments of the Sudarsana Lake burst during the heavy rains, and the stream which fed it became furious. Chakrapalita, an officer under governor Parnadatta repaired the embankments and constructed a Vishnu temple in 458 A. D. to commemorate the successful completion of the work. (See a separate question on the history of the Lake on page 148 of this book).

Extent of his empire.

The Inscriptions and coins of Skanda-gupta show that at the enith of his power he ruled over an extensive empire. The Junagarh
Rock Inscription records that his empire was bound by the waters of the four oceans. The Kahaum Pillar Inscription states that as a result of his conquests, "the heads of hundred kings fell at his feet and tendered their homage at his Darbar hall". His empire extended practically over the whole of Northern India including regions like Saurashtra, districts of Cambay, and the contiguous parts of Gujarat and Malwa. The Junagarh Rock Inscription shows that he ruled over Saurashtra. Some coins of Skanda-gupta have been found in Bihar, Bengal, Western India, Central India and Kathiwar. His coins were in circulation in the territories over which he ruled. We can, therefore, safely presume that he ruled over these territories. His control over these territories is also borne out by the discovery of his inscriptions at Junagarh (in Gujarat Kathiawar), Bhitari (Ghazipur district), Kahaum (Gorakhpur district), Indore (Central India) and in Bihar. He maintained his hold over his vast empire with the help of able governors. Parnadatta was the governor of Saurashtra. Another able governor, Saryana was in charge of the territory between the Kalindi and the Narmada. Another governor, Maharaja Bhimvarman was ruling over the Kausambhi region. No doubt, the disintegration of the empire had started in the closing years of Kumara-gupta I's reign and the chiefs of Malwa, Saurashtra, Central India, South Bihar and Southern India had successfully established small independent states but the strong arm of Skanda-gupta compelled them one after another to surrender unconditionally. He accomplished the work of subjugation of these states step by step, and by the 5th year of his reign, he had thoroughly completed his work and fulfilled his dream.

**Estimate of His Character.**

Skanda-gupta was indeed one of the great Gupta Sovereigns of India and was in no way inferior both in qualities of war and peace to any of the other leading Gupta monarchs. His greatness lies in the fact that he alone seems to have realised the peril which hung over India in the shape of clouds of barbarian huns, and like a true patriot he devoted himself to the task of securing the safety of his country. During the last days of Kumara-gupta, this prince stemmed the tide of the first Huna onslaught, and the victories obtained by the Gupta armies were due solely to his personal bravery. The Gupta panegyrist recorded with wonder the courage and the perseverance which he exhibited in dealing with his enemies. Dr. R. D. Banerji while making an estimate of Skanda-gupta's achievements remarks, "Of our progenitors, whom we ought to have remembered with gratitude, but whom centuries of Muslim oppression, rape, and destruction of records have caused to forget, the emperor Skanda-gupta stands in the foremost rank. When the great Magadh nation forgot its glorious past, its sacred duty of defending the gods and Brahmans, women and children, the weak and the helpless and above all the defence
of the mother-land, he alone remembered it, tried his best to maintain
the glorious record of his ancestors from being tarnished and the rich
and fertile plains of the Indus and Ganges from being trampled under
the feet of the countless barbarian Hunas. He was the last great hero
of Magadha who realised that it was his duty to defend the gates of
India with the last drop of his life blood. He spent his whole life in
the performance of this noble task and at the end sacrificed himself
cheerfully in the performance of his sacred duty”. To conclude, his
administration, his heroic wars, his patriotic ambitions..........all
these made Skanda-gupta one of the greatest Gupta emperors”.

Points to Remember

Introduction. Several inscriptions such as Bhitari Pillar Inscrip-
tion, the Junagarh Rock Inscription, the Indor Copper Plate Inscription,
the Bihar Inscription, the Gadhwa Stone Inscription, the Kahaum Inscrip-
tion, and Kosam Siva Parvati Pedestal Inscription throw light on the
history of Skanda-gupta’s reign.

Succession. The Bhitari Stone Inscription and the Junagarh Rock
Inscription indicate that Skanda-gupta was selected by his father for the
throne; the inscriptions indicate some trouble over the succession, the
nature of the dispute not known definitely.

The Pushyamitra and Huna Invasions. Skanda-gupta subdued
the Pushyamitras, also heroically fought against the other formidable
enemies—the Hunas. His victory over the Hunas was his great achieve-
ment.

Selection of Frontier Officers. Skanda-gupta realised the
importance of guarding the frontier; appointed capable governors of the
empire after great deliberation; appointed Pranadatta as the governor of
Saurashtra, Sarvanga Vishyapati that of Doab and Brahmanvarman as
the ruler of Kosam region

Religion. Skanda-gupta himself a Vaishnav but tolerant towards
other religion.; the Kahaum Stone Inscription, the Indor Copper Plate,
the Bihar Stone Inscription show his tolerant spirit.

Extent of his empire. Ruled over an extensive empire which
stretched from the Bay of Bengal to the Arabian Sea, and comprised
practically the whole of Northern India to the East of the Punjab and
Rajputana.

His Estimate. Skanda-gupta one of the greatest Gupta monarchs;
he was a wise administrator, a great warrior, a true patriot. Views of
Dr. Banerji.
Q. Trace the history of the Sudarsana Lake upto the time of Skanda-gupta.

Ans. The Sudarsana Lake was one of the magnificent works of the public utility undertaken by the Hindu kings in ancient India. Panikkar writes, "The Sudarsana Lake is a feat of engineering and is one of the most notable examples of irrigation in ancient India that has come down to us". This famous lake at Girnar in Kathiwar was originally constructed during the reign of Chandra-gupta Maurya by damming up a mountain stream with a great wall of masonry. Although Girnar is situated close to the Arabian Sea and is at a distance of at least 1000 miles from the Mauryan capital yet the needs of the local farmers even in this distant part of the empire did not escape the imperial notice. Pushyagupta, who was Chandra-gupta Maurya's, governor of the Western provinces, thought of the plan of damming up a small stream and thus providing a reservoir of great value for irrigation. He, accordingly in 310 B.C. got a lake constructed called the Lake Sudarsana, ("the beautiful") between the citadel on the east side of the hill and the Junagarh Rock farther to the east. Asoka, the grandson of Chandra-gupta Maurya excavated 260 B.C. canals for irrigation purposes from this great lake under the superintendence of his representative Raja Tushapha, who was then the viceroy of the western provinces. The lake was thus turned into an irrigation tank. These beneficent works constructed under the patronage of the Maurya emperors endured for four hundred years, but in the year 150 A.D., a storm of exceptional violence destroyed the embankment and with it the lake.

Rebuilding of the Dam.

The embankments of the great lake were built, "three times stronger by the Saka king Rudradaman I in 151 A.D. The work was carried out at a great expense from his treasury without laying any burden on the people by way of taxes or any benevolences. The history of the work has been preserved in the Girnar Inscription which is perhaps the only epigraphic record containing the names of Chandra-gupta Maurya and Asoka.

Repair of the Lake in the time of Skanda-gupta.

We learn from the Junagarh Rock Inscription that as a result of excessive rains, the Lake Sudarsana which served the city of Girnar, the capital of Saurashtra, once again burst its bunds one night in the Gupta year 136 A.D. = 455, the very first year of the reign of Skanda-gupta. As a result of this breach, all the rivers Palasini, Suvarnasikata
which were received into the lake and remained confined to it, now found their way into the ocean. The Sudarsana Lake which was like a veritable ocean drained of its waters, became an ugly sight, (Durdarsana) belying its name. The citizens were filled with despair as the whole countryside seemed to be threatened with ruin. At this critical juncture, Chakrapalita (the mayor of the capital city), the son of Parnadatta, came to the rescue of the people in true civic spirit and had the dam repaired and embankments renewed at "an immeasurable costs within a short period of two months. The new dam was a piece of solid masonry. The embankment was 100 cubits long, 58 cubits broad and of seven men's height (about 40 feet). Thus was brought about the renovation of the lake Sudarsana. The lake thus stood as a witness to the care which the rulers gave to the works of public utility. It was indeed a great achievement which stands to the credit of Parnadatta, the governor of Saurashtra and his son Chakrapalita. They saved the country from a great disaster. "The poet, echoing the voice of the grateful people, lauded up to the skies the virtues and merits of both the father and the son, in a composition which is expressly stated to be the "Book on repair of Sudarsana Lake" (Sudarsanatataka-Samaskia-grantha rachna)". To commemorate the successful completion of the work, a temple of the god Chakrabhrit or Vishnu was built on the dam by Chakrapalita.

The subsequent history of the Lake is not known. At sometime unknown, the ancient dam fell to ruin, and the lake finally disappeared. The site of the lake was buried deep in the jungle and was so utterly forgotten that the modern local enquiries have failed to ascertain its exact position. Dr. R. D. Banerji has suggested that the bed of the Sudarsana Lake is now a fertile plain surrounding the base of the Girnar mountain and the dense forest known as the Gir forest. No traces can be found either of the great embankments or the temple of the Vishnu built on the dam.

Points to Remember

The Sudarsana Lake a magnificent work of public utility; originally built by Chandra-gupta Maurya by damming up a mountain stream with great masonry wall; channels constructed for irrigation purposes by Asoka; turned the lake into irrigation tank. The dam and the lake destroyed by a great storm in 150 A.D., the dam rebuilt by Rudradaman I, a Saka king; "The dam built three times stronger."

2. The lake burst its bunds in the times of Skanda-gupta, the people in great distress; Chakrapalita, a local magistrate rebuilt the dam; the work highly praised by the poets of his time; to commemorate the completion of work, a temple of Vishnu built on the site of the dam.
3. Subsequent history of the lake not known, the bed of the lake buried in deep jungles, the sight of the dam difficult to locate.

Q. Write notes on the following inscriptions of Skanda-gupta
(a) Junagarh Rock Inscription, (b) Bhitari Pillar Inscription.

Ans. Junagarh Rock Inscription of Skanda-gupta.

This famous inscription is the earliest of Skanda-gupta’s epigraphic records. It was discovered by James Prinsep in 1838 on a rock at Junagarh in Gujrat Kathiawar. The whole of the inscription is in Sanskrit except a few words. It was probably inscribed in 255-56 A.D. and furnishes three dates of Skanda-gupta’s reign i.e. 136, 137, 138 Gupta era.

Historical Importance of the Inscription.

The Inscription gives valuable information about the exploits, conquests and achievements of Skanda-gupta as a crown prince and as a king. It states that he set himself as a garuda against his hostile governors who were like so many serpents lifting their hoods in pride. When his father died (pitari surasakahitvam praptavati), by his own prowess (atmasaktya) he humbled his enemies (avanatarih) and made subject to himself the earth bounded by the four oceans and flourishing countries (Chaturudadhi jalanam sphita paryata desam avanim).33

Next he humbled his enemies in the Mlechchha countries and made them announce that he had won victory over them. Some writers hold that his victory over the Mlechchhas refers to his campaign against the Hunas. The inscription seems to indicate that his conquests in different directions were complete, for he is said to have destroyed the root of the power of his enemies who themselves declared that he had defeated them.

Secondly, the inscription throws some light on the question of accession of Skanda-gupta to the throne. It states that the goddess of fortune (Luxmi) after examining fully his merits, fixed her choice upon him in preference to all other sons of the sovereign (Kumara-gupta I). This indicates that in accordance with the previous practice, the succession to the Gupta throne was regulated by merit rather than by priority of birth, the father selecting the best of his sons to succeed him.

Thirdly, the inscription gives some glimpses of his administration. It records that after having conquered the whole earth and humbling
the pride of his enemies, he set about organising his empire by appointing governors in all the provinces and spent many a day and night in thinking to find out among his officers (provincial governors) the most competent of them who could shoulder the burden of administration of the whole of Saurashtra countries newly acquired (praisihyam nikhilam Surashtra). His choice ultimately fell on Parnadatta to rule over the Saurashtra region. Having done this he felt at ease, just as the gods felt easy after appointing Varuna as the guardian of the western quarter.

The inscription further records that Parnadatta after much thought appointed his son Chakrapalita as the Mayor of the city of Grinagara, the capital of the country of Saurashtra. Chakrapalita was not in debt (Arini) by his extravagance; he was possessed of eloquence by which he could win over his colleagues of the Municipal Council. He was very social in habits and made friendly calls on the citizens (grihapravessa) in a free and unceremonious manner and was very popular.

Lastly, the inscription gives the history of the lake Sudarsana. It states that owing to excessive rains, the lake (tataka) Sudarsana which was the source of the city's water supply suddenly burst (bibheda) its dam in the Gupta Era 136=145 A. D. with the result that all the rivers like Palasini, Suvarnasikata and others rising from the neighbouring hills, Urjyayat (near Girnar) and Raivataka, which were received in the lake, found their way into the ocean. This fine lake which was like a deep ocean deprived of its waters, became an ugly site (durdarsana). The people were filled with despair, as their water supply had been cut off and their life without water had become miserable. At this time, Chakrapalita proved to be their true friend and saviour. He got the dam repaired and the embankments renewed within 2 months. The dam was about 180 feet long, about 110 feet wide and about 40 feet high. The embankment was made of strong stone so that the reservoir might last for all times (Sasvatakalpa-kalam). Thus was brought the renovation (samaskara) of lake Sudarsana. The importance of the inscription lies in the fact that it is the earliest of Skanda Gupta's inscriptions. It thus helps us in fixing the date of his accession. It also tells that the king took a great interest in works of public utility and the welfare of the public.

The Bhitari Stone Pillar Inscription.

The Bhitari Stone Pillar Inscription is an important and interesting monument of the history of Skanda-gupta's reign. It is a long inscription comprising of 19 lines inscribed on a red sand stone column which stands outside the village Bhitari in Gaziaabad district of Uttar Pradesh. It is written in Sanskrit and is partly in prose and partly in
verse. It was discovered in 1834. The inscription is unfortunately undated. Its purpose is to commemorate the installation of an image of Vishnu under the name of Sarangin and allotment to the idol, of a village outside which the column stands. The inscription also records the career of Skanda-gupta as the crown prince as well as the king. Incidentally the inscription also gives some information about the predecessors of Skanda-gupta.

**Historical Value of the Inscription.**

In the first place, the events recorded in the inscription give a connected history of the wars which Skanda-gupta fought against the enemies of the empire. It records that as crown prince, Skanda-gupta crushed the power of the Pushyamitrás and thus saved his father’s empire from total destruction. There is a controversy among the scholars about the reading of the word Pushyamitrás in the inscription. Mr. Divakar reads it as Yudhumitrán. Dr. Fleet and Dandekar hold that the reference is most distinctly to Pushyamitrás. Dr Banerji suggests that it appears as if Pushyamitrás were just one of the many tribes from among the Hunas, representing presumably the first wave of the Huna advance to reach the plains of the Punjab. The inscription indicates that Skanda-gupta had to face great hardships in subduing the Pushyamitrás. In a picturesque passage, the inscription states that “By whom (he) prepared himself to restore the fallen fortune of his family, a (whole) night was spent on a couch that was the bare earth; and having conquered the Pushyamitrás who had developed great power and wealth, placed his left foot on the footstool, which was the king of that tribe himself.”

The inscription records the victory of Skanda-gupta over the Hunas. It states, ‘Who when his father had attained the skies conquered (his) enemies by the strength of his arms, (and) established again the ruined fortunes of his (lineage), (and) then crying “the victory has been achieved” betook himself to his mother, whose eyes were full of tears of joy, just as Krishna, when he had slain (his) enemies, betook himself to (his mother) “Devki”. Again, “By his two arms the earth was shaken, when he, the creator (of a disturbance like that) of a terrible whirl pool, joined in close conflict with Hunas” Who with his own armies, established (again his) lineage that had been made to totter.........(and) with his two arms subjugated the earth, and showed mercy to the conquered people in distress, (but) has neither become proud nor arrogant though his glory is increasing day by day and whom the bards raised to distinction with (their) songs and praises.”

Secondly, the inscription indicates that Skanda-gupta was the immediate successor of his father, Kumara-gupta on the throne. It records that Skanda-gupta succeeded to the throne on the ground both
of his fidelity to his father (adhering to the feet of his father like the bee to the lotus) and superior military attainments as the only hero of the Gupta family.

Thirdly, the inscription throws some light on the personal qualities of Skanda-gupta. He was endowed with much prowess and remained the most conspicuous hero in the lineage of the guptas. His fame and glory spread far and wide. His good conduct and spotless soul emulated those who performed noble actions. Above all he was an accomplished musician. The combination of various qualities in him made him popular all over the world and people talked of him with great respect and reverence.

Lastly, the inscription gives valuable information about the predecessors of Skanda-gupta and fixes his relationship with them. It records that "the glorious Samudra-gupta, the son of Maharajadhiraja (Chandra-gupta I), had attained perfection. He was the exterminator of all kings. There was none who was equal to him in the world. His fame spread to the shores of the four oceans. He was equal to the gods Dhanda, Varuna, Indra and Antaka. He was the axe of the god Kritanta. He gave away 'many millions' of cows and gold pieces which he had lawfully acquired. He was the restorer of the Asvamedha sacrifice. He was the son of the son's son of the Maharaja gupta, son's son of the illustrious Maharaja Ghatotkacha, son of the glorious Maharajadhiraja Chandra-gupta I, the daughter's son of the Lichchhavis from Mahadevi Kumaradevi." Further it states that Samudra-gupta, "was the devout worshipper of God. He nominated Chandra-gupta II, the glorious one, as his successor. The latter was his son from queen Mahadevi Duttadevi and was himself unequalled in power."

The inscription is indeed very helpful in constructing the connected history of the Guptas in general and that of Skanda-gupta in particular. The inscription supplements the information which we gather from other epigraphic records and numismatic sources. It proves beyond doubt that the Hunas inspite of their repeated invasions could not make much impression and that throughout the reign of Skanda-gupta, the empire remained intact.

Points to Remember

Junagarh Rock Inscription

The inscription discovered in 1833, inscribed on a rock near Junagarh, dated 455 A.D., the earliest of Skanda-gupta's inscriptions.


**Historical Importance:**

[1] Gives information about Skanda-gupta's conquests and achievements; vanquished his enemies who recognised his victory; routed the Melechha country.

[2] Skanda-gupta selected by his father who was impressed by his ability.

[3] The inscription gives information about his administration; selected an able person Parnadatta as the governor of Saurashtra; Parnadatta appointed Chakrapalita as mayor of Girnar; popular with the citizens.

[4] The inscription mainly gives history of Lake Sudarsana; the lake burst its bunds; dam rebuilt and embankment renewed by Chakrapalita.

**Bhitari Stone Pillar Inscription**

[1] The inscription gives valuable information about the career of Skanda-gupta both as the crown prince and as the king; discovered at Bhitari near Ghaziabad in 1834.

[2] It shows that Skanda-gupta defeated the Pushyamitras and thus saved the empire from total destruction; he also won a great victory over the formidable Hunas; his achievements admired by the people.

[3] The inscription gives valuable information about Skanda-gupta's predecessors; also indicates that he was the immediate successor of Kumara-gupta I.

[4] The inscription records the personal qualities of Skanda-gupta; a brave king; his conduct spotless; also an accomplished musician.

**Q. Describe the main coin types of Skanda-gupta.**

**Ans.** According to Dr. Altekar, after the death of Kumara-gupta I, the zeal of the government for numismatic activity came to an end. Skanda-gupta was too much absorbed in his struggle against the foreign invaders and could not think about issuing different varieties of coins. Dr. Dandekar opines that the later issues of Skanda-gupta's coins, though of heavier standard, show a definite deterioration from the point of view of the purity of gold. Only three or four types of his gold coinage have been discovered, of which the Archer type was the general issue. He issued silver coins as well which present a variety of type. Skanda-gupta issued the following types of gold coinage.
Archer Type.

In this type of coins, the obverse shows the king holding bow and arrow with Garudadhvaja to his right and the legend Skanda and the interesting epithet Sudhanvi (skilled bow man). The reverse shows the goddess Luxmi on lotus and the legend Skanda-gupta or Kramadityah. This type of coins indicates the king’s war-like activities. From the figure of the goddess of Luxmi on the reverse of his coins, it appears that he was the worshipper of Vishnu.

King and Luxmi Type.

Some scholars call this type as king and queen Type on the ground of its resemblance to Chandra-gupta I type coins of Samudra-gupta. In the king and Luxmi type of coins the obverse shows Skanda-gupta standing wearing waist-cloth and jewellery with bow and arrow and a female most probably goddess Luxmi and Garuda between them. The reverse shows a female holding fillet in outstretched right hand and lotus in left which rests on knee. This type of coins gives expression to what Skanda-gupta owes to goddess Luxmi in retrieving the lost glory of his family as stated in the Junagarh Rock inscription.

Horseman Type.

Only one specimen of this type has been discovered from Bodleian collection. Alt-kerer holds that this coin was issued by Chandra-gupta and has been wrongly attributed to Skanda-gupta. Dr. Mookerji holds that its weight of 140.5 grains and also its legend Kramadityah on the reverse connects it with Skanda-gupta.

Chhatra Type.

A single specimen of this type has been discovered from Bayana hoard. Some writers opine that it might have been issued either by Chandra-gupta II Vikramaditya or Ghatotkacha. This coin type shows king offering a sacrifice and an attendant behind him holding an umbrella.

Silver Coinage

Besides the above types of gold coins of Skanda-gupta, several varieties of silver coins of this period have also been discovered. He issued silver coins for circulation in both Western and Central India. The Western issues bear on the obverse, the king’s bust but on the reverse the figures of (a) Garuda (b) Bull (c) Altar. The Bull type was in circulation in Kathiawar pointing to the Gupta dominions in Valabhi whose Senapatis adopted the badge of the Bull. In his Central issues he imitated the silver coinage of Kumara-gupta I.
Points to Remember

[1] Deterioration in the art of coinage during Skanda-gupta’s reign; only 3 or 4 types of his coins discovered.

[2] (i) The Archer type shows his warlike qualities; also shows he was a worshiper of Vishnu. (ii) King and Luxmi type bears on the obverse the figure of the king holding bow and arrow and a female most probably Luxmi and Garuda between them, the reverse shows a female with a lotus. (iii) Horseman Type shows the legend karmaditya on the reverse. (iv) A single coin of Chhatra type discovered from the Bayana hoard, some writers hold that this type not issued by Skanda-gupta.

(3) Silver Coinage: His silver coins in circulation in both Western and Central India; three types in western coinage; in the northern coinage he imitated the central silver coinage of Kumara-gupta I.
CHAPTER VIII.

The Later Imperial Guptas.

After the death of Skanda-gupta, the history of the imperial Guptas becomes obscure. No doubt, the Gupta dynasty continued to exist but its glory appears to have passed away. Skanda-gupta seems to have been succeeded by Puru-gupta who in turn was followed by Narasimha-gupta Baladitya, Kumara-gupta II and Budha-gupta. With the accession of Budha-gupta there was some recovery. After his death some ten or eleven shadow emperors succeeded who ruled over a gradually shrinking empire. They ruled over a small territory, comprising parts of Bengal and Bihar only. As the time passed, the imperial authority over the provincial governors weakened and they now set up independent states and pursued their own devices and destinies. The Guptas probably continued to exercise effective authority in Magadha up to the end of the seventh century A.D.

Q. Write short notes on the later Gupta emperors.

Puru - gupta.

The immediate successor of Skanda-gupta appears to have been his brother or half brother Puru-gupta. The name of Puru-gupta has been discovered from the Bhitari seal Inscription of Kumara-gupta (II). The inscription records that Maharajadhiraja Puru-gupta was the son of Maharajadhiraja Kumara-gupta by his queen Mahadevi Anantadevi. The inscription omits to mention the name of Skanda-gupta in the genealogical list. This has made some scholars to believe that Kumara-gupta I was succeeded by Puru-gupta and not by Skanda-gupta. Some writers hold that Puru-gupta was the rival of Skanda-gupta who was killed by the latter in the war of succession. There is another theory that the empire was split up into two rival branches, one ruled by Skanda-gupta and the other by Puru-gupta. From the study of various theories, it is difficult to come to any definite conclusion. (For details see pages 133-140 of this book).

The inscriptions do not provide any information about any mili-
tary achievements of Puru-gupta. The numismatic evidence shows that his hold on Saurashtra was not complete because he seems to have not issued silver coins which were required to be circulated in this region. His gold coins are rare which indicate that Gupta empire had shrunk considerably during his reign. A literary work, "Life of Vasubandhu" written by Pramartha relates that Puru-gupta was a patron of Buddhism and was associated with the famous Buddhist scholar Vasubandhu whom he appointed as teacher of the queen and the crown prince Baladitya. Pramartha further relates in his work that when Baladitya became king, he invited Vasubandhu to Ayodhya. The work also seems to indicate that Puru-gupta had set up his capital at Ayodhya. Pramartha’s statement is corroborated by the evidence of coins which reveal that Puru-gupta’s son Narasimha-gupta called himself Baladitya on his coins.

Puru-gupta issued gold coins of Archer type of which a few specimens have been discovered. These coins correspond very closely in style to Skanda gupta’s heavier issues weighing 142.7 and 141.1 grains. There are two varieties in this type. The first variety shows the name Puru on the obverse and the legend Sri Vikramah on the reverse. A second variety omits the name Puru. On some specimens the name Puru has been read as Budha by S. K. Sarasvati. In that case these coins may be assigned to Budha-gupta. Some coins bearing the name Prakasadatta have been discovered which Alian and Smith attribute to Puru-gupta. Dr. R. D. Banerji, however, holds that Prakasadatta and Budha-gupta are the same person.

Narasimha-gupta Baladitya 469-473 A. D.

Puru-gupta was succeeded by Narasimha-gupta presumably in 468-469 A.D. He was born of Puru-gupta’s queen Sri Vatsadevi. Narasimha-gupta’s coins indicate that he bore the title of Baladitya. Hoernle and Smith identify him with a king Baladitya mentioned by Hiuen Tsang who inflicted a crushing defeat on Mihrakula and imprisoned him. But this identification is not correct. The father of Baladitya whom Hiuen Tsang mentions, was Tathagatha and his son was Vajra, whereas according to the genealogical list given in the Baitari Seal Inscription, Narasimha-gupta Baladitya’s father was Puru-gupta and his son was Kumara-gupta II. Baladitya whom Hiuen Tsang mentions, must be some different person.

Narasimha-gupta was presumably a youngman at the time of his accession to the throne. His title Baladitya may indicate the same thing. Narasimha-gupta seems to have retrieved the Gupta fortune to some extent. Manju-Sri-Mulakalpa records that the regime
of Baladitya was "without foes and without obstacles." This statement seems to be an exaggeration and cannot be accepted without reservation.

Jayaswal suggests that this Baladitya was the first Gupta sovereign to have assumed Buddhism as his religion. According to this scholar, this fact can be proved by an inscription discovered at Nalanda. Allan also believes that Baladitya became a patron of Buddhism due to the influence of Vasubandhu.

Manju-Sri-Mulakalpa calls Narasimha-gupta as Chakravartin. It suggests that he was a full and real emperor, and that there was no diminution of his ancestral territories. Dr. Dandekar opines that the statement in Manju-Sri-Mulakalpa may only imply that Narasimha-gupta undertook the task of regaining what was lost of the Gupta sovereignty during the reign of his father and the credit of being a pioneer in this recuperative work and even of achieving some measure of success in this task is certainly due to him.

Dr. Fleet holds that the principal capital of Baladitya and his successors was Kasi. Narasimha-gupta issued some gold coins of the Archer type which have been found in Bengal, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh.

Kumara-gupta II Karmaditya 473-476 A.D.

The epigraphic and literary evidence shows that Kumara-gupta II was the immediate successor of Narasimha-gupta, his son by his wife queen Mahalakshmi Devi. An inscription on the Sarnath Buddha Stone image records that Kumara-gupta II was ruling in the Gupta Era 154 i.e. A. D. 473. This inscription also suggests that he was very much respected round about his capital, Kasi. The Mandasor Inscription of Bandhuvarman dated 473 A. D. suggests that Kumara-gupta II’s paramount authority was also recognised in Malwa and his court was adorned by the great poet Vatsabhati, the author of this inscription. The Khoh Copper Plate Inscription of Pravrajaka of the year 156=475 A. D. indicates that in the year 475 A. D., the Gupta kings were in the enjoyment of paramount authority.

The Mandasor (Desapur) Inscription of 473 A. D. states that a guild of silk weavers repaired the temple of the Sun at Desapura in 472-73 A. D. which was originally constructed in 436-37 A. D. during the reign of Kumara-gupta I. Dr. Dandekar holds that the Mandasor Inscription indicates that the guild of silk-weavers during the reign of Kumara-gupta found sufficient time, money and peace to undertake the repair of the temple. Malwa thus seems to have been reoccupied by the Guptas. The commerce flourished and the guild of silk weavers consequently became sufficiently wealthy during the reign of Kumara-gupta II. These facts also show how the rebuilding of the empire was
progressing even during his reign.

Kumara-gupta II assumed the title of Karmaditya presumably in imitation of his illustrious predecessors Chandra-gupta II and Skanda-gupta who assumed the title of Vikramaditya. The Sarnath inscription describes Kumara-gupta II as 'Parma Bhagvata', a title used by the Vaishnava kings.

Kumara-gupta II issued only the Archer Type of gold coins. In these coins the obverse shows the king standing holding bow and arrow and Garuda standard on the left with letter Ku and the legend Kramadityah. The reverse shows the goddess Luxmi seated on a lotus and the legend Kramadityah. The second variety which is of a ruder fabric shows on the obverse the word 'go' or word 'Ja' between the king's feet and a long circular legend Maharajadhiraja-Sri-Kumara-gupta Kramadityah. The legends on his coins show that he was a regular emperor of the Gupta dynasty. His coins are very rare which indicate that the period of his reign was a short one. Some of his coins have been discovered in Bengal, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh.

Budha-gupta 476-495 A.D.

Budha-gupta was the immediate successor of Kumara-gupta II. The Sarnath Inscription of Budha-gupta shows that he was on the throne in Gupta Era 157=476 A.D. His exact relationship with his predecessors is not certain. Hiuen Tsang states that he was a son of Sakraditya. In Sanskrit Sakara and Mahendra are synonyms of Indra, the king of gods. Budha-gupta may have been a son of Kumara-gupta I, Mahendraditya. It has also been suggested by some scholars that he was the governor of Malwa under Skanda-gupta, but rose in revolt against Narasimha-gupta and finally overthrew Kumara-gupta II.

Several inscriptions of Budha-gupta have been discovered which give us valuable information about the extent of his dominions. The evidence of these epigraphical records proves beyond doubt that his authority was acknowledged all over the territory extending from Malwa to Bengal. He may be regarded as having exercised sway over nearly the whole of the Gupta empire as left by Skanda-gupta. He was perhaps able to recover some of the territories and the prestige which his predecessors had lost during the troubled times.

The Damodarpur Copper Plate inscription of Budha-gupta besides giving glimpse of his revenue administration testify to the fact that his empire included Pundravardhana Bhukti (roughly North Bengal) which was governed by his viceroy Uparika Maharajas Brahmadatta and Jayadatta. The Sarnath Inscription of 476-77 A.D. indicates that his stronghold was in Benarbas. The Eran Stone
Inscription shows that his empire included the Malwa region which was governed by Maharaja Matrivishnu. Maharaja Surasmichandra was in charge of the land between the Kalindi (Jumuna) and the Narmada. The inscriptions thus show that Budha-gupta's dominions included parts of Central India as well as North Bengal. We have no positive evidence that Budha-gupta's empire included the Kathiawar peninsula as in the time of Skanda-gupta. But a careful study of the records of the Maitraka dynasty of Valabhi seems to indicate that Budha-gupta ruled over this region. Dr. R. C. Majumdar points out that the power and prestige of the Gupta empire was visibly on the decline in the time of Budha-gupta. The fact that the Matrikas and the Parivrakjas who were feudatories of the Guptas refer only in vague and general terms to the paramount Gupta power. It seems to indicate that the Gupta power was on its decline. Again, the governors of Bengal and Malwa are described as Maharajas which was definitely an innovation introduced since the time of Kumara-gupta I. Budha-gupta's silver coins were current only in the Central provinces of the Gupta empire. The type current in Gujrat and Kathiawar seems to have disappeared. It is doubtful that he issued gold coins. All these facts prove that the Gupta power was on the decline.

Allan and Smith have put forward the view that Budha-gupta was only a provincial governor of Malwa. But this view has been disproved by the above inscriptions.

Some silver coins of the Peacock Type of Budha-gupta have been discovered which are dated 495 A.D. These coins were meant for circulation in Central India. The legend on these coins describes him as 'the lord of the earth'. Some gold coins bearing the name Prakataradiyana have been discovered. Allan and Smith believe that these coins were issued by Puru-gupta. Dr. R. D. Banerji, however, holds that Prakataradiyana and Budha-gupta are the two different names of the same king.

**Successors of Budha-Gupta**

There is a lack of insessional evidence regarding the question of succession of the Gupta rulers after Budha-gupta. It is, therefore, difficult to state with certainty the sequence of events or to understand their reaction upon one another. We can only trace the course of history of the Guptas after Budha-gupta in broad outlines in association with such names as Budha-gupta, Yashodharman, Vishnuvardhana, Tathagataganuda and Vajra. Another name that may be added to this list is that of Vainya-gupta.
It is generally believed that Budha-gupta was succeeded by Bhanu-gupta. The relationship between the two is not known. Dr. Ray Chaudhury suggests that Bhanu-gupta may be identified with Baladaitya who inflicted a crushing defeat on Mihirakula.

Bhanu-gupta is known from a single Inscription dated 510 A.D. discovered at Eran (Saugar district Madhya Pradesh.) Neither any coin nor any seal mentioning him has so far come to light. The Eran Stone Inscription of 510 A.D. records that Bhanu-gupta was the "bravest on the earth, a mighty king, the equal of Partha. The Inscription, however, describes him merely as a Raja and does not apply to his name the title of Maharaja or the higher imperial title of Maharajadhrija. Dr. R. K. Mookerji, on this ground suggests that Bhanu-gupta was probably a governor of the Malwa province under Narasimha-gupta.

Bhanu-gupta ruled over Northern India from North Bengal to Eastern Malwa. During his reign the Hunas invaded Malwa. Bhanu-gupta accompanied by Gopa Raja, a noble of Magadha fought against the invaders near the modern village of Eran in Eastern Malwa. In this battle, Gopa Raja died and his devoted wife burnt herself on his funeral pyre. A memorial Sati Pillar on which the record is engraved was constructed on that place. It is now worshipped as Siva linga.

Although the Eran Stone Pillar Inscription pays a great tribute to his bravery, yet Bhanu-gupta remains a shadowy figure. It is difficult to know his place in the Gupta Imperial family or to assess his role in the troubled times of the Gupta empire.

Vainya-gupta.

The Gunaigargh Copper Plate Inscription of the year 188=A.D. 507 gives some information about the history of the reign of a Gupta emperor named Vainya-gupta. The relationship of this ruler with Budha-gupta or Bhanu-gupta is unknown. Whether Vainya-gupta was the successor of Bhanu-gupta, or the two ruled at the same time respectively over the western and eastern parts of the empire, it is difficult to ascertain. The Gunaigargh Inscription mentions Vainya-gupta as Maharaja. It, however, does not mean that he was an insignificant ruler. Dr. Ganguli suggests that the fabric and the type of his coins indicate that he belonged to the Imperial Gupta dynasty of Magadha. The weight of his coins indicates that he was an independent and prosperous sovereign. One of the Nalanda seals mention him as Maharajadhiraja.
Vainya-gupta ruled over Samatata, East Bengal and Nalanda. The Gunaigarrh Inscription records that he granted some lands to his feudatory (Padadasa) named Maharaja Rudradatta in Uttaramandala. The Bhukati of Uttaramandala in Samatata was under its governor Vijayasena. The Inscription also mentions a number of Vishayapatris or district officers who are also referred to as Kumaramatyas. The inscription also mentions the king's Dutaka as Vijayasena who combined in himself various offices of the state besides governorship.

The Gunaigarrh Inscription shows that Vainya-gupta was a Saiva. But in his coinage he retained the family symbol of Garudadhawja which indicates that he was a Vaishnava. The Gunaigarrh Inscription records that Vainya-Gupta made a gift of some land to his feudatory named Maharaja Rudradatta in Uttaramandala for a Buddhist Vihara. This fact proves that he was a tolerant ruler.

Three gold coins of Archer Type have been discovered bearing legend which was read as Chandra by Allan. But some other writers have read it as Vainya. Dr. R. K. Mookerji holds that the latter reading seems to be more probable as Vainya-Gupta is a known name whereas Chandra = Chandra-Gupta (III) is not known.

Other Imperial Gupta Emperors

Hiuen Tsang's account indicates that Bhanu-gupta was succeeded by Vajra "who was not a powerful king at all". He calls him the son of Baladitya whose father's name was Tathagata-gupta. Nothing more is known about Vajra. The Manju-Sri-Mulkapī mentions the name of Prakataditya who was another successor of Bhanu-gupta. It is probable that Vajra and Prakataditya were brothers. But no epigraphic records refer to either of these names nor have any coins belonging to them yet been discovered. They were probably the last of the Imperial Gupta line.

Points to Remember

A controversy about the succession to the Gupta throne after Skanda-Gupta.

Puru-Gupta seems to be the immediate successor of Skanda-gupta; Puru-gupta son of Kumara-gupta I; Puru-gupta's hold over Surashtra not complete; issued gold coins of Archer Type.

Narasimha-gupta Baladitya succeeded to the throne after Puru-gupta; Narasimha-gupta cannot be identified with Baladitya mentioned by Hieun Tsang; Narasimha-gupta a patron of Buddhism; undertook
the task of restoration of the fortunes of the Gupta empire; issued gold coins of Archer Type.

**Kumara-gupta II Karmaditya** was the immediate successor of Narasimha-gupta Baladitya; the Sarnath Inscription of Kumara-gupta II shows he ruled in 473 A.D. His Bhittari seal shows that he was Vaishnava; his coins very rare; reign period very short; the temple of sun at Devapura repaired by a guild of weavers during his reign.

**Budha-gupta** immediate successor of Kumara-gupta II; his reign period 476-495 A.D.; two Damodarpur copper plate inscriptions give information about his administration; ruled over an extensive territory which extended from Bengal to Central India including the modern Uttar Pardesh; issued silver coinage of the type of silver coinage of Kumara-gupta I; Budha-gupta last great king among the later imperial Guptas.

**Bhanu-gupta** his relationship with Budha-gupta not known; Raychoudhuri identifies him with Baladitya who defeated Mihiramaka; The Eran Stone Inscription of 510 A.D. shows that Bhanu-gupta accompanied by Gopa Raja, a noble fought against the Hunas at Eran; Gopa Raja killed.

**Vainya-gupta** - His relationship with Budha-gupta or Bhanu-gupta not known; The Gunaghar copper plate inscription shows Vainya-gupta ruled over Samatata, East Bengal and Nalanda; the weight and fabric of his coins show that he was an independent and prosperous sovereign.

**Other imperial Gupta Emperors** - Hien Tsang’s account shows Bhanu-gupta was succeeded by Vajra; Majnu-Sri-Mukalpa gives the name of another ruler Prakaditya; no coins or epigraphic records of Vajra and Prakaditya discovered; they were probably the last imperial Gupta emperors.

Q. 1. Write a brief note on the Damodarpur Copper Plate inscriptions.

Q. 2. What light do the Damodarpur Copper Plates throw on the administration and the administrative practices of the Imperial Guptas?

**Ans.** Five copper plate inscriptions discovered at Damodarpur in the Dinajpur district give some interesting details about the local and revenue administration during the reign of the Guptas. They also indirectly throw some light on the political conditions prevailing in North Bengal from the middle of the 5th to that of the 6th century A.D. Two plates belong to the reign of Kumara-gupta I and two belong to the reign of Budha-gupta. The fifth plate refers to a Gupta
sovereign whose name has not been clearly read. Basak and R. D. Banerji assign this plate to Bhanu-gupta whereas R. K. Mookerji is of the view that it belongs to the reign of Kumara-gupta III.

The Damodarpur Copper Plate Inscriptions of Kumara-gupta I.

The first Damodarpur Copper Plate Inscription of the year 124=443 A. D. records that when Paramadaivata Maharaiaadhiraja Kumara-gupta was the ruling emperor, an Uparika named Chiradatta was the governor of Pundravar-ihana Bhukti (roughly North Bengal). Under him a Kumaramatya named Vetravarman served as the deputy governor of the district of Kotivarsa. The inscription further records that a Brahmin named Karpatika applied for the sale of some waste land by the government. The Brahmin also promised to pay the price of the land at the rate of three gold dinaras for each Kulayavana. The application was sanctioned by the government and the sale was confirmed by an inscription on a copper plate.

The second Damodarpur Copper Plate Inscription of the Gupta year 129=467 A. D. also belongs to the times of Kumara-gupta I. It also mentions Chiradatta and Vetravarman. The second plate records another sale by the government of land to a Brahmin, whose name has not been correctly read. The applicant was given five Drona (measure of land) after the receipt of money by the government. The applicant Karpatika referred to in the first plate wanted the land for the performance of his agnihotra rites and the unknown applicant of the second plate wanted the land for the maintenance of his five daily sacrifices (Mahayajnas).

The First and Second Damodarpur copper plates of Kumar-gupta also throw light on the administration of the districts. The headquarters of a district were called Adhistanas. The district officer and the courts were styled as Adhikaranas. The District Officer was assisted by an advisory council comprising of representatives of the principal local interests, viz, Nagra-sreshthi, President of the town corporation (Mayor), Prathama-kulika, the chief of the guild of artisans, (3) Sarthavaha, representative of the guild of merchants, (4) Pratama kayastha, chief scribe of the district. Both the plates mention the same officers who were either elected or appointed.

Damodarpur Copper Plates of Budha-gupta.

The Damodarpur No. 3 Copper Plate Inscription dated Gupta year 163=482 A. D. and the Damodarpur No. 4 Copper Plate Inscription which is undated belong to the reign of Budha-gupta.
The third plate of the Gupta year 163=482 A. D. states that Paramadaivata, Maharajadhiraja Sri Budha-gupta was the "ruler of the earth." This epithet indicates that Budha-gupta was at the height of his power and glory when this inscription was inscribed. This inscription like the inscriptions on the other two Damodarpur Copper Plates of the times of Kumara-gupta records the transfer of land and repeats most of the details and words of the first two plates.

The Damodarpur Plate No. 3 records that a village headman (Gramika) named Nabhaka belonging to a village called Chandagrama applied for the sale of some land to settle some pious Brahmins. On the receipt of the application, the local Advisory Council referred it to the Pustapala, Patradasa. Upon the recommendation of the latter and on the receipt of money from Nabhaka, one Kulyavapa of waste land measuring eight by nine Nalas was sold to him. In this plate three other persons named Sthayapala, Kapila and Sribhadra are mentioned. But due to the decay of the inscription it is difficult to connect them with the narrative.

The Damodarpur Copper Plate Inscription No. 4 is undated but it may be assigned to the reign of Budha-gupta. It records that Uparika Maharaja Jayadatta was the governor of Pundravardhana Bhakti under Budha-gupta. Jayadatta appointed a person named Sandaka as officer incharge of the district of Kotivarsha. In this inscription also an application is made for the grant of land by a Nagra-sreshthi Ribhupala. He wanted some habitable land for building two temples and two store rooms in the village of Donagrama in (Himavachchhikara) i.e. Himalayan peaks. Ribhupala stated in his application that "in the village of Donga-grama in Himavachchikara (the summit of the Himalayas) I have formerly given four Kulyavapas of land to the God Kokamukha - svamin and seven Kulyavapas to Svayamvaraha - svamin, in the hope of benefit to myself (and) for the sake of increasing religious merit. Now in the neighbourhood of these cultivated lands I wish to build two temples with store houses for these two Gods." The application was granted and some building land sold to the Nagara-sreshthi Ribhupalla after it had been recommended by a board of three Pushtapalas.

The Fifth Damodarpur Copper Plate Inscription.

The fifth Damodarpur Copper Plate is dated the Gupta year 224=543 A. D. The name of the king inscribed on the plate is not clear, though the name ending Gupta is quite clear. Dr. Basak and R. D. Banerji read the name as Bhadu-Gupta. But Dr. R. K. Mookerji H. Krishna Shastri and Y. R. Gupta suggest that the inscription belongs to Kumara-gupta III. Dr. Majumdar suggests that the
attrition of this inscription to Bhanu-gupta is less probable as the date of the record is now known to be 224, and not 214 as Dr. Basak read and there is an interval of 33 years between this and the Eran Stone Pillar Inscription of the year 510 A. D. the only other known record of Bhanu-gupta's reign.

The Damodarpur No. 5 plate Inscription records that a nobleman (Kulapatra) named Amartadeva an inhabitant of Ayodhya applied for the sale of some rent free uncultivable land at the usual price for being converted into a religious trust. The purpose of this grant was to make provision for the repairs and the supply of necessaries of worship such as cow's milk, incense, flowers, lamp etc. for the worship of God Svetavaraha - svami. The application was referred to a Board of three record keepers (Pustapala) headed by a chief (Prathma.) On its recommendation, five Kulyavapas of land were sold to the applicant for fifteen Dinaras. In this case the grant of land was made to the god Svetavaraha - svami. The fifth plate thus is not merely a deed of transfer of land by the state to a private individual but grant of land to a god as well.

Points to Remember

The Damodarpur Copper Plate Inscriptions give details about local and revenue administration during the reign of the Guptas; also throw light on political condition of North Bengal in the 5th and 6th centuries A. D.

The Damodarpur Copper Plate Inscriptions of Kumara Gupta I. The first plate dated 443 A. D. second plate dated 467 A. D; record sale of land by the government to some applicants. The plates also give administrative details. The District Headquarter called Adhisthana. The District Officer and courts styled as Adhikarnas. The District Officer assisted by an advisory council in his work.

The Damodarpur Copper Plate Inscriptions of Budha Gupta. The Plate No. 3 dated 482 A. D., mentions Budha Gupta as Paramadivita; the plate records the transfer of some land; repeats the details and words of the first two plates. The Plate No. 4 is undated; records the names of some officers; also records the sale of some building land to a Nagar-sareshti Ribhupala.

The Fifth Damodarpur Copper Plate Inscription dated 543 A. D; the name of the king not identified with certitude; the plate records the sale of land to a nobleman Amratadeva for being converted into a religious trust.
Q. Write a note on the Faridpur Plate Inscriptions.

Ans. Four copper-plate inscriptions discovered in the Faridpur district of East Bengal give some details about the local administration during the later part of the Gupta period. They belong to the reign of three different kings about whom no information is available from any other source. Two of the inscriptions belong to the reign of a king named Dharmaditya, the third to that of Gopachandra and the fourth to that of Samacharadeva. In form, the inscriptions on the Faridpur Copper-plates resemble those on the Damodarpur Copper Plates.

The First Faridpur Plate.

The first plate is dated year 3 of Dharmaditya. It records that Dharmaditya was ‘an invincible ruler of the earth’. He had a feudatory chief named Maharaja Sthanudatta who was in charge of a province. He appointed Jajava as the Vishayapati of the Mandala of Varaka. The inscription also refers to another officer named Sadhanika who was probably concerned with the realization of debts and fines. The inscription further records that a person Vatabhoga applied for the purchase of some land to be bestowed on a Brahmin. On the report of the putapala Vinaysena, four Kulyavapas of land were sold to the applicant on payment of 12 Dinaras by him. Two more facts given in this inscription are important. In the first place, the inscription shows that the rule established in the districts along the eastern sea (Bay of Bengal) was that cultivated lands were things which were sold according to the rate of a Kulyavapa for the sum of four dinaras. Secondly, the inscription records that the feet of the emperor received the sixth part of the price according to the law there, which is a new feature in ancient Indian transfer of land.

The Second Faridpur Plate.

The Second Faridpura plate is undated but it also belongs to the times of Dharmaditya. It records that in the reign of emperor Dharmaditya there was a viceroy or Uparika named Nagadeva who had the title of Mahaprajaihara. He had under him Gopalaswami in charge of the district of Varakamandala. A person named Vasudeva swami applied for the purchase of some land in order to bestow it on a Brahmin named Somaswami. This record shows that some land was sold to the applicant at the current rate of four Dinara to a Kulyavapa.
The Third Faridpur Plate.

The inscription belongs to the reign of an emperor Gopachandra and is dated year 18. It describes this king as Maharajadhiraja, Apratiratha, and Bhattarakar. He appointed one Nagadeva as governor of the province of NavyaVakasika. He held many offices like Mahapratihara, Kumarapadiya, Amatya and Uparika. He appointed under him Vatsapala as the district magistrate of the Mandala of Varaka. The inscription shows that Vatsapala himself applied for the sale of some land to bestow on a Brahmin named Comidattaswami. In the 2nd Faridpur Plate the name of the Pustapala is given as Janamabhuti but in the third plate the Pustapala was Nayabhuti. The inscription on the 3rd plate like the inscription on the first plate turns into a deed of gift at the end because in both the cases the land was sold to the applicants to be bestowed on Brahmins. The second plate of the reign of Dharmaditya does not seem to be far removed from the third plate in date because both the plates mention the Headclerk Nagasena.

The Fourth Faridpur copper-plate.

This plate inscription belongs to the time of emperor Samachara, ruler of Bengal. The inscription records that during the reign of Samachara, Jivadatta was the viceroy of the province of NavyaVakasika. The later had a Visyapti named Pavitturka under him. The inscription further records that one Suparitakaswa-min applied for the sale of some land for the performance of certain Vedic ceremonies. The land was accordingly granted to the applicant. The inscription on this plate does not record a transfer but a free gift of land.

There is a great difference between the Damodarpur copper-plate inscriptions and the Faridpur copper-plate inscriptions. The Damodarpur plates indicate that there was a well-ordered government in which the district officer was associated with an advisory council comprising of the headclerk of the government and three principal leaders of the mercantile community the Nagarasreshti, the Prathama-kulika and Sarthavaha. In majority of cases, the land was transferred on the recommendation of a board of three Pustapalas. In the Faridpur copper plates, the only officer mentioned.set his report in cases of transfer of land was the headclerk. This officer is styled as Jayesthakayastha instead of Prathamakayastha. Even this officer is not referred to in the 4th Faridpur plate, his place being taken by a Jyathadikamika named Dauka.

Points to Remember

Faridpur Copper plate inscriptions give some details about local
administration during the later period of the Gupta rule; two inscriptions belong to a king named Dharamditya; the third to Gopachandra and fourth to Soma-chandra.

(i) The fourth plate records the grant of land to a Brahmin Vatabhoga; the inscription shows, that land was sold at the rate of 4 dinars to a Kulyavapa in the districts along the Eastern sea (Bay of Bengal); the king received the sixth part of the price of the land.

(ii) The Second Plate records the sale of land to a person Vasudeva swamin.

(iii) The Third Plate records the grant of land to a person Vatsapala who had to bestow it to a Brahmin.

(iv) The Fourth Plate records the grant of land to one Suparitapa Swamin for the performance of certain Vedic ceremonies.

In the case of Damodarpur Copper plate Inscriptions the district officer was associated with an advisory council for making the grant of land but no such practice shown in the Faridpur Plate Inscriptions.

Q. Write notes on the Eran Inscriptions of the reigns of Budha-gupta, Bhanu-gupta and Toramana.

Ans. The Eran Stone Pillar Inscription of the reign of Budha-gupta.

The Eran Stone Inscription of Budha-gupta was discovered by Captain T. S. Burt at Eran (Saugor District of Madhya Pradesh) in 1838. It is dated G. E. 165 = 484 A. D. and is partly in verse and partly in prose. It refers to a Maharajadhiraja Surasmichandra who was a feudatory of Budha-gupta and was governing the country lying between the river Kalli di or Jumuna and the Narmada. The inscription also records the erection of a pillar called the dhavaja stambha or flag staff of God Vishnu under the name of Janardana by a Brahmin who held the title of Matrivishnu and his younger brother Dhanya vishnu. This inscription is very helpful in constructing the chronology of the later Imperial Guptas and enables us to determine the approximate date of the Huna conquest of Malwa. The inscription also indicates that Hinduism was still the state religion.

The Eran Stone Inscription of Bhanu-gupta.

The Eran Stone Pillar Inscription of Bhanu-gupta is dated G.E. 191 = A.D. 510. The inscription tells us that Bhanu-gupta was “the
bravest on earth (Jayati praviro), a mighty king (raja Mahan), the
equal of Paratha (Paratha-samo\textsuperscript{a}). It further records that the king
Bhanu-gupta followed by a feudatory chief named Goparaja came to
Eran where a great battle was fought. In this battle, Gopa Raja was
killed and his wife became a sati on his funeral pyre. A memorial
Sati pillar was erected on the spot on which the inscription is
engraved.

The Eran Boar Stone Inscription of Toramana.

The Eran Boar Stone Inscription is dated in the first year of Maha
raja Toramana. It was inscribed by Dhanyavishnu (already referred
to in the Eran Stone Inscription of Budha-gupta) after the death of
his elder brother Matrivishnu. The inscription is engraved on the
breast of a colossal image of the Boar (Vihara) incarnation of Vishnu.
The inscription records the building of the temple in which the image
of the (boar) stands by Dhanyavishnu. This inscription shows that
Dhanyavishnu had become a vassal of the Huna chief during the reign
of Bhanu-gupta who was a successor of Budha-gupta. It also shows
that the eastern part of central India had passed into the hands of
the Hunas during the reign of Bhanu-gupta.

A critical examination of the above three inscriptions at Eran
helps us in deducing the following three facts.

Firstly, the conquest of Malwa by the Hunas took place within
one generation of the dedication of the dhavajasthamba (flag staff
of Vishnu) by the brothers Matrivishnu and Dhanyavishnu.

Secondly, the battle of Eran in which Goparaja died in 510, was
fought by Bhanu-gupta and Goparaja against the Huna Chief
Toramana and in this battle Bhanu-gupta was defeated.

Lastly, Toramana after vanquishing Bhanu-gupta conquered
Malwa and consequently established his sovereignty there.

Points to Remember.

The Eran Stone Inscription of the reign of Budha-gupta is
dated 484 A.D.; records the erection of a flag staff of Vishnu by Matri-
Vishnu and his brother Dhanyavishnu.

The Eran Stone Inscription of Bhanu-gupta dated 510 A. D.;
describes Bhanu-gupta as a brave and mighty king; records that Bhanu-
gupta accompanied by his feudatory chief Gopa-raja fought a battle at
Eran, Gopa-raja was killed, his wife followed him to the pyre.
The Eran Boar Stone Inscription of Toramana dated the first year of Toramana; inscribed by Dhanyakrishna after the death of his brother Matrivishnu; records the erection of a temple, the inscription shows Dhanyakrishna had become a vassal of Toramana.

Three facts may be deduced:-(a) Toramana conquered Malwa within one generation after Budha-gupta. (b) Bhanu-gupta was defeated in the battle fought at Eran. (c) Sovereignty of Toramana established over Eastern Malwa.

Q. Give a brief account of the reign of the Later Guptas of Magadha and Malwa.

Ans. The Apasad (Gaya district) inscription of Adityasena and the Deo-Barnark (Shahabad district) inscription of Jivita-gupta II have brought to light the existence of a new line of Gupta princes designated as the Later Gupta rulers by the modern historians. Like the Maukharis, they were at first, the feudatories of the Imperial Guptas and came into prominence and asserted their authority about the middle of the sixth century A.D. when the Imperial Gupta power broke up. Some of the Later Gupta rulers were reigning in North Eastern India and Malwa which they seemed to have recovered after the break up of the Huna power. It is probable that in the beginning this dynasty ruled in Magadha. Some writers suggest that their rule began in Malwa but was later on extended to Magadha. Gradually the Later Guptas became the masters of Gauda and Magadha and acquired suzerainty over Malwa. They had not set up any independent kingdom till the overthrow of the Gupta empire. They fought with the Maukharis and other powers for a share of the spoil. In other words "they came into possession of those parts of the Gupta dominions which had not been formed into independent kingdoms and were so to say, the residuary legatees of the Gupta empire." No epigraphical record has been discovered which indicates that they were the descendents of the Imperial Guptas. Even the court poets of the Later Guptas do not claim for them the imperial Guptas lineage. The names of eleven later Gupta rulers have been discovered from the Apasad Inscription and the Deo-Barnark inscription and they reigned for about two hundred years.

Krishna-gupta.

The founder of the Later Gupta dynasty was Krishna-gupta. The Apasad Inscription describes him as a Nripa (king). The Inscription further records that "he was a hero whose arms played the part of a lion, in bruising the foreheads of the array of the rutting elephants of his) haughty enemy (dripatarati), (and) in being victorious by (its) prowess over countless foes." Dr. Raychaudhuri suggests that the dripatarati against whom he had to fight may have been Yasodharman.
Deva Sri Harsha Gupta.

Deva Sri Harsha Gupta was the next king of this dynasty. He had to fight against those who were "averse to the abode of the goddess of fortune being with (him, her) own lord". There were many wounds on his chest from many weapons. The names of enemies who tried to deprive him of his rightful possessions are not mentioned.

Jivita-gupta I.

Jivita-gupta I came to the throne after Harsha-gupta. Jivita-gupta probably succeeded in re-establishing the power of his family in the territory lying between the Himalayas and the sea apparently in Eastern India. The Apsad inscription records, "The very terrible scorching fever (of fear) left on (his) haughty foes, even though they stood on sea side shores that were cool with the flowing and ebbing currents of water (and) were covered with the branches of plantain trees severed by the trunks of elephants roaming through the lofty groves of palmyra palms; (or even though they stood on (that) mountain (Himalayas) which is cold with the water of the rushing and wailing torrents full of snow." Dr. Raychaudhri opines that the reference to the 'haughty foes' is probably to the Gaudas who had already started on a career of conquest by this time.

Kumara-gupta of Malwa.

Jivita-gupta was succeeded by Kumara-gupta of Malwa. Some writers call this ruler as Kumara-gupta III. But it is wrong to designate him as such because he does not obviously belong to the dynasty of the Imperial Guptas. Kumara-gupta of Malwa was one of the most powerful and successful rulers of the Later Gupta dynasty. The Haraha Inscription of Isanavarman dated 554 A.D. provides us some information about Kumara-gupta's eventful career. The inscription indicates that Kumara-gupta was a contemporary of Maukhari ruler Isanavarman. He had to face a sea of troubles. The Gaurhas of Bengal were advancing from their 'proper realm' which was Western Bengal as it bordered on the sea and included Karnasuvarna and Radhapuri. Kumara-gupta seems to have won victory over them and established his sovereignty in that territory.

The Haraha inscription of Isanavarman shows that Kumara-gupta defeated a Maukhari chief Isanavarman. Isanavarman was a very powerful ruler who won a victory over the Hunas. Isanavarman further claims victories over the Andhras, the Salikas and Gaudas. Kumara-gupta's victory over this Maukhari king has been mentioned in the Haraha inscription. Some writers identify Kumara-gupta of Damodarpur copper plate with Kumara-gupta of Malwa. This
inscription shows that his sovereignty was recognised in eastern India though temporarily. Kumara-gupta's funeral rites were performed at Prayaga which obviously formed a part of his dominions.

**Damodar-gupta.**

Damodar-gupta was the son and successor of Kumara-gupta of Malwa. He continued the struggle against the Maukhari and was killed or seriously wounded by Isanavarman's son Sarvavarman. The death of Damodar-gupta thus made possible for the Maukhari to conquer Magadha or a large part of it. The Sirpur Stone Inscription of Mahasiva-gupta and a reference in the Deo-Baranark inscription seem to indicate that the temporary sovereignty which Kumara-gupta of Malwa had secured over Magadha passed for some time from the Guptas to the Maukhari.

**Mahasena-gupta.**

Mahasena-gupta was the son and successor of Damodar-gupta. He is identified with the king of Malwa mentioned in Harshacharita whose sons Kumara-gupta and Madhava-gupta were sent by their father to wait upon Rajyavardhana and Harsha-vardhana. Mahasena-gupta made this alliance most probably because of his fear of the rising power of Maukhari. He was able to retrieve the prestige of dynasty by conquering the whole of Northern Bengal from the Maukhari. He also defeated Susthitavarman, the king of Kamarupa (Assam). The Apsad Inscription records that he "won a great victory over the illustrious Sushita-varman, king of Kamarupa, the fame of which is constantly sung on the banks of the river Lauhitya (Brahmasutra)." His sister Mahasena-gupta Devi was married to Adityavardhana of Thaneswar and her son Prabhakara-varadhana became the "supreme power during the closing years of the sixth century."

The reign of Mahasena-gupta is a fixed point of chronology of the later Guptas of Magadha as it is beyond doubt that he was a contemporary of Adityavaradhana and Prabhakara-varadhana and his son Madhava-gupta, a friend and an ally of Harsha.

**Deva-gupta II.**

Between Mahasena-gupta, the contemporary of Prabhakar-varadhana and his son Madhava-gupta, a friend and an ally of Harsha, there occurs the name of another Guptarauler of Malwa named Deva-gupta II. *(Note: Emperor Chandra-gupta II was Deva-gupta I).* The Madhuban and Bänkaura inscriptions of Harsha mention Deva-gupta II as the most prominent among the kings "who resembled wicked horses". The Harshacharita states that Deva-gupta of Malwa combined with Sasanka, lord of Gauda and killed the Maukhar king of Kanauj named Grahvarman and imprisoned his queen Rajyasri. Rajyavardhana
the king of Thaneshvara who was a brother of Rajyasri defeated the Gupta king 'with ridiculous ease'. Deva Gupta's defeat led to the annexation of Malwa by Rajyavardhana as related by Bana. The position of Deva-gupta in the dynastic list of the Guptas has not been determined with certitude. Hoernle suggests that he was probably the eldest son of Mahasena-gupta and an elder brother of Kumara-gupta and Madhva-gupta. His name does not appear in the Apshad inscription just as the name of Skanda-gupta is omitted in the Bhitari Seal inscription.

Madhva-gupta.

Deva-gupta was succeeded by Madhva-gupta. He was a faithful ally of Harsha and ruled as his feudatory in the eastern parts of his empire. He also resided at the court of Harsha.

Adityasena.

Madhva-gupta was succeeded by his son Adityasena. He ascended the throne in the third quarter of the 7th century A.D. The Shahpur Stone Inscription indicates that he was alive in Harsha Era 66=672 A.D. After the death of Harsha, he gave a good account of himself. He revived some of the lost glory of the Imperial Guptas by making extensive conquests and by assuming titles indicative of imperial rank. He was the first in his family to assume the title of Parmabhattach-Maharajadhiraja. He boastfully claimed to have ruled "the earth to the shores of oceans". His Shahpur Stone Inscription indicates that he conquered Anga. He established matrimonial alliances with the Maukharis and the rulers of Nepal. Like his ancestors, Adityasena was a Vaishnava. His mother queen Srimati erected a monastery at Apshad in the Gaya district close to a temple of Vishnu built by Adityasena. His wife queen Konadivi excavated a tank on the top of the Mandra hill in the Bhagalpur district of Bihar. This tank is now called Papaharni.

The Last Kings.

The Deo-Barnark inscription shows that Adityasena was succeeded by his son Deva-gupta (III) who was in turn succeeded by his son Vishnu-gupta. The last king of the Later Gupta dynasty was Jivita-gupta, a son of Vishnu-gupta. All these kings continued to assume imperial titles. Jivita-gupta II made a grant of land to the temple of the God Varunaswami at Deo-Barnark in the Shahabad district of Bihar. After his death Eastern India became a prey to anarchy. The Gupta territories which included Magadha, Anga and parts of Madhyaadesa since the time of Adityasena, were finally occupied by the Gauḍa-kings of Bengal in the middle of the eighth century A.D.
Points to Remember.

The Later Gupta dynasty came into prominence in the sixth century A.D. Names of eleven kings discovered from the Aphisad Inscription and the Deo-Barnark Inscription. Later Guptas ruled in Malwa and Magadha; their connection with the main Imperial Gupta line not known.

Krishna-gupta founder of the dynasty; called a Naripa; (ii) Deva Sri Harsha-gupta next king; (iii) The third king Jivita-gupta; established his rule in Eastern India (iv) Jivita-gupta succeeded by Kumara-gupta of Malwa; the most powerful king of the Later Gupta dynasty; secured sovereignty over Western Bengal; defeated Isanavarman, a powerful Maukharl chief; Prayaga formed a part of Kumara-gupta’s dominions (v) Damodara-gupta a son and successor of Kumara-gupta; Magadha or a large part of it lost to the Maukharis; Damodar-gupta killed or wounded (vi) Mahasena-gupta successor of Damodar-gupta; probably retrieved the prestige of the family; recaptured North Bengal from Maukharis; defeated ruler of Kamrupa (Assam) (vii) Deva-gupta II the next ruler; defeated by Rajyavardhana of Thaneshwar; Malwa lost to the Guptas; (viii) Deva-gupta succeeded by Madhva-gupta; an ally of Harsha and ruled as his feudatory in the eastern part of his empire (ix) Adityasena was alive in 672 A.D., asserted independence after the death of Harsha; extended his dominions; performed Asvamedha sacrifice, assumed imperial titles (x) other kings: - Deva-gupta III, Vishnu-gupta and Jivita-gupta II (xi) The later Gupta dynasty broke up in the middle of the 8th century A.D.

Q. Discuss the causes of the downfall of the Gupta Empire.

Q. Write a critical essay on the causes of the decline and actual dismemberment of the Gupta Empire.

Ans. The empire of the Guptas enjoyed a long span of life like those of the Mauryas and the Kushans. For two centuries, the Guptas gave unity to a large portion of India. Under their liberal patronage, art and literature made mighty strides and great literary giants produced some of the most celebrated works in Sanskriti literature. A benevolent system of administration was established and the country was well put up on the road to progress. But the Gupta empire was not destined to continue its march on this road. After the death of Skanda-gupta, the power of Imperial Guptas began to decline and ultimately collapsed completely towards the middle of the sixth century A.D. Though a line of the Guptas called the Later Guptas rose on the ruins of the Imperial Guptas and continued to rule for several generations in Malwa and Magadha, it did not make any distinctive impress on the Indian political scene. The causes which led to the decline and ultimate collapse of the great empire.
reared by the genius of Samudra-gupta and Chandra-gupta II were both external and internal. These causes were similar to those which proved so disastrous to the Mauryan empire in ancient days and to the Turkish Sultanate of Delhi in the 14th century and the Mughal empire in India in the 18th century.

Internal Causes.

Weak Successors of Skanda-gupta.

The Gupta empire contained in itself the germs of its weakness. Such a large empire could be efficiently administered only by rulers of an exceptional calibre. But to the misfortune of the Guptas, the last flicker of Gupta genius disappeared with the death of Skanda-gupta. His successors were all weak and dissolute. The only rulers of some importance were Puru-gupta, Kumara-gupta and Budha-gupta. The other rulers exercised little influence. The empire like all oriental despotisms depended on the personal character of the ruler and once the strong hand was withdrawn from the centre, disruption and decay set in.

In fact, the monarchical form of government itself was indirectly responsible for the downfall of the Gupta empire. The powerful monarchs are bound to be succeeded by weak ones sooner or later and when incapable and imbecile kings succeed to the throne, the empire is bound to disintegrate. Sir J. N. Sarkar aptly points out that if we turn the pages of the entire Indian history, we hardly come across a single dynasty which might have produced more than five powerful kings. In Maurya, Khilji and Tuglaq dynasties there were not more than two in each. In the Imperial Gupta dynasty there were only four. After Skanda-gupta, there was a succession of weak rulers who could not maintain the unity and integrity of the empire. Thus the monarchical form of government itself was an important factor which led to the break up of the Gupta empire.

Absence of a fixed law of succession.

Though in the beginning of the Gupta rule merit rather than primogeniture assured the succession of the best ruler, it later on proved to be a cause of disruption of the empire. Owing to the absence of the law of primogeniture for succession to the throne it was inevitable that there should be frequent struggles among the aspirants to the throne. Some writers have pointed out that in the latter half of the Gupta period there were rival Gupta kings ruling the country at the same time from their respective capitals.
Disunity and disaffection within the royal family.

The Gupta empire also collapsed due to the dissensions within the royal family itself and the consequent internecine warfare. The inscriptions indicate that immediately after the death of Kumara-gupta I there was a war of succession among his sons. Dr. Raychaudhari writes that "the theory of a struggle among the sons of Kumara-gupta I may or may not be true, but it is quite certain that the descendants of Chandra-gupta II did not pull well together." The later Imperial Guptas do not seem to have been on friendly terms with their Vakataka cousins. Narendrasena, a Vakataka, a great grandson of Chandra-gupta II through his daughter Prabhavati, seems to have come into hostile contact with the Imperial Guptas.

Internal revolts and insubordination of the provincial governors.

The traditional insubordination of the provincial governors was one of the potent causes of the downfall of the empire. After the death of Skanda-gupta, a period of anarchy and misrule began. As a result of the invasions of the Pushyamitrases and the Hunas the authority of the centre over the provincial governors and the feudatories became weak. The Maitrakas of Valabbi, the Maukharis in the Ganges valley and the Gaudas in Bengal assumed independence and even encroached upon the Gupta territories. Gujrat Kathiawar ceased to be a part of the Gupta empire as is proved by the fact that none of these rulers viz., Puru-gupta, Narsimha-gupta and Kumara-gupta II issued any silver coins for use in this province. Dr. R. C. Majumdar opines that the hereditary character of the officialdom particularly in some of the outlying provinces must have let loose the centrifugal forces which gathered strength as the central authority weakened owing to the onslaughts of the foreigners.

Unwieldiness of the Empire.

According to K.M. Pannikkar, the empire of India was never a reality but an ideal. As there were no rapid means of communication and transport and as India was geographically a sub-continent, the unity of the country depended on the magnificence of monarchs like Asoka, Samudra-gupta and Akbar. As soon as these august personalities made their exit the forces of disintegration gathered momentum. The Later Imperial Guptas being weak could not control the empire which extended from the Himalayas in the north to the Narmada in the south and from Malwa in the west to Bengal in the east. As the empire became too unwieldy, the disintegration was inevitable.
5. Influence of Buddhism.

The earliest Gupta kings were staunch Brahminists and did not hesitate to engage in sacrifices involving the slaughter of living beings. But to the detriment of the dynasty some of the later Imperial Gupta rulers, such as Baladitya, Tathagata and Budha-gupta were Buddhists and their faith had repercussion on the military strength and political power of the empire. Like the Mauryas after Asoka, the government did not lay proper emphasis on the military efficiency of the empire. In the absence of military vigour, it was impossible to maintain the integrity and strength of the empire. The kindness and piety of the rulers like Baladitya was bound to adversely affect the fortunes of the Guptas. Such rulers could not maintain their supremacy and were ultimately thrown into the back ground. Dr. Raychaudhuri writes that in this connection it is interesting to recall a story recorded by Hiuen Tsang. When Mihirakula, the Huna tyrant ruling Sakala proceeded to invade the territory of Baladitya the latter seems to have said to his ministers, "I hear those thieves are coming and I cannot fight with them; by the permission of my ministers, I will conceal my poor person among the bushes of the morass". Having uttered these words, he escaped to an island along with many of his subjects. This story seems to be an exaggeration but it is certain that the later Buddhist Gupta kings of the Imperial Guptan dynasty did not possess much courage or military vigour although they did not lack in kindness and piety. Some writers, however, hold that the decline of the Gupta dynasty started much earlier at a time when the rulers were Hindus.

6. The Gupta administrative system.

According to Dr. B. G. Gokhale the administrative system as set up by the Guptas also adversely affected the fortunes of the empire. The Gupta empire like all other empires of antiquity rested on a parallelism of power with the highest concentration as well as extensive decentralisation of power at the centre and the lower levels respectively. This system of government required a large standing army and a complicated system of checks and counter-checks, and once the balance of power in this pyramidal structure was slightly disturbed it produced far reaching repercussions all over. In these circumstances when wars had to be fought against the Pushyamitrav and the Hunas, they took a heavy toll of the Gupta army.

7. Neglect of frontier defence.

The Gupta emperors did not extend their empire beyond the river Sutluj nor did they make any efforts to have any strong and friendly military power beyond the frontiers on this border. As a consequence
the western gates of India remained neglected and unguarded. The foreign invasions from this direction thus became easier. The imprudent Gupta sovereigns had, therefore, to suffer for their neglect and lack of military insight and their empire was overwhelmed when swarms of Hunas poured through the western passes.

8. Growing luxury among the people.

A long spell of peace and prosperity under the Gupta rule had made the people of northern India luxurious and inactive which impaired their martial qualities. The vigour and vitality of the subjects deteriorated. Dr. R. D. Banerji writes that the influx of Roman gold and the soft life of a century of peace and prosperity had enervated the people of Magadha. "So when the country was faced with the onslaughts of the invaders it could not put up any opposition.

External Causes.

9. Huna and Pushyamitra invasions.

During the reign of Kumara-gupta I and Skanda-gupta the stability of the Gupta empire was seriously threatened by the invasions of a turbulent people commonly known as the Pushyamitrás. Although Skanda-gupta averted the danger yet the foundations of the empire were greatly weakened. After the Pushyamitrás, a more formidable enemy i.e. the Hunas swooped down upon the northwestern provinces of the empire. Although their early attacks were successfully repelled by Skanda-gupta they continued to pour into India and were in a short time able to make themselves the masters of the Punjab and Malwa. Their repeated attacks exhausted the financial resources of the empire and undermined its stability. It is generally believed that the Huna invasions were one of the main causes of the downfall of the Gupta empire. Dr. R. C. Majumdar, however, is of the view that the Huna invasions cannot be regarded as the principal cause of the collapse of the Gupta empire. He opines that the gates of India were successfully barred against the Hunas throughout the sixth century A.D. No doubt, Toramana and Mihirakula met with temporary success, yet they never counted in India politics. They had their hold over Kashmir and Afghanistan which lay beyond the frontiers of the Gupta empire.


According to Dr. Majumdar so far as evidence goes, the final blow to the Gupta empire was not given by the Hunas but by the ambitious
chief Yashodharman of Malwa. There is hardly any doubt that the Hunas caused destruction on a large scale but before long their mad fury was exhausted. The rift caused by Yashodharman, however, gradually widened and ultimately led to the disintegration of the empire. To begin with, Yashodharman was only a local chief. He took advantage of the weakness of the Gupta kings and the troubled situation in Malwa and established his independent authority there. He assumed such a great power that he not only vanquished Mihirakula but was also able to defy the Gupta authority. He probably made some conquests at the cost of the Gupta empire but their exact nature is not known. The Mandasor Inscription records that his suzerainty was acknowledged over areas bounded by the Himalayas in the north, the ocean in the west, the Brahmaputra in the east and the Ganjam district in the south. It appears that he could not maintain his position for long. He rose and fell like a meteor. But his dazzling military achievements led other rulers to follow his example and they also challenged the Gupta supremacy. In such circumstances the future of the Gupta empire was doomed.

11. Incursions of the Vakatakas.

D. N. Dandekar opines that the Vakatakas were also responsible to some extent for the downfall of the Gupta empire. The Vakatakas had adopted a rebellious attitude towards the Gupta kings in the reign of Skanda-gupta but the latter was able to quell them. After the death of Skanda-gupta, the Vakataka king Narendrasena took advantage of the disturbances in the Gupta empire and established his sovereignty over Kosala, Mekala and Malwa. These provinces which were snatched away by the Vakatakas from the Gupta dominions could not be recovered by any of the Gupta kings for a long time. The Vakatakas in addition to the Hunas and other foreign tribes thus made their own contribution to bring about the disintegration and the fall of the Gupta empire.

Conclusion.

Thus we see that various causes such as the "outbreak of rebellions within, devastating invasions from without, the growth of a class of hereditary governors and other officials who commanded enormous influence in local centres and assumed the titles of Mahāraja and Mahāraja-dhiraja and dissensions in the imperial Gupta family itself" resulted in the collapse of the great empire. It was the cumulative effect of a number of factors which worked together against the Guptas but none of these factors was by itself wholly or solely responsible for the process of the decline and ultimate collapse of the empire.
Points to Remember.

The great empire reared by the genius of Samudra-gupta and Chandra-gupta II began to decline in the time of Skanda-gupta; completely collapsed in the middle of the 6th century A.D.

Internal Causes.

(i) Weak successors of Skanda-gupta; no powerful ruler came to the throne after him; the authority of the central government considerably weakened; the monarchical form of government itself indirectly responsible for the break up of the empire. (ii) No fixed law of succession; frequent struggle among the aspirants to the throne. (iii) Dissensions within the royal family; the descendants of Chandra-gupta II did not pull well together. (iv) The ambitions of the feudatories and the insubordination of the provincial governors; the Maitrikas of Valabhi, the Maukharis, and the Gaudas of Bengal assumed independence. (v) The empire became too unwieldy; could not be controlled by the weak Gupta rulers. (vi) Buddhist leanings of the later Imperial Guptas weakened their military vigour. (vii) Gupta administrative system required a large standing army and a system of checks and counter-checks for its proper working and when the balance slightly disturbed, the empire was bound to decline. (viii) Neglect of the defence of western frontier; foreign invasions became easier. (ix) Peace and prosperity under the Gupta rulers enervated the people; their martial qualities impaired.

External Causes.

(i) Pushyamitra and the Huna invasions weakened the foundations of the empire; R. C. Majumdar holds that the Huna invasions cannot be regarded as the chief cause of the downfall of the Gupta empire. (ii) Yashodharman of Malwa assumed great power, defied Gupta authority; his dazzling military achievements encouraged other rulers to challenge the Gupta authority. (iii) The Vakatakas wrested many territories from the Guptas which could not be recovered by the latter-

Conclusion:

The downfall of the Gupta empire was a cumulative result of various factors; no single factor solely responsible for it.
CHAPTER IX

THE HUNAS

Q. Discuss the Huna invasions of India and their effects on the history and culture of Northern India.

Ans. In the middle of the fifth century A.D., the peace of India was rudely disturbed by a series of invasions of the Hunas, a fierce and barbarous tribes who carried fire and sword wherever they went. The Guptas had not yet achieved their natural scientific frontiers on the north-west when they had to face the menace of this scourge of the civilised world. Never before had India witnessed such horrors and barbarities and it seemed for a time that the whole civilization of India would be swept away under the fiery onslaught of these wild horsemen.

Who were the Hunas.

The Hunas were a race of fierce barbarians. According to the description given in the Chinese literature they had "broad shoulders, flat nose, and tiny black eyes deeply sunk in their heads and little or no hair on their faces". Originally they lived in the neighbourhood of China but gradually they migrated to other parts of Asia and Europe. Various causes such as the sterile nature of their lands, the extension of Chinese empire, the multiplication of their numbers and bad climate compelled them to find out fresh land. It was in the second century B.C. that swarms of these nomads moved from Eastern Asia and in the course of time reached Europe and spread over the Eastern and Central parts of that continent where they earned undying notoriety for their savage cruelties. Their invasion of Europe brought about the collapse of the magnificent Roman empire. Another hoard of these people settled in the valley of the Oxus from where they came into Afghanistan through the passes of the Hindukush, and overthrew the remnants of the Kushan kingdom of Kabul, and eventually burst into India through the western passes.
Attacks of the Hunas on the Gupta Empire.

About 458 A.D., the Hunas attacked the western parts of the Gupta empire, but were hurled back by the military ability and prowess of Skanda-gupta who thus postponed the impending disaster to his empire. The Bhitari Pillar Inscription records that Skanda-gupta "by his two arms shook the earth, when he......joined in close contact with the Hunas."

The Gupta emperors had not extended their rule over the Punjab. The western gates of India remained unguarded and swarm after swarm of the barbarians consequently continued pouring into the country. About the year 466-67 A.D., the Hunas under their intrepid leader Toramana known from the Rajatarangini inscriptions and coins, once again swooped down upon the western provinces of the Gupta empire. Skanda-gupta parried this blow with great difficulty. But the invasions of the Hunas continued and most-probably Skanda-gupta lost his life in trying to stem the mighty flood of their third invasion. Toramana occupied the western provinces of the Gupta dominions and thus secured a foothold for himself.

For the next few years the country was spared the horrors of the Huna inroads. In 484 A.D., however, another swarm of the Hunas who had moved southwards towards Persia and had defeated and killed king Feroze of Persia marched towards India. The collapse of the Persian resistance opened another floodgate of invasions and allowed further hordes of the invaders to pour into the Punjab through Kandhar. The combined forces of the two branches of the Hunas shook the very foundations of the Gupta empire and wrested the whole of western India from Skanda-gupta’s distant successor Matri-vishnu, who was ruling as a feudatory of Budha-gupta in the western provinces. He surrendered Malwa to the Hunas which gave a shattering blow to the fortunes of the Guptas. The Gupta empire was now confined to Magadha and North Bengal.

Toramana, as his inscriptions and coins indicate assumed the Indian titles and even worshipped India deities as the previous foreign invaders (the Indo Bactrians and Kushans) had done before him. He exercised suzerainty over a number of local Rajas in central India and the Punjab who formerly owed allegiance to the Guptas. His empire thus extended over the Punjab, Rajputana and parts of Central India.

Toramana was succeeded in about 515 A.D., by his son Mihirakula, who is represented in Indian traditions as a revolting blood thirsty tyrant, taking fiendish delight in acts of brutality. According to Hiuen Tsang, he was a ferocious opponent of Buddhism and
destroyed and plundered many of their stupas and monasteries. He made Sakala the modern Sialkot as his Indian capital. He also won some victories. His sovereignty was acknowledged over Gwalior in the 15th year of his reign (530 A.D.). Hiuen Tsang writes that he subdued the whole of India. Cosmas surnamed Indicopleustes, an Alexandrian Greek also described the Huna chief at that time as the overlord of India. But the Hunas were not destined to enjoy success for long, and Mihirakula too soon met his doom at the hands of Yasodharman and Baladitya. Who this Baladitya was we cannot say with certainty.

Collapse of the Huna Power.

The Mandasor Inscription (No. 70) narrates that the Malwa chief Yasodharman was the leader of the popular national revolt against Mihirakula. With the help of other rulers, he inflicted a crushing defeat upon Mihirakula. Yasodharman in his Mandasor Inscription claims that “respect was paid to his feet by even the famous king Mihirakula”. There are, however, no references to it in Hiuen Tsang’s account. The Mandasor Inscription seems to contradict the statement of Hiuen Tsang that it was Baladitya who defeated Mihirakula. Smith’s theory that Yasodharman and Baladitya formed a confederacy to fight against the Hunas may be original but it is purely conjectural and cannot be relied upon. Some scholars now try to reconcile the conflicting statements by suggesting that Baladitya first checked the onslaughts of the Hunas and their complete rout was accomplished by Yasodharman.

Hiuen Tsang tells a long story of the final triumph of Baladitya over Mihirakula which may be summed up as follows:

“Baladitya, king of Magadha, profoundly honoured the law of Buddha. When he heard of the cruel persecution and atrocities of Mihirakula, he strictly guarded the frontiers of his kingdom and refused to pay tribute. When Mihirakula invaded his dominions, Baladitya took refuge with his army in an island. Mihirakula left the main part of his army in charge of his younger brother, embarked on boats, and landed with a part of his troops on the island. He was, however, ambushed by the troops of Baladitya in a narrow pass and was taken prisoner. Baladitya resolved to kill Mihirakula, but released him on the intercession of his mother. Mihirakula found that his brother had gone back and occupied the throne. He, therefore, sought and obtained asylum in Kashmir. Then he stirred up a rebellion there, killed the king and placed himself on the throne of Kashmir. He, next killed the king of Gandhara, exterminated the royal family, destroyed the stupas and sangharamas, plundered the wealth of the country and returned. But within a year he died.”
Dr. R.C. Majumdar opines that the account given by Hieun Tsang is subject to suspicion, because it places Mihirakula several centuries behind his date. His account also seems to be exaggerated and many of the details of the story are difficult to believe. But in spite of all these drawbacks, in the absence of a better or a more satisfactory hypothesis, we may provisionally accept Baladityya as the hero who defeated Mihirakula and saved the Gupta empire from the Huna depredations.

With the defeat of Mihirakula, the Hunas seem to have lost their political supremacy in India. The literary works and inscriptions, however, indicate that for many centuries afterwards they remained a potent factor in the political situation in India. They even formed small independent principalities in the country but they no longer appear as a great power or even a disturbing element in Indian history.

Effects of the Huna Invasions.

The story of the Huna Indian conflict forms an event of great national importance like the Graeco-Indian conflict of earlier times and passed into folk lore or tradition. Though the rule of the Hunas was brief and their dominions were confined to North-West and Central India, they left a deep impress on Indian society and polity.

Political Effects.

According to Dr. V. A. Smith, the Huna invasions of the 5th and 6th centuries constitute a turning point in the history of Northern India. They shattered the Gupta empire and thus prepared the ground for the growth of a number of petty states. Chaos, anarchy, uncertainty, fear and worry took the place of the law and order of the earlier period. Peace and security which the people had for two centuries been enjoying under the benevolent Gupta rule vanished.

Secondly as Havell says, the Huna rule in India "tended to debase the freer spirit of the political ideals, to weaken the authority of popular assemblies, and to increase the arbitrary power exercised by the head of the state. He further suggests that "oriental despotism was of Tartar or Mongolian creation; it was never recognised in Indo-Aryan traditional laws."

Dr. R. C. Majumdar, however, holds that it is an exaggeration to say that the Hunas completely shattered the Gupta empire. The gates of India were successfully barred against the Huna invaders throughout the 5th century. Although at first Toramana and later
Mihirakula achieved some temporary successes, yet the Hunas never counted as a paramount power in Indian politics, save in Kashmir and Afghanistan which lay far beyond the frontiers of the Gupta empire. So far as evidence goes, the death blow to the Gupta empire was not dealt by the Hunas but by ambitious chiefs like Yasodharman of Malwa. The Hunas caused depredations on a large scale, but before long the force of their sweeping success spent itself. The rift caused by Yasodharman, however, gradually widened till the mighty imperial Gupta structure was engulfed in the chasm.

**Social Effects**

Tho Hunas greatly affected the racial composition of India. After losing political power they settled down in India and established matrimonial relations with the Hindus. They were gradually absorbed in the Hindu society, like Indo Greek, Sakas and Kushans and several new castes sprang up, forming a new martial group, the Rajputs. Havell writes, “There can be little doubt that the numerous ramification of the Rajput clans of present day are the result of many foreign elements which were assimilated by the Indo Aryan society from the fourth to the sixth centuries A.D. and later”. Smith writes that “one of 3600 so called Rajput royal clans was actually given the name Huna”. The absorption of the Hunas into the Hindu society also greatly affected the caste system. As the Hindus in the beginning detested their barbaric ways of life and were not prepared to mix with them, so various new castes cropped up in their society, thus making the caste system further rigid.

The progress and development of literary and scientific studies which had begun under the Vakataka and Gupta kings also received a serious set back due to the social and political disorganisation of the country.

**Religious and Moral Effects.**

The Hunas put to sword a large number of Buddhists and destroyed their splendid monasteries in Northern India. This is the main reason why the Buddhist relics are not available in Northern India while such relics are present in a large number in eastern and southern parts of the country. The severe persecution of the Buddhists also led to the rapid decline of their religion. From the cultural point of view, the Huna invasions also proved to be a great curse. They demolished the great monuments of art and burnt the valuable records of history. Their destruction thus deprived the historians of a lot of useful information and have made history poorer.
The moral effects of the Huna invasions are described by Havell in these words, “the strong infusion of Huna blood lowered the high ethical standards of Indo Aryan tradition and favoured the growth of many vulgar superstitions which were never countenanced by the great philosophers and spiritual teachers of Aryavarta”.

Points to Remember.

The Hunas, a race of fierce barbarians attacked the Gupta empire about the middle of 5th century A.D. Skanda-gupta hurled back their invasion; but the Huna invasions continued. The first known leader of the Huna invaders in India was Toramana, who occupied Punjab, Rajputana and parts of Central India; Toramana succeeded by Mihirakula, a blood-thirsty tyrant; a ferocious opponent of Buddhism: Hieun Tsang states Mihirakula defeated by Baladitya; the Mandasor Inscription records that Mihirakula paid homage to Yasodharman; After the death of Mihirakula the Hunas seems to have lost political supremacy in India; formed into small independent principalities.

Effects:

The Huna invasion left a deep impress on the Indian society and polity.

(i) Politically the Hunas gave a severe blow to the Gupta empire; spread lawlessness and anarchy; paved the way for the growth of a number of petty states

(ii) Gave a blow to the social and cultural development of the country.

(iii) The absorption of the Hunas in Hindu society made the caste system further rigid.

(iv) Their invasions led to the rapid decline of Buddhism.

(v) The Hunas destroyed works of art; lowered ethical standards.

Q. Describe the career and achievements of Yasodharman of Malwa.

Ans. Yasodharman also known as Vishnupaydhana was an ambitious ruler of Malwa whose reign may have roughly covered the first half of the sixth century A.D. Nothing is known about his predecessors or his successors. Dr. Majumdar suggests that he may be
linked with the family to which belonged the long line of rulers ending with Bandhuvarman who ruled Malwa or a part of it as a feudatory of Kumara-gupta with Dasapura as his capital. But there is an interval of about a century between Bandhuvarman and Yasodharman, and we know little about the activities of this family during this period. Yasodharman's name thus stands alone and unconnected.

Yasodharman rose to prominence in about 530 A.D. He is known to us through a long Sanskrit inscription engraved in duplicate on two stone pillars at Mandasor. This inscription is undated. Like the Allahabad Pillar Inscription of Samudra-gupta, this inscription of Yasodharman commemorates his power and glory. This official eulogy describes Yasodharman as a great king. It claims that he ruled over an extensive empire which extended over a vast area bounded by the Himalayas in the north, Mahendra mountains (Ganjam district) in the south, Brahmaputra in the east and the ocean in the west. It further attributes to him the conquest of countries "which did not even submit to the Guptas or the Hunas." This inscription further indicates that even Mihirakula was compelled to pay respect to his two feet after his defeat. Verses 6 and 7 of the inscription describe in its characteristic style the Mihirakula—Yasodharman episode: "He (i.e. Yasodharman) to whose feet respect was paid with complimentary presents of the flowers from the lock of hair on the top of his head by even that famous king Mihirakula whose head had never previously been brought into the humility of obeisance to any other save the god Sthanu (Shiva), and embraced by whose arm the mountain of snow (i.e. Himalaya) falsely prides itself on being styled as inaccessible fortress."

There is another inscription of Yasodharman and Vishnuvardhana discovered at Mandasor which is dated Malwa Era 589=A.D. 532. It describes Yasodharman as "achieving victory (Jayati), plunging into the army of his enemies (satu sainyam vigahya), bending down the fame of all heroes (vira-kirti-vinamya), with his body decorated all over with battle scars." It also gives him the epithet Janendra and associates him with another supposed king (naradhipati) named Vishnuvardhana who is further mentioned as Rajadhiraja and Pramesvara. Fleet is of the opinion that Vishnuvardhana acknowledged the suzerainty of Yashodharman. But the writers generally believe that they were one and the same person as indicated by the phrase 'saeva' ('he is it was') in this inscription. These two inscriptions discovered at Mandasor almost repeat the same exploits and refer to the sovereignty of the king over Prachi (Eastern India) and North Kashmir.

The general and conventional account of Yasodharman, universal conquest (Digvijaya) as given in the inscriptions of course cannot be
accepted as literally true. There seems to be no reason to believe that Yasodharman was the sole and undisputed master of Northern India. The verses in the inscription refer to Digvijaya which he claims to have performed and describe the conventional boundaries of the Chakravartiksetra. At the same time such a claim publicly made, must have some basis in fact and we need hardly doubt that Yasodharman had a brilliant career and was a great conqueror, and that he liberated a large slice of territory from the Huna yoke.

Dr. R. C. Majumdar suggests that the fact that the country round Mandasor formed the centre of Yasodharman’s empire and the principal seat of his authority may suggest that he first rose to power and distinction by liberating Central India by defeating Mihirakula. The Mandasor Inscription of Yasodharman and Vishnuvardhan dated 533 A.D. indicates that his victory over Mihirakula must be assigned to about that time or a little later. R. C. Majumdar further suggests that he probably completed the task which Bhanugupta could not accomplish or partially succeeded in doing.

Inspite of his great victory over the Huna chief, Yasodharman failed to establish a permanent empire. This can be proved by the fact that in 543-44 A.D., a Gupta emperor and not Yasodharman was shown as sovereign in a land grant in North Bengal. Again, as late as 528 A.D. Parivarjaka rulers acknowledged the Guptas as sovereign. It is, therefore, reasonable to presume that his ephemeral triumphs may be placed during the interval between these two dates. This is also confirmed by the Mandasor Inscription of Yasodharman Vishnuvardhana which is dated 533-34 A.D.

How Yasodharman’s meteoric career came to an end still remains shrouded in mystery. He suddenly flashed into prominence by inflicting a signal defeat on Mihirakula, carried his victories in arms far and wide and made a bold bid for the imperial power, and like a meteor again, he suddenly vanished from the political scene and his empire vanished with him.

The Mandasor Inscription seems to contradict the statement of Hieun Tsang that the sole credit for the defeat of Mihirakula is due to Baladitya. Scholars now try to reconcile the statement by suggesting that Baladitya first put a check on the Hunas and their complete rout was due to Yasodharman.

Dr. Hoernle tried to identify Yasodharman with the legendary Vikramaditya of Ujjain. But this theory has been proved quite
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untenable. Yasodharman did not vanquish the Sakas, nor did he rule at Ujjain, and there is no contemporary evidence proving his assumption of the title of Vikramaditya.

Dr. K. P. Jayaswal identified Yasodharman with the Puranic Kalki on the ground that like the legendary hero he exterminated the Hunas and the irreligious and aimed at the welfare of the common people. If this identification is corroborated by further researches, Yasodharman’s reign must be regarded as an important epoch in the social history of India because both Hindu and Jaina records agree that Kalki’s acts produced great social and religious changes. At present, however, Yasodharman stands an isolated figure and is one of the great puzzles of ancient Indian history.

Pointe to Remember.

Yasodharman a ruler of Malwa who rose to power about the first half of the sixth century A.D.; nothing is known about his predecessors or successors. A Sanskrit Inscription discovered at Mandasor shows that he conquered the regions from the Brahmaputra to Mount Mahendra and from Himalayas to Western ocean: ruled over territories not even ruled by the Guptas or the Hunas; defeated Mihirakula. Accounts of Yasodharman’s achievements may be exaggerated, his career as a great conqueror cannot be doubted. Another inscription of Mandasor dated 533-34 also gives some information about his reign. It is not known how his meteoric career ended; he remains a puzzle of ancient Indian history.

Write a note on Toramana.

Ans. Toramana is the first known leader of the Hunas who invaded India about the close of the fifth or the beginning of the 6th century A.D. Advancing from the Punjab, he occupied the western parts of the Gupta dominions. He even captured Eran (Saugor District Madhya Pradesh) and included it in his dominions.

There are some inscriptions which refer to Toramana. In the first place there is an inscription at Eran which is dated the first Year of Maharajadhiraja Toramana. Next, there is an inscription dated the year 15 of the reign of Mihirakula which names his father as Tora. The first two letters Tora can be read, the rest having been decayed. The name has been restored as Toramana. Another inscription has been found at Khewra (Salt range in the Western Punjab), referring to Rajadhiraja Maharaja Toramana-Shahi-Jau (bla) whom some scholars have identified with the king mentioned in the Eran Inscription, but others regard him as quite different. None of these
inscriptions refers to Toramana as a Huna. It was suggested by Fleet and Sir Aure Stein and recently by Jayaswal that he was not a Huna, but a Kushana chief allied with the Hunas.

Sten Konow is of the view that Toramana was in all probability a Huna, as has generally been assumed, and not a Kushana.

There is an interesting account of Toramana in a Jaina work Kuvalayamala, composed in 700 Saka Era=778 A.D.). It records that Toramana (written as Toraraya in one manuscript), enjoyed sovereignty of the world, or rather of Uttarapatha. He lived at Paivvâiya on the bank of the Chandrabhaga (Chenab river). His Guru was Hari-gupta, who himself was a scion of the Gupta family and lived there.

Rajatrangni, the Kashmir chronicle also mentions Toramana but his history recorded therein can hardly be reconciled with what we know of the Huna chief of that name from other sources.

Toramana's coins and inscriptions indicate that he had assumed the Indian title of Maharajadhiraaja, as many previous foreign invaders (the Indo-Bacterian and the Kushan) had done before him. They further reveal that he was of foreign origin and that he ruled over parts of U.P., Rajputana, and the Punjab and Kashmir. His coins also show that he was a worshipper of Vishnu.

Nothing is precisely known of the closing years of Toramana's rule although it seems that his reign continued up to the opening of the sixth century A.D.

Points to Remember.

Toramana was the first known Huna leader who invaded India; known from his inscriptions and coins; Rajatrangni also refers to Toramana but facts given in this work are not reliable; Toramana advanced from the Punjab; captured a large part of Gupta territories; assumed Indian imperial titles; coins show that he was a worshipper of Vishnu.

Q. Describe the career and achievements of Mihirakula, naming the sources you utilise.

Ans. Mihirakula was the son and successor of Toramana, the leader of Huna incursions in India. He succeeded his father to the throne about 515 A.D. The traditions represent him as "a veritable terror," "the Atila of India," "the oppressor of mankind," "the
oremest among the wicked men”. Hiuen Tsang writes in his account that he carried on a merciless persecution of the Buddhists, destroying and plundering their Stupas and monasteries. Cosmas, a Christian monk who visited India in his reign calls him a great oppressor. Kalhana, a Brahmin of Kashmir writes about him in the same strain in his work Rajatarangini about six centuries later.

Mihirakula spread fire and carnage from the Punjab to Mahi. By 525 A.D. he was absolute master of the north-western zone. Hiuen Tsang records that Mihirakula came into a conflict with a king Baladitya who profoundly honoured the law of Buddha. Who this Baladitya was cannot be stated with certainty. Mihirakula was defeated and taken prisoner. But Baladitya later set him free and allowed him to go into exile. According to the testimony of Hiuen Tsang, Mihirakula was sent reeling back to his dominions on the north-west frontier only to find that his brother had seized the throne.

Mihirakula, after spending sometime in concealment took refuge in Kashmir where he received a generous treatment at the hands of its ruler who placed him in charge of a small territory. Mihirakula whatever misused the generosity and kindness shown to him. After some time he rebelled against his benefactor and treacherously seized the throne of Kashmir. He then ran over the Buddhist holy land of Gandhara. Its Huna ruler perhaps himself was treacherously surprised and slain. He exterminated the royal family and massacred multitudes of people on the banks of the Indus. He laid in ruins the splendid Buddhist monasteries and despoiled their treasures.

The account of Mihirakula—Baladitya episode as given by Hiuen Tsang is liable to suspicion because he places Mihirakula ‘several centuries ago.’ Moreover, it is difficult to believe many of the details of this story.

Mandasor inscription of Yasodharman claims that “respect was paid to his feet by even that (famous) king Mihirakula.” It shows that Mihirakula was defeated but his kingdom was not destroyed. After the fall of Yasodharman which probably came soon after, Mihirakula regained his position.

The Kashmir chronicle, Rajatarangini gives an account of Mihirakula’s campaign against the distant island of Ceylon. It states that Mihirakula’s queen was wearing a Ceylon made corset on her bosom with the print of the Ceylonese king’s feet. Mihirakula took it as an insult. He invaded Ceylon and defeated its king. This tradition, however, does not seem to contain any truth.

Mihirakula’s dominions included Afghanistan, the Punjab,
Rajputana and Malwa. Hiuen Tsang’s account indicates that his capital was at Sagala, the modern Sialkot. The exact date of his death is not known. According to some writers he died in 540 A.D. There are others who are of the view that he died in 547 A.D. Hiuen Tsang writing about his death remarks that “his career was cut short by his sudden death and the air was darkened, and the earth quaked, and fierce winds rushed forth as he went to the Hell of unceasing torment.” And the holy saints said in pity, “For having killed countless victims and overthrowing the land of the Buddha, he has now fallen into the lowest hell, where he shall pass endless ages of revolution.”

**Mihirakula’s Coins and Inscriptions.**

Two inscriptions give us some information about Mihirakula. One of his inscriptions was found inside the fort of Gwalior. It shows that he was the son of Toramana and ruled over Northern India for at least 15 years. The other inscription was discovered near Khewra in the salt range of the Punjab. It records the building of a Sun Temple in the 15th year of Mihirakula’s reign.

A number of copper coins of Mihirakula have also been found in the neighbourhood of Gwalior. A much larger variety of his coins has been found at Chiniot (West Punjab, Pakistan). Some of his coins bear the image of the goddess Luxmi. A large number of his coins have the bull and the trident of Siva.

**His Religion.**

Toramana’s coins show that he seems to have adopted Hinduism. His coins bear the figure of bull which indicates that he was a worshipper of Siva. The Gwalior Inscription records that he built a Sun temple. He might have been a worshipper of the god Sun also. It is, however, clear that he was very intolerant towards the Buddhists and persecuted them.

**Points to Remember**

Mihirakula son and successor of Toramana; the tradition represents him as a cruel monster. Hiuen Tsang, Cosmas and Kalhana state that he persecuted the Buddhists; Hiuen Tsang writes Mihirakula came into conflict with Baladitya; identification of Baladitya not finally established; Mihirakula was defeated; retired to Kashmir; murdered his benefactor.
and massacred the people; captured Gandhara; Hsien Tsang's account cannot be relied upon. Rojatarangini gives account of Mihirakula's; campaign against king of Ceylon; this tradition hardly trustworthy. Mihirakula's coins bear the image of goddess Luxmi; some coins have the image of bull. Two inscriptions of Mihirakula discovered; one at Gwalior and the other at Kheora; he seems to have adopted Hinduism, worshipper of the god Sun and of Siva; intolerant towards other religions.
CHAPTER X

The Gupta Administration.

Introduction.

The Gupta emperors were great administrators. They knew it full well that the stability and permanence of the state depends on efficient and enlightened administration. Hence they evolved for their empire an imposing and benevolent system of administration. But their system cannot be called genuinely original. They did not make any innovations but simply adopted and improved upon the administrative system of the earlier empires so as to suit the contemporary conditions. They continued the traditional machinery of the bureaucratic administration with nomenclature mostly borrowed and adopted from the earlier times. The high imperial office of mantri (high minister) and the Mahamatras or the provincial viceroys of the times of the Guptas go back to the Mauryan period. The titles of the Gupta officials like Kumaramatya, Mahadandanayaka and Sandhivigrhika mentioned in the Allahabad Pillar Inscription were also known to Kautilya. Again, the technical terms such as Gramika, Grama, Vishya Nagra, Gopa, Bhoga, Shulka, Pushtapala, Gulma, Akshapatala, Duta, Seema and Adhikarna are also mentioned in the Mauryan records. Moreover, the Scythian and Kushan officials like Rajuka, Lekhaka, Amatya, Dandanayaka, Mahasenapati and Gramayka served as the prototypes for the Gupta system.

On the eve of rise of the Guptas to Imperial power several republican states existed in India. The principal ones among them were the Madaras in the central Punjab, the Kunindas in the Kangra valley the Yadneys in the south eastern Punjab, the Arjunayanas in the Agra-Jaipur area and the Malavas in the central Rajputana. There were many small non-monarchical states like those of the Pratjunas, Sanka-nikas, Kakas and Abhiras in the modern Madhya Pradesh. These republics almost completely disappeared by the end of the 4th century A.D. and the hereditary monarchy became the prevailing type of government during the Gupta period.
Q. 1. Discuss the Gupta administrative organisation with reference to (a) the position of the king (b) the structure of the central government and (c) the Kumaramatyas.

2. Describe the central administration under the Imperial Guptas.

Ans. The Imperial Guptas established a well organised state which brought about the consolidation of a large part of Northern India under one government. They set up an efficient system of administration both at the centre and in the provinces. The central government consisted of the king and his ministers. The framework of the government and the titles of the officials at the centre were, however, not original but were derived mainly from the administrative set up of the Mauryan empire. The principles upon which the government worked were also borrowed from the past. Its working and the functions of its principal officers have been explained below.

The Sovereign.

The emperor was the supreme head of the state and the hub of the whole administrative machinery. He was usually nominated by his predecessor. The Allahabad Pillar Inscription indicates that Chandra-gupta I announced the nomination of Samudra-gupta as his successor to his council or Sabha. The Riddhapura Inscription also suggests such nomination in the expression tatpada-parigrihiita. In the case of Chandra-gupta II his nomination by his father is indicated in the Bihar and Bhitari Pillar inscriptions of Skanda-gupta where the expression tatparigrihiita is used for Chandra-gupta II. The right of primogeniture was not always enforced. Preference in succession was given to a prince who had already proved his worth. Generally the eldest son was recognised as Yuvara (heir apparent) and put in charge of the important duties of the state. Persons of royal birth were often appointed viceroys of provinces.

Imperial Titles.

The Gupta rulers abandoned the modest title of Rajan which was commonly adopted by the indigenous dynasties of earlier times. They now assumed the high sounding titles brought into vogue by the foreign rulers like the Kushans in India. The epigraphical records of the Gupta period show that the kings assumed such titles as Paramadaivata, Maharajadhira, and Prithivipala, Paramesvara, Samrat, Ekadhira, Chakravartin to indicate their imperial status. The early Gupta rulers like Sri-gupta and Ghatotkacha were simply
designated as Maharajahs. But from the time of Chandra-gupta I,
the grander title of Maharajadhiraja began to be claimed.

Divinity of the kings.

Frequent references seems to have been made in the Gupta
epigraphical records to the ‘divine nature’ of king when he is called
Achintyapurusha, Dhandavrunhhand arikusam, Parmadaivata etc.
In the Allahabad Pillar Inscription Samudra-gupta is described as
Lokdharmodevasaya, ‘God come to live upon earth’. He is represen-
ted equal to Kuvera, Varuna, Indra and Yama. Inspite of assumption of
these divine titles, Gupta kings did not claim either infalliability or
autocratic powers on account of their theoretical divinity. The
records of our period indicate that the kings who were
haughty, irreligious, immodest and tyrannical were never regarded
as divine but were held to public opprobrium. They could not
become tyrannical like the Stuarts kings of England.

Education and Training.

Both the Smritis and the inscriptions of the age emphasise that a
king can become successful ruler only if he waits upon the elders,
studies the art of government, cultivates religiousness and protects
his subjects as efficiently as the divine guardians. It was obligatory
for the king to have the knowledge of Shastras and to be well versed
in the literary and social sciences of the time. He must make
assiduous efforts to master the political science, to cultivate fortitude
and to acquire leadership for otherwise he would not become a
successful ruler. The Smritis suggest that an ideal ruler is he who
“possesses an inner soul pervaded by the inclination for the acquit-
tance of debts and obligations and is occupied with the welfare of
all mankind”.

The Gupta monarchs were generally not only doughty fighters,
rough soldiers and war-lords but great lovers of learning and fine
arts. The Allahabad Pillar Inscription shows that Samudra-gupta
established (his) title of “King of poets” by various poetical com-
positions. The court of Chandra-gupta II was adorned by the important
literary figures of the time. Similarly the coins of the later Imperial
Gupta kings indicate that they appreciated the various artistic, social
and educational problems of the times.

R.N. Dandekar writes that the personal accomplishments of the
sovereigns—literary, artistic, martial and diplomatic—which have
been greatly stressed in the inscriptions cannot have been idle praise
and may be regarded as indicating the type of education given to a
prince. Bhanu-gupta is said to have personally fought the enemies.
Skanda-gupta was compelled ‘to sleep on the bare earth’ during one of his campaigns.

Powers and Prerogatives of the king.

The king was the fountain head of all the authority in the state. He usually “held all the levers and handles which worked the Government machinery”. He was the centre of all military, political, administrative and judicial powers. No doubt, he was assisted by a council of ministers but the ultimate responsibility of a final decision rested with him. He was often his own commander-in-chief and himself led important military expeditions. All viceroys, governors and military officers were appointed by him and were responsible to him. They all held office at his pleasure. The secretariat at the capital worked under his personal direction and supervision and the provincial governors and their officers were under his personal control and guidance. His oral orders were noted down by secretaries and then put into proper shape and forwarded to the concerned officers for being carried out. To all appearances, the government was thus personal but in reality it was by no means autocratic. The kings had no legislative powers and were expected to govern according to the customary laws including those made by local bodies, guilds and other voluntary associations. Almost all the functions of government other than defence and foreign relations were decentralised as far as possible and delegated to the autonomous local bodies like the village Panchayats and town councils functioning under the general supervision of the central government which varied in intensity from time to time. Though there was no central popular assembly like the modern parliament, people did not suffer from the evil consequences of autocracy due to the delegation of large powers to the local bodies. The Smritis and epigraphical records of the Gupta period emphasise that a good king should respect the wishes of his subjects and promote their welfare and there is every reason to believe that the rulers ordinarily tried to live up to this ideal. Fahien, the celebrated Chinese pilgrim tells us how the people under the Gupta rule were happy and prosperous and had no occasion to complain against the oppression or autocracy of the government.

Ministry.

As stated above the king carried on the administration with the help of a council of ministers whose offices were often hereditary. It was next in importance to the king and the fact of existence of such a council is hinted at in the Allahabad Pillar Inscription and the Smritis. They refer to ministers as Mantris or Sachivas. Although we have no definite information about the strength of the ministry or the portfolios held by its different members yet it appears from
the literature of the age that the ecclesiastical, military, revenue, land and commerce departments were put under the charge of different members of the council of ministers. Sometimes several offices were held simultaneously by a single minister. For example, Harisena, the composer of the Allahabad Pillar Inscription was a foreign minister, and also a military general, an officer controlling the supervision of the Royal Kitchen, a minister (Kumaramatya), chief of the, police and a criminal judge. It indicates that either a minister was transferred from one portfolio to another or that one minister was in charge of several departments. Military leadership seems to have been one of the necessary qualifications of a minister. Besides possessing a proficiency in the military art, ministers were expected to be well versed in the art of diplomacy as well. Some of them, like Saba and Harisena were also poets and authors. There was often a tendency for the ministerial office to be held in hereditary succession.

Central Government.

The Gupta inscriptions throw no light on the nature of the machinery of the Central government. It seems that the Gupta emperors continued the traditional bureaucratic machinery of the earlier times. R. D. Banerji opines that it was as efficient and as well organised as the official system of Chanakya and Chandra-gupta Maurya. The names of the majority of officials have been found in the seals discovered by Bloch and Spooner among the ruins of Vaisali and Nalanda. The work of Central Govt was carried on with the help of Mantris or Sachivas. The capital of the kingdom was the head quarters of the central secretariat whose chief officer was called Sarvadhyaaksha. The secretariat accommodated a large number of departments. Each office had its own seal of office with which all its communications were stamped to make them authentic. Each minister transacted routine business on his own responsibility but important matters were invariably referred to the whole council presided over by the king. There does not seem to have been a very clear cut division between civil and military functions.

The military department was undoubtedly the most important department and was directly administered by the king or the heir apparent. There was a Mahabaladhihkrita (commander-in-chief) and several Mahasenapatis (generals) working under the king. There were a large number of Mahadandanayakas who appear to correspond to modern Lt. Generals. There were Dandanayakas who were probably of the rank of modern colonels.

The foreign minister was called Mahasandhivigrahika. He was expected to accompany the king to the battle-field in order to assist him in the matters of war and peace. This officer worked in close
co-operation with the king and the military department. He was responsible for planning of campaigns, collection of intelligence both military and diplomatic and general supervision over the preparedness of the army. The foreign minister seems to have been the busiest minister in the early Gupta period when Samudra-gupta and Chandra-gupta II were engaged in their campaigns in the north and south. This department decided which kingdoms were to be annexed to the Gupta dominions and which were to be permitted to remain as the feudatory states. The Mahasandhivigrahaika had a number of Sandhivigrahikas under him to assist him in his work.

The designation of the head of the police department seems to have been Mahadandananayaka. The term has been translated as "chief of police and criminal judge". Some seals discovered at Vaisali refer to Dadndanayakas who were probably the officers of the police like the modern superintendents of police.

The name of the officer in charge of the revenue department is not known. This department was in charge of collection of taxes and revenue. Waste lands, forests and mines which were state properties were administered by this department.

The judicial department is not referred to in the contemporary records. The evidence afforded by the Smritis like that of Brihaspati written about this time suggest that this department was presided over by the Chief Justice who was assisted by several city and town judges. The seals of Nayadhikaranas and Dharmadhikarnas have been discovered at Nalanda and Vaisali which belong to the courts of these judges.

The ecclesiastical department was under a minister probably called Parodha or Pandita. They seem to have discharged the functions similar to those of the Dharma Mahamatras of the times of Asoka. Their main duties were to regulate public morals, supervise charities and temples and promote public education.

The designation of the minister in charge of trade and commerce is not known. The names of subordinate officers like Drangikas occur in contemporary inscriptions. This department was also in charge of roads and rest houses.

Besides there were was office of Mahapratihara who was the chief door keeper and perhaps chief of the palace guard. He and his assistants regulated the admission of the visitors to the emperor. There was an officer named Khadyatapakika who was in charge of the royal kitchen. The king as a conqueror employed special officers
Yuktapurushas who were appointed to restore to the vanquished the properties seized by the king.

Kumaramatyas.

The Guptas had a superior civil service similar to the modern I.C.S. or I.A.S. The members of this service were known as Kumaramatyas. Scholars like R. K. Mookerji and Chattopadhayaya have translated this term as ministers in attendance of a prince of the royal blood. But Dr. Majumdar says that a careful analysis of the epigraphical records shows that such was not the case. Harisena, the foreign minister of Samudra-gupta and Sikharaswami and Prithvisena the ministers of Kumara-gupta worked directly under the sovereign but are still described as Kumaramatyas. The inscriptions indicate that the members of this class were sent sometimes to serve as district officers and divisional officers sometimes as secretariat officers and sometimes as cabinet ministers and were often promoted to the posts of ministers and generals. Dr. Altekar is of the view that they resembled the Amatyas of the Mauryas and Stahvana administration who held similar posts. It is, however, difficult to know why the term Kumara was prefixed to this designation in the Gupta period. Kumaramatyas were usually of high birth and were often recruited from the members of ex-royal families which had been superceded by in the empire. Their posts were generally hereditary as those of the ministers.

R. D. Banerji writes that there were several gradations among the ministers who held the rank of Kumaramatyas. To the highest grade belonged those who were equal in rank to the emperor himself (Sri-Paramabhattarakā padiya kumaramatya). To the second class of Kumaramatyas belonged those who were held equal in rank to heir—apparent (Yuvrajā-bhattarakā padiya kumaramatya). To the third class of Kumaramatyas belonged the persons who were equal in the rank to the younger princes. The ordinary Kumaramatyas belonged to the fourth class. The gradation of these officers was to some extent similar to the nobility of the early Roman Empire. To sum up, the Kumaramatyas were a class of high officials some of whom were equal to the rank to the Emperor himself, some to the heir—apparent, while the others held the same rank as the princes of the royal blood.

Points to Remember.

*Imperial Guptas established an efficient and well-organised system of administration in the empire. The principles of the system and the titles of the officials and departments borrowed from the past.*
The Sovereign:—The sovereign was the supreme head of the state; normally nominated by his predecessor, right of primogeniture not always enforced. The Guptas adopted such titles as Maharajadhiraja, Parmadaivta, Prithvipala, Smrat, Ekrajadira. A successful ruler must study art of government; cultivate religiousness; protect his subjects, must be well versed in the literary and social sciences, cultivate fortitude and acquire leadership. Gupta rulers great warriors and generals, lovers of art and literature. Powers:—The king was the fountain-head of all authority—civil, military, political, administrative and judicial; all officers held office at his pleasure; the government though personal not autocratic; the king had no legislative powers; local bodies enjoyed a large measure of autonomy; people did not suffer from evil consequences of autocracy. Ministry:—the king had a council of ministers; advised and assisted him in the administration; ministers allotted different departments; sometimes several offices held by a single minister.

Central Government. The work of central government at the capital carried on with the help of Saclivas or secretaries. The military department directly under the king; assisted by Mahasenafronts and Mahadandanatykas. The foreign minister called Mahasandivigrahaloka; assisted the king in matters of war and peace; responsible for planning campaigns; also supervised intelligence department; The Revenue department collected taxes and revenues, the Judicial department probably under a Chief Justice; The ecclesiastical department under Parodha or Pandita; regulated public morals, supervised charities and temples; Other officers:—Mahapratikara, Khadyatatapakika, Yukutapuusha.

Kumaramatyas. Superior civil service similar to modern I.C.S. or I.A.S, these officers men of high birth, recruited from ex-royal families, the post hereditary, appointed to high jobs such as district officers, divisional officers, secretaries even ministers; several grades of Kumaramatyas.

Q. 1. Discuss the provincial administration of the Guptas.

Q. 2. Write a short but careful account of the provincial and district administration under the Guptas.

(A) Provincial Administration

Both for the sake of administrative convenience and efficiency, the far-flung empire of the Guptas had been divided into various units and sub-units. The largest of such units was known as Desa which was large enough to be equivalent to a modern province. The number and the names of all the provinces of the empire have not so far come to light nor do we know about the designations of
the officers entrusted with their government. Only a few details about their administrative organisation are available from the inscriptions and coins of the Gupta period. The epigraphical records mention three provinces, namely, Saurashtra, Malwa and Antaravedi (the territories lying between the Yamuna and the Narmada). It seems that Panchashala, Kosala, Magadha and Vanga were also among the provinces of the empire. The principal officers of the provinces and their functions are given below:

(a) Desa

The governor of a Desa or province was called by several names such as Uparika Maharaja, Bhogika, Gopta or Rajasthaniya. The Junagarh Rock Inscription shows that the viceroy of a province was appointed by the emperor himself from among the Uparikas. The inscription indicates that Skanda-gupta appointed Paradatta ‘after great deliberations’ to look after the civil and military administration of the province of Saurashtra.

The Junagarh Rock inscription describes the qualities which a good governor should possess. It records that Skanda-gupta selected persons who were modest (vinita), upright (satya) straight forward (arjava) and above all temptation. The governor was expected to possess eloquence, sweetness of temper and civility of manners. He must have inborn and natural inclination to discharge the debts and obligations which the state owed to its subjects. He must be able to maintain an effective control over the far flung areas and must be competent to meet the most difficult situation readily. The accounts of Kumara-gupta I, show that the post of a viceroy which had been so far reserved for the princes of royal blood, was thrown open to the commanders of armies if they were found fit for it.

The viceroy or governor was the emperor’s representative in the province. In the provinces away from the imperial capital he behaved for all purposes like a king in miniature. He was responsible for the maintenance of law and order and for keeping the feudatories within his province under adequate control. He was responsible for the enforcement of royal decrees in his area. He was expected to help the poor and the pious and to protect the cultivators. He was expected to develop the province by constructing and repairing works of public utility like irrigation tanks and to strengthen the foundations of the empire by promoting good government and public confidence. The governors usually appointed their own subordinate officials. It seems that all the departments that existed at the centre had their replicas in the provincial head quarters also.

The governor had several private secretaries called Dutas, Dutakas
or Ajnadapakas who communicated his orders to the administrative officials. Some of the heads of the departments in the provinces mentioned in the Vaisali Seal Inscriptions, the Damdarpur Copper plate inscriptions and the Faridpur Copper Plate inscriptions were as under:

1. Baladhikaranika (the Army Chief).
2. Dandapasadhikaranika (the Police Chief).
3. Ranabhandarika (the Chancellor of Military Exchequer).
4. Mahadandanayaka (Chief Justice).
5. Vinaya-shti-sthapaka (Minister for Law and Order).
7. Tadayuktaka (Treasury Officer).
8. Hiranyasamudayika (Currency Officer).
9. Aurnasthanika (Superintendent of Silk Factories).
10. Chauroddharanika (Chief Detectives).

The Allahabad Pillar Inscription indicates that there was a Senapati (Commander-in-chief) in each province.

(b) Bhuktis.

The province was divided into sub-units called Bhuktis. A Bhukti was about the size of the modern Commissioner's division. We have references to Bhuktis in some inscriptions of the Imperial Guptas. They indicate that these units were governed by Uparika Maharajas who were appointed by and were responsible to the emperor himself. The Damodarpur Copper Plate Inscription of Kumara-gupta I dated G.E. 124 records that during his reign an Uparika named Chiradatta was the governor of the Bhukti of Pundravardhana (roughly North Bengal). The Damodarpur Copper Plate Inscription dated G.E. 165 shows that during the reign of Budha-gupta two Uparikas named Jayadatta and Brahmadatta were the viceroys of the same province. Several other Bhuktis such as Pundravardhana Bhukti, Tirabhukti, Naga Rabhukti, Sravastibhukti, Ahichchatrabhukti etc have been mentioned in the inscriptions of the Gupta period. Many of the governors of the Bhuktis such as Rajaputradeve of Pundravardhana, Govinda-gupta of Tirabhukti, Ghatotkacha Gupta of Tumain were princes of the royal blood.

(B) The District Administration.

The Bhuktis were sub-divided into small divisions called Vishayas. A Vishaya or pradeśa was roughly equal to a modern district.
Among the Pradeshas or Vishayas the Gupta records make mention of Latavishya Tiripuriavishaya, Airikina (called Pradesa in Samudra-gupta's Eran Inscriptio and Vishaya in that of Toramana), Antaravedi, Gaya, Kotivarsha, Mahakaushalpura, Khadapara, Pancha-nagari etc. The head-quarters of a district was called Adhikshana and the district office was called the Adhikarna. The executive officers of the district were designated by the generic names of Sambhyavahari (Baigrama and Nandapur Copper Plate Inscriptions) and Avuktakas (Nandapur Copper Plate Inscription). The Vishayapatis were usually appointed by the Uparikas or Governors of the provinces. For example, the Damodarpur Copper-plates show that Vishayapati of Kotivarsha was appointed by the Uparika of Pundravardhana. Similarly the Vishayapatis of Kotivarsha, Airikina and Tripuri were appointed by the Governors. But the Indore Copper plate inscription of Skanda-gupta suggests that sometimes Vishayaptis were also appointed by and acted directly under the Emperor himself. For instance, the Vishaypati like Sarvanaga of Antaravedi was directly responsible to the sovereign. The Vishayapati belonged to the cadre of Kumaramatyas and Ayuktakas or was a feudatory Maharaja. He was the pivot of the Gupta administration on the district level. He was the chief authority in civil, judicial and executive matters in the district. He maintained the records of lands and public accounts. Even when the central government sold some waste land it consulted the district officer. The inscriptions on the Faridpur Copper Plates, granting such lands bear the seal of the district administrator as a proof of his concurrence. The District Officer was helped in his administration by a group of officers as have been listed below by Dr. R. K. Mookerji.

(1) Mahattaras (Village Elders).
(2) Ashtakuladhikaranikas (Probably officer in charge of groups of families in the local area).
(3) Gramikas (Village headmen).
(4) Saulkika (Collector of customs and tolls).
(5) Gaulmika (Incharge of forests and forts).
(6) Agraharika (Incharge of settlements dedicated to gods or Brahmins).
(7) Dhruvadhikaranika (Land Revenue Officer).
(8) Bhandagaradhikrita (Treasurer).
(9) Talavataka (Village Accountant).
(10) Utkhetayita (Collector of taxes).
(11) Pustapala (Notary and Keeper of Records).
The subordinate staff of the district administration consisted of officers mentioned in the inscriptions as Yuktas, Niyuktas, Vyapritas and Adhikritas. Dr. Altekar suggests that the officers of police and trade departments probably worked under them.

Non Official District Councils.

The Damodarpur Copper Plates indicate that the Vishayapati had a sort of advisory council which represented leading commercial interests and artisans in the district. It seems that it formed a sort of a Municipal Council or District Board or Parishad. Dr. Bloch found a seal at Basrah which belonged to the Parishad of Udanakupa. The council consisted of the Nagara-sresthi (the chief banker of the city or president of the city guild (b) Prathamakulika (the chief artisan or the president of the artisan guild) (c) Pratham kayastha (chief of the union of writers or scribes) (d) Pustapala (keeper of records) and others. Dr. Altekar writes that the creation of an advisory council seems to have been an innovation of the Gupta kings.

The Faridpur Copper Plate Inscription No. 3 shows that the district council often contained as many as twenty members. The members of this non official council bore the titles of Vishyamahattaras. Seals of the council of Vishyamahattaras have been discovered at Nalanda. The Gupta inscriptions do not describe how the Vishyamahattaras were selected or elected. The term Prathamaprasartithin and Prathamaparshthavahana indicate that the guilds of bankers and traders were represented by their respective presidents. It seems that the other members of the council were the persons who had acquired a pre- eminent status by their age, experience and character.

C. The Town Administration.

The Gunaighar Inscription shows that the town administration was carried on by an officer called the Purapala who enjoyed the status of a Kumaramatya. He was appointed by the emperor himself. His office corresponded to the Nagarayayaharkas of the Mauryan times. The Purapala was probably assisted by a council known as Parishad. It aided the imperial officer in the work of administration of taxation and public works. The Gupta records show that the townsmen of the age were particular about the water supply, town halls, recreation, gardens etc. and the town council took adequate measures to satisfy their expectations. It seems that the Parishad formed an important element of the machinery of the local government. The Mallasarul Inscription of Gopachandra shows
that a city had a special officer called Avasathika or a superintendent of Dharamsala.

The Village Administration.

Every Vishaya consisted of a number of villages called Gramas. The headman of a village was called Grameyaka or Gramadhyaksha. He was assisted by the village council known as Panchamandali in Madhya Pradesh and Gramajanapada in Bihar. These village councils were the Panchayats of the ancient days. A large number of seals of such village councils have been found at Nalanda. We do not know how the members of the village councils were appointed. The term Mahamatras would suggest that some prominent persons of different classes were elevated to the council by general approval. It seems that the Guptas did not interfere with the autonomy of the village community and gave to the village council great powers in the village administration. It discharged almost all the functions of the government. It helped the village headmen in the maintenance of peace and order in the village. It looked after village defence, dispensed justice, organised works of public utility acted as trustee for minors and collected government revenues and deposited them in the central treasury.

Points to Remember.

Gupta empire divided into units and subunits. Very little information available about the working of the provincial administration. The biggest unit called Desa which was equivalent to a modern province. The governor of a province called Uparika maharaja. Gupta or Rajasthaniya appointed by the emperor after deliberation; enjoyed vast powers, assisted by various heads of departments in his work. The Desa divided into Bhuktis; a Bhukti equivalent to a commissioner's division; governed by an Uparika; The names of some Bhuktis were Tirabhukti, Nagarabhukti, Sravastibhukti; many of the governors of Bhuktis were princes of royal blood.

District Administration:—Desas and Bhuktis divided into Vishayas or Pradesas; equivalent to a modern district; a Vishaya was under a Vishayapati; pivot of the Gupta administration at district level; assisted by a group of officials such as Gaulmika, Agraharika, Dhruvadhikaranika, Talavataka, Pustapala etc. The Vishayapati had a non official advisory council which represented the principal leaders of the mercantile community such as chief bankar, chief artisan, chief trader, chief writer etc.
Town administration was carried on by a Purodpala, who enjoyed the status of a Kumaramatiya, assisted by a council known as Parishad, which took adequate measures for the economic welfare of the townsmen.

Village Administration:—The district was divided into Gramas; administration carried on by Grameykas, or Gramadhyaksha assistedly by a council known as Panchamandala; similar to a Panchayat of ancient days, the village enjoyed a large measure of autonomy during the Gupta age.

Q. Describe the Land System and the Land Revenue administration of the Guptas. Besides land revenue what were the other sources of income of the state? Also describe the main heads of expenditure.

Ans. The Land System and Land Revenue Administration.

The main occupation of the people during the Gupta age was agriculture and the main source of income of the state was land revenue. The government, therefore, took keen interest in the land revenue administration of the country and took adequate measures for the welfare of the peasants. Several inscriptions like the Gaya grant of Samudra Gupta dated 329 A.D., the Dhanaidaha mutilated copper plate inscription of Kumara-gupta I, the Paharpur copper plate of Budha-gupta, the Damodarpur copper plates and the Faridpur copper plates afford interesting glimpses into the land system and the land revenue administration during the Gupta rule.

Measurement and classification of land.

The Gupta inscriptions indicate that the prevailing standard of land measurement was Kulyavapa which was equal to 8 dronavapas. The precise dimensions of these measures are not known. It seems that a Kulyavapa was slightly larger than an acre. The plots of land were marked out by ash, charcoal, pegs, or by boundary signs which were prominently visible.

The entire cultivable land in the village was settled and distributed into holdings among its householders. The government could not take away land for public purposes or charity out of these settled holdings of peasant proprietors. These lands were not only assessed for revenue purposes for usual taxes but were surveyed according to the prevailing standards of land measurement. The uncultivated lands were classified into the following types (a) Samudayabahya, i.e. not productive of any revenue for the state (b) Aprahata or untilled land (c) Khila-Kshetra or fallow land (d) Aprada or unsettled
(e) ashtamba or devoid of vegetation  (f) Apratikara or not yielding any income to the proprietor  (g) Utpraiktka or not assessed  (h) Na-kashchit rajartha-virodha i.e. not causing any loss of revenue to the state.

The above terms seem to refer to uncultivated waste lands lying on the outskirts of settled villages. But such lands though not under cultivation were cultivable. That is why the state charged to its purchaser the customary sale price which it could bear. The purchaser could create an endowment to maintain his charity out of the yield of such lands.

Land Transactions.

The inscriptions mention varied conditions of sale of land. In some cases the sale adhered to the custom of non-destruction of the principal. In other cases sale was made in perpetuity with or without the right of alienation. The grants of religious nature were generally perpetual, heritable and exempted from several customary burdens of the village. Sometimes Brahmans, temples and monasteries were granted entire villages. In such cases the donee was given only the right to receive the royal revenues and could not dispossess the tenants. The donees were required to live in the villages alienated to them which discouraged absentee landlordism.

According to Dr. Ghoshal, the Gaya Copper Plate Inscription of Samudra Gupta dated 329 A. D. illustrates the different classes of tenants inhabiting an ordinary revenue paying village in the early Gupta period. The temporary tenants paid the Uparik tax and the other tenants paid the usual contributions in cash or kind. The inscription further shows that the state maintained strict control over the pious grants of land by making it an essential condition of the gift that revenue paying tenants should not be admitted into the privileged village to the detriment of the king's revenue.

The landlords who did not themselves till their lands used to lease them to the tenants. The landlords gave them about 33 to 50 percent of the gross produce as the return for their labours.

The Paharpur Copper Plate Inscription dated G. E. 159 = 479 A. D. records that the proposal for the transfer of land in the village was in the first instance referred to the standing non-official committee which consisted of (a) leading Brahmans (Brahmanottarars) (b) village elders (Mahattaras) (c) and representative householders (Kutumbinash). The Damodarpur Copper Plate Inscription No. 3 shows that the village council consisted of four classes of members viz. (1) Mahattaras (2) Ashtakuladhikaranas (3) Grameykas and Kutumbinash, together with the government officers the Pustapalas.
After the sale was permitted by the government, the actual transfer of ownership was effected in the presence of leading villagers who formally demarcated the plot.

Ownership of Land.

There has been a considerable difference of opinions among the scholars about the precise ownership of land during the Gupta age. R. N. Dandekar thinks that there is definite evidence in the inscriptions which proves that the state was virtual if not legal owner of all the lands. Dr. Jayaswal, on the other hand, is of the view that the Gupta title deeds inscribed on copper plates and registered at the office of the district officer, whose seal they bore clearly prove private ownership. R. G. Basak suggests that the land jointly belonged to the state and the people or in other words, it was owned by the village assemblies. He argues that the state could not alienate lands without prior consent of the people's representatives such as village elders and leading businessmen. Secondly he holds that only 1/6 of the sale proceeds of the land went to the state exchequer and the remaining amount went to the funds of the village assemblies subject to over all control of the sovereign. R. N. Dandekar, on the other hand, puts forward the following arguments in support of his view. In the first place, the so called people's representatives were only minor officials of the state. Secondly the word dhammasadbhaga (as found in the inscriptions) refers to the share in the spiritual merit and not the portion of the sale proceeds. Thirdly the most convincing argument in favour of the exclusive state ownership of the class of lands mentioned in the inscriptions is that the grant of such lands was recommended on the ground that the sovereign could thereby acquire wealth by sale proceeds as well as spiritual merit. Lastly the elaborate official procedure for the alienation of land comprising of three stages of formal application, the verification by record-keepers, and the inspection and the actual transfer of land sold may also seem to confirm the state ownership of such lands.

Dr. R. C. Majumdar is of the opinion that follow and waste lands belonged to the state but their actual transfer was made with the approval and through the agency of village councils or town councils. He further suggests that in several villages the state owned small fiefs of cultivable lands which are expressly described in the inscriptions as rajyavastu, i.e., crown lands. These lands usually went to the state on account of want of heirs or failure to pay the land tax. As far as rest of the cultivable land was concerned, it belonged to the private individuals and the state could not dispossess them.

Hiuen Tsang's account shows that the royal lands were divided into four classes:—
(a) Lands to provide expenses of religious activities of the sovereign himself.

(b) Lands to be granted to important public servants by way of remuneration.

(c) Lands to be given away as rewards for high intellectual eminence.

(d) Lands for giving gifts to various sects and communities.

Land Revenue.

The land revenue collections, the backbone of the Gupta administration were moderate. The Guptas charged 1/6 as government share of the gross produce as compared with a quarter in the Mauryan period and a third in the time of Akbar. It was called Bhagakara in some localities and Udranga in others. Dr. Altekar suggests that in actual practice the land tax varied from 8 to 32 percent which was usually collected in kind. It seems that it varied according to the fertility of land. Besides, the government also charged 1/6 of the sale proceeds of lands which is borne out by the Faridpur Copper Plates.

Other Sources of Income.

Dr. Mookerji writes that it appears that in the system of taxation of those days there was hardly any property or income which was not taxed. One important source of income of the state was duties imposed on goods at ports, ferries and fortified stations. Similarly octroi duties some of which were collected in kind were assigned to the village and town officers as a part of their remuneration. The references to Bhuta-pratyaya in the inscriptions indicate that it was probably a tax on articles manufactured in the kingdom. The account given by Dandin and some other inscriptions show that the people were fond of drinking. It seems that the government taxed this common luxury also. The government also earned a large income from customs duties as during the Gupta period India had brisk trade both with the European and the eastern countries. The people were also required to pay tolls to cross the rivers. As the government was the owner of uncultivated lands, forests, pastures and salt mines, it derived large income by letting them out or selling their produce.

Justice was also a source of income to the state. The government imposed fines for violation of the law. The inscriptions refer to Dasaparadha i.e. fines from ten offences, viz., three offences of the body, theft, murder and adultery (b) four offences of speech, harsh
words, libellous words and pointless words; (c) and three offences of mind, coveting other's property, thinking of wrong and devotion to what is not true.

The government also collected taxes from the merchants according to their capacity to pay. The Mahajans and industrialists paid to the king ten percent of their income. The government had also the right to hidden treasure and deposits.

Another source of income to the state was the war booty. Samudra-gupta overran the whole of northern and southern India and returned to his capital with hundreds of camels laden with gold and silver. Similarly Chandra-gupta II conquered a great part of western India and brought a large amount of booty to the royal treasury.

Lastly the unclaimed property, mint, presents and salt also formed the sources of the royal income.

Heads of Expenditure.

The Guptas spent a large part of the state revenue on defence forces, on government business and for the welfare of their subjects in general. B.G. Gokhale suggests that about 50% of the money available in the state budget was spent on the army. For extensive campaigns Samudra-gupta and Chandra-gupta II must have spent even larger amounts. Of the other items of expenditure the personal expenses of the emperor must have accounted for about 10%. As much as 20% must have been spent on the nation building activities including donations to religious and cultural endowments and the rest went into the reserve. Dr. Gokhale remarks that "this predilection of setting aside large surplusses for reserves was common through major periods of Indian history and it may be surmised that the Guptas were not an exception to this general rule."

Points to Remember.

Land System:—

Several inscriptions gives information about the land system and the revenue administration of the Guptas. The prevailing standard of measurement was Kulyavapa=8 Dronavapas; a Kulyavapa slightly larger than an acre. The entire cultivated land in a village settled and distributed among its householders. The uncultivated lands classified into 8 types. Land sold on varied conditions; some land alienations adhered to the custom of non- destruction of principal; in some cases the sales in perpetuity with or without the right of alienation; grants of lands for charitable
purposes perpetual. Sometimes entire village granted. The proposal for transfer of land in the first instance referred to a village council; the sales sanctioned by the government. Difference of opinion about the precise ownership of lands. Some writers hold that all lands belonged to the king, others hold that only fallow lands and waste lands belonged to him. The Royal lands divided into 4 catagories;

Land Revenue:—

It is generally held the government levied 1/6 of the produce as land revenue. It seems that it varied between 8% to 32% according to the fertility of land.

Other Sources of Income:—

The other sources of income were excise and customs, octroi duties, taxes on incomes of merchants, war booty etc. As the state had monopoly of uncultivated lands, forests, pastures and salt mines, it derived large incomes from their produce; justice was also a source of income to the state.

Heads of Expenditure:—

Principal item of expenditure was the army. Government also spent on nation buildings activities and made donations to charitable institutions; surplus amount went into the reserve.

Q. Describe the military administration of the Imperial Guptas.

Ans. The Gupta period was an age of imperialism. The Gupta monarchs like Chandra-gupta I, Samudra-gupta, Chandra-gupta II and Skanda-gupta were great warriors and intrepid generals. For the extension of their dominions and the stability of the empire, they seem to have organised an efficient and well knit system of military administration.

The king was the head of the military administration. He paid special attention to the army and usually himself led the troops in war. He was assisted by the heir apparent, if he was old enough to bear the responsibility. There is an indication in Kamandaka's Nitisara that there was a war council which advised and assisted the king in his military administration.

The general structure of the military system of the Guptas did not differ much from that of the Mauryans. The contemporary accounts show that the main army of the Guptas was divided into six different
branches. The first important branch of the defence forces was the foot soldiers or the infantry. The second category consisted of horsemen or cavalry. The third division was made up of elephants and they played an important role in warfare. Each elephant carried three fighting men and a driver. The fourth branch consisted of chariots each of which carried one driver and two fighters. Kalidasa writes that chariots had fallen in disuse and were not so popular as they were in the early Vedic period. Another important division consisted of the naval forces. With the development of trade and commerce with the eastern and the western countries, this branch of the defence forces had become increasingly popular. The transport agency formed the last section. It dealt with the supply of the war material and stores and also looked after the upkeep of roads. Each branch had a different cadre of officers who bore significant titles like Asvapatis, Mahasvapatis and Mahapilupatis.

The Malwa Copper Plate Inscription of Dharasena refers to the post of a Senapati. The Bijjaghar Inscription tells us about a military rank of Mahasenapati. It seems that there were a number of Mahasenapatis under the emperor. Dr. R. C. Majumdar suggests that the Mahasenapatis and their armies were posted in different provinces of the Gupta empire to overawe the neighbouring armies and prospective local enemies. There were Mahadandanayakas who seem to have been the subordinates of Mahasenapatis. The Shahpur Stone Image Inscription refers to an other military officer Baladhikrita who commanded a division of the army. We come across several other ranks in the army such as Mahasanadvigrabika, Mahabaladhiprita and the warden of marches. The army had different quarter masters posted at different places, the seals of some of whom have been discovered. There was no clear cut division between civil and military officials. Some officers like Mahabaladhipritas and the Mahadandanayakas performed duties mainly military in character. But some civil officers also held military ranks. For example a Mantri could become a Mahabaladhiprita and an Amatya could also combine in himself the post of a Mahadandanayaka. Recruitment to the army was not confined to a particular caste. Some of the ablest commanders of the Gupta army were Brahmans.

There were several categories of soldiers. The best among them were the hereditary soldiers whose ancestors for several generations had been in the service of the king. They were very loyal to the king and normally formed the king’s bodyguard. The second category was called Brhityas. They were also paid by the king but they were neither hereditary nor had served the king for a long period. Next there were soldiers called Suhrtas. They were not directly
in the king’s service but were maintained by his allies who supplied them to him in war time. They were like the feudal armies of the Norman period in England. They could not be much relied upon by the king. The fourth category of the soldiers was known as Srenis. They were like militia of the Anglo-Saxon kings in England. The fifth category of the soldiers were called Dvisdas. They were not very reliable and were required to clean the roads. The last category of the soldiers were known as Atavikas. They were recruited from among the warring classes during an emergency.

The six departments of the army were under the strict control of an administrative office. This office issued orders concerning the army personnel and their duties. Kāmandaka’s Nitisāra shows that this department was very efficient. This office seems to have been modelled on the office maintained by the Mauryan kings. The different departments of the army were represented in the king’s council by their commanders. This council with the king in the chair took all important decisions concerning war and peace. The law givers also had enjoined upon the king to honour the decisions of this council.

The Allahabad Pillar Inscription gives an impressive list of weapons of war used in those days. It included battle axes (a weapon specially favoured by the Emperor himself), bows and arrows, spears and pikes, swords and lances, barbed darts and javelins. The soldiers were provided with armour and helmet.

The army seems to have been an expensive proposition as the amount of money spent upon its upkeep must have been about 50% of the total budget. Of course, successful expeditions brought their rewards in the form of tributes and thus helped to lessen the burden of the army on the state exchequer.

**Points to Remember.**

The Gupta emperors generally great warriors and military generals; organised an efficient military system. The king head of military administration; Nitisāra shows he had a war council to advise and assist him. The general structure based on the Mauryan system. The army divided into six departments viz., infantry, cavalry, elephants, chariots, naval forces and transport. Each branch had a different cadre of officers, who bore significant titles such as Asvapatis, Mahasvapatis and Mahapulaputis. The inscriptions give titles of different high military officers such as Senapatis, Mahasenapatis, Mahadandanayakas, Maha-
sandhivigrahikas, etc. There were six categories of soldiers. The six department of army were under the control of an administrative officer; all departments represented in king’s council. The weapons of war in use were battle axes, arrows, spears, swords etc. About 50% of the total budget spent on the upkeep of army.

Q. Describe the judicial administration under the Gupta rule.

Ans. The Gupta epigraphical records do not throw adequate light on the judicial system prevailing in those days. They yield us valuable information but are by no means comprehensive. Moreover, they differ great deal in the details. The works of ancient writers show that a regular hierarchy of courts existed though the exact structure that obtained cannot be easily ascertained. The outlines of the system have, therefore, to be gathered from the works of writers like Narada, Katyayana and Brihaspati written about this time.

Judicial Machinery.

During the Gupta period, the emperor was held to be the fountain of justice. His court was called by such names as sabha, dharma-sthana and dharma-dhikarana. Katyayana writes that the king should decide suits in association with learned Brahmins, elders and ministers well versed in state-craft. At another place he writes that he should associate with him judges, ministers, Brahmins, the Purohitas and the assessors. Brihaspati writes that the Sabha consisted of ten limbs, which included the king, the chief judge, the assessor, the accountant, the scribe and the bailiff. Regarding the functions of these limbs, of the Sabha, Brihaspati explains that “the chief justice declares the law, the king awards the punishment, the assessors examine the dispute, the accountant counts the wealth or the subject matter of dispute, the scribe writes down the pleadings, dispositions and decisions, and the bailiff summons the defendants, the witnesses and the assessors”. The above works show that the king, the judges and the assessors as well as the Brahmins formed the king’s court while the others were only the court’s assistants. Katyayana adds a new feature by stating that the merchants of high birth who were experienced, well read and were of good conduct could also take part in the administration of justice. Narada says that the king’s decisions were influenced by the Sabha. To serve as a check on the whims and caprices of the king in the administration of justice, Narada enjoins upon the council (Sabha) to give a just decision and even to persuade the king to desist from giving wrong decisions.
The Gupta inscriptions mention the names of Mahadandanayaka and Mahakshatapalika as the judicial officers. Mahadandanayaka was probably a magistrate and a police officer. Mahakshatapalika kept the records of proceedings of different cases of law and the legal interpretations of various points given.

Narada gives us a list of courts in an ascending order. The smallest of these was the Kula (village council). The next was called Sreni (corporation) and the final court was the Gana, a person authorised by the king and lastly the king himself. This last was the final court. The ultimate court of appeal was the king's court.

Some writers are of the view that there were four types of courts during the Gupta period. They were Pratisthita (city and village court appointed by the monarch), Mudrita (court of Pravvivaka), Aparatisthita (a circuit court) and Saista a court which was presided over by the king. There were also mobile courts for the forests and such other places.

Judicial Procedure.

A sort of definite procedure seems to have obtained in the royal courts. Dr. N. C. Sen Gupta has analysed critically the judicial procedure adopted by the government and the stages through which a case passed till it was finally decided. He is of the view that only cases involving crime or serious social offences could be initiated in the king's court. Gradually the king's justice became popular and the aggrieved persons frequently resorted to his court for redress. When a case was brought before it the court first satisfied itself that the case was within the ambit of law and then summons were issued to the parties involved. According to Narada a case normally passed through four stages. These are "receiving information from a person, then finding out under what title of law the information falls, the consideration of the pleadings of the parties and the evidence, and lastly the decision". Brihaspati's view is that the four stages were the plaint, the reply, adducing of evidence and the decision. According to Manu the plaintiff had to make the complaint personally. But Narada writes that a brother or father could act as attorney.

Sukraniti writes that the judge and the members of the jury decide the cases by a majority. Decisions were taken in the light of customs and the laws. The oaths were administered, the witnesses were examined and the opinion of the community was ascertained. Dr. Majumdar writes that we can well presume that the sound rules which have been laid down in the later Smritis about restraint, res judicata, the relative importance of the oral and documentary evidence etc. were evolved in the Gupta law-courts. Pleaders do not figure in the
judicial system of the Guptas. The jurors were expected to analyse
the case, ascertain the points favourable to either party and weigh
them impartially for coming to a proper decision. The decision of
the court was pronounced immediately after the conclusion of the
trial.

In cases where no satisfactory evidence, oral or documentary,
was forthcoming, the judges resorted to the method of decision by
ordeal. The principal ordeals employed were those by fire, by water,
by weighing and by poison. "In the water ordeal, the accused is
put in one sack and a stone in another and then the two sacks are
connected and thrown in a deep stream; if the sack containing the
stone floats, and the other sinks, the man's guilt is proved. The fire
ordeal requires the accused to kneel and tread on hot iron, to take
it in his hand and lick it; if he is innocent, he is not hurt, but he is
burnt if he is guilty. In the weighing ordeal, the accused is weighed
against a stone; and if the latter is the lighter, the charge is false;
if otherwise, he is true. The poison ordeal requires that the right
hind leg of the ram be cut off, and according to the portion assigned
to the accused to eat, poisons are put into the leg, and if the man
is innocent he survives, and if not the poison takes effect".

Laws.

Apart from the statute law and specific edicts, the law enforced in
those days was moral law. It was regarded the sacred and religious
duty of the government to vindicate the truth and uphold the
righteous and punish the wrong doer. Dharmasastras of which
Manusmriti was considered the most important and the customs
were to be regarded as authorities for the law. Katyayana writes
that the usages which were established in the country with the
people's approval and were not in conflict with the Vedas and Smritis
should be recorded in writing under the king's seal. Narada expanded
eighteen titles of law known to the older Smritis into 132 divisions.

Besides administering the rules embodied in a part of the Dharm-
sastra literature courts enforced jatidharma (rules of caste), janapada-
dhharma (local customs), srenidharma (laws of guilds) and kuladhharma
(family tradition) in so far as they created civil and legal rights.
Most of the laws were based upon tradition which was changing
along with the social customs.

Punishments.

According to Fahien, the punishments were light. He writes,"The king governs without decapitation or other corporal punishment.
Criminals are simply fined lightly or heavily according to the circum-

stances of each case. Even in the cases of repeated attempts at wicked rebellion, they only have their right hand cut off”. The testimony of Fahien, however, is not accepted by many scholars. According to them the punishments during the Gupta period were very harsh and severe. Mutilation, death sentence, fines and imprisonment were in vogue. Death sentence was imposed upon the murderers, traitors, dacoits and persons guilty of heinous crimes. The Multrarakshasa of Visakhadatta relates that atrocious punishments like taking the eyes out of the sockets or crushing the offender under the elephant's foot were inflicted. In the Junagarh Rock Inscription there are references to tortures inflicted on the criminals.

Conclusion.

The Gupta system of Judicial administration like all other systems of justice in ancient India was of a rough and ready type. There was absence of any clear cut gradation of courts and the specific functions of the judicial officers were not well defined. In spite of these shortcomings, the system was free from unnecessary expense, delay and rigidity. To its still greater credit, it was simple and possessed a considerable degree of human elements of sympathy, understanding and mercy. The much valued statement of Fahien bears testimony to the effectiveness of the system.

Points to Remember.

The outlines of the Gupta administration gathered from works of Narada, Katayana and Brihaspati. The king fountain head of justice; his court called Sabha or dharamasthana or Dharamadhikarna. The king decided suits in association with learned Brahmans, elders, ministers etc.; The titles of judicial officers were Mahadandanayaka, Mahakshatpalika etc. Narada writes the lowest court was kula, the next called Sreni, and the final court was Gana; ultimate court of appeal was king's court; Definite procedure seems to have obtained in the royal courts; cases decided by majority; oaths were administered; witnesses examined; pleaders do not figure in the judicial system of the Guptas. Ordeals were also employed sometimes; four principal ordeals were those by fire, by water, by weighing and by poison.

Laws:—

Statute laws, specific edicts moral laws and customs and rules embodied in Dharmashashtra literature enforced.

Punishments:—

Fahien writes that the punishments were light; the view not accepted by many scholars; mutilation, capital punishment, imprisonment and fines
inflicted. Madararakshar of Visakhadatta and Junagarh Rock Inscriptions refer to tortures inflicted on the criminals.

Q. Make an estimate of the Gupta administration.

Ans. The Imperial Guptas ruled India for about two centuries. During this period a number of able, versatile and mighty monarchs brought about consolidation of a large part of northern India under one political umbrella and established a great empire. The greatness of the Gupta empire consisted not only in its extent but also in its enlightened ideal of government.

The Guptas reorganised the Indian empire and established a bureaucracy as efficient and as well organised as the official system of Chanakya and Chandra-gupta Maurya. The system of administration, the structure of the government and the titles of the officials were borrowed from the earlier empires. During two hundred years of their rule, they further perfected the machinery of Imperial government which had come down to them.

According to Salesthe, the Gupta system was both imposing and benevolent. "It was imposing because of the vastness of its structure the nature of which can be realised from the fact that it was composed of the king, the council of ministers, the feudatories, the departments of the state, the officers of the capital, in the provinces and in the villages with their multifarious duties, the great extent of their authority and the numerical strength of their own subordinates. It was benevolent because it was not the crude autocracy where in the king was the only and absolute dictator." The kings were enlightened and their rule was vigorous. Although there was no centralised parliament to control the actions of the kings yet there were constitutional checks in the form of the council of ministers and the high officials of the state. Moreover, the whole administration was guided by a judiciously interpreted constitutional usages coming down in the form of precedents which had almost received the sanction of law. The kings followed the traditional rules about their duties and high ideals enshrined in semi-religious books which were sufficiently effective to curb tyrannical tendencies. The most important thing for the king was to see that his rule was popular and that his subjects did not resent his measures. It was difficult for him to overcome the wrath of his subjects. Moreover, the government was much decentralised and its functions were to a large measure transferred to the district administration. The state never neglected the native instinct of local groups and communities so far as it was consistent with the social and ethical canons of Dharma as laid down in the Sstras. The district officers were controlled and assisted by popular councils.
of Mahattaras whose concurrence was necessary even if the state was to sell its own waste land. The villages had their own councils called Panchamandals which enjoyed a large measure of autonomy. They functioned as corporate bodies and administered all the branches of administration including the maintenance of peace and order, the settlement of disputes and collection of taxes.

The picture of administration that we get from the Gupta records is that of efficiency. The whole system of government at the centre and the provinces was well organised. The central secretariat at the capital worked efficiently and kept in close contact with the provinces and the lower units and kept an effective control over the activities of the government servants there. The tours of the emperor and his ministers, the vigilant watch kept by the intelligence department and the force of public opinion greatly helped in keeping under check the centrifugal tendencies of the local officers and contributed to the successful working of the provincial administration.

The efficient system of administration ensured safety to its subjects both from foreign invasions and internal disturbances for a period of nearly two centuries. Fahien, the celebrated Chinese Buddhist pilgrim writes that the government did not put any restrictions on the movements of the people unless they endangered public safety. In the administration of justice there was a happy combination of justice and humanity. Criminals were punished promptly but the punishments were not inhuman. The fact that Fahien was not robbed anywhere on his travels whereas his successor Huen Tsang who followed him into India in the seventh century had quite a few unpleasant experiences, bears testimony to the effectiveness of the Gupta administrative machinery.

Apart from maintaining law and order, the government took adequate measures for the economic welfare of the subjects as well. Great care was bestowed on the efficient working of the public works department. Evidence of the great attention paid to irrigation in the remotest provinces of the empire is found in the Junagarh Rock Inscription of Skanda-gupta. The inscription records that Chakrapalita, the mayor of the city of Grinarra, rebuilt the dam on Sudarsana lake at "an immeasurable cost within a short period of two months". The trade and commerce department, no doubt collected various taxes but it also promoted commerce by securing safety of roads and by establishing a gold currency of international standard. The state developed mines and forests and afforded facilities to the peasants for bringing waste land under cultivation. The mint department was busy producing coins of high artistic merit. Dr. Altekar writes that "although the superintendent of mint (Lashakadhayaksha of the Arthasastra) does not figure in the
Gupta records yet no student of numismatics can dissent from the view that the mint department of the Guptas which issued the most artistic coins of the ancient period must have been more extensive and well organised than that of the Mauryas, which issued only the punch-marked coins.”

The Gupta government did not fail to promote the moral and spiritual welfare of the people. It appointed religious inspectors who regulated public morals and supervised charity and temples. The government generally made grants of land in the shape of agraharas or villages to learned Brahmans in furtherance of their religious pursuits. The donees of these villages were particularly required to set high moral standards so as to set an example for others. The state followed a policy of religious toleration and extended its patronage impartially to Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism. Dr. Altekar writes, though there is no direct evidence available upon this point we can well presume that the Gupta state attempted to keep an even balance between the conflicting interests of different classes.

The study of the Gupta administration thus gives us a picture of a benign government. The description as given by Fahien reflects the general condition of peace, prosperity, and well being of the country. The cities were teeming with population. The people were virtuous and happy and had scope and freedom for creative activity along varied lines. The poor and the sick, the orphans, the widows and the crippled were supplied food and medicines free of charge in hospitable institutions. Peace and prosperity maintained by the government naturally fostered the development of literature, science and art. The enlightened and benevolent administration had thus promoted both moral and material progress of the people.

Points to Remember.

The Guptas established a well organised system of government. They borrowed the principles of administration and the names of officials mainly from the past and perfected the imperial administrative machinery; Their administration was both imposing and benevolent. The kings were enlightened and their rule vigorous. The government was decentralised, the local units enjoyed a large measure of autonomy; the Panchayats flourished in the villages. Fahien records that people enjoyed considerable individual freedom; in the administration of justice a happy combination of justice and humanity; criminal promptly punished. Government took adequate measures for the economic welfare of the people; built works of public utility; trade and commerce flourished. The government also promoted moral and spiritual welfare of the people; granted lands for charitable purposes and to learned Brahmans. On the whole the people enjoyed the blessings of strong and benign government during the Gupta age.
CHAPTER XI

SOCIETY AND CULTURE

According to Havell, the civilization of the Gupta period was a revival of Aryan culture and of Aryan polity which owing to the disturbed conditions of Hindustan and the corruption of Aryan ideals were becoming decadent and stood in need of revision. The profound peace and the establishment of a firm central government by the Gupta emperors opened the high ways of commerce, gave impetus to both inland and foreign trade, promoted a great activity in all the arts of peace, and brought about a general revival of Aryan learning-philosophy, science, poetry and drama. Though many of the great works of art and literature of this period have been destroyed by the brutal vandalism of later invaders, yet enough remains to depict the glory of the Gupta age.

Social and Economic Conditions.

Q. Discuss the social life of India during the Gupta Age.

Ans. The official Gupta records are silent about the social life of the people. Some valuable information can, however, be gleaned from the accounts left by the Chinese pilgrims like Fahien and Hiuen Tsang. We also get some information from the Smritis and the literary works of the age.

Social Organisation.

Society during the Gupta age was divided on the basis of the age old doctrine of the four varnas or castes and the four ashramas (stages) which was the key note of the whole system of social life. The four varnas in the Hindu society were Brahmanas, Kshatriyas, Vaisyas and Sudras. Each of these four ethnic-occupational groups of Varnas was expected to follow its own specific
dharm or code of duties as prescribed by the Smritis in order that the purity, solidarity and integrity of the society as a whole should remain undisturbed. Life for people of all these castes was divided into a graduated series of four stages or Asramas i.e. Brahmacharya, Grihasthya, Vanaprastha and Sanyasa. The religious books prescribe certain duties for various Asramas or stages of life. It was the sacred duty of the sovereign to uphold the rules relating to the duties and mutual relations of the four Varnas and to prevent their unlawful mixture. Ahavadatta, the governor of a province is described as the protector of castes and his successor Dharmadatta as checker of the mixture of castes. Varahamihira, the author of Brihatamsitita assigns different quarters of a city to Brahmans, Kshatriyas Vaisyas and Sudras as does Kautilya in his Arthasastra.

Although the Smritis prescribe separate professions for different castes, yet in the Gupta age as in the earlier times departures were made from it. In actual practice considerable freedom seems to have been allowed in the matter of choice of profession. There are numerous authentic instances of Brahmans and Kshatriyas adopting the occupations of classes below them and the Vaisyas and Sudras following those of the classes above them. From the drama Mrichchhakatika, which gives a very vivid picture of the contemporary society we learn that Brahmans were not exclusively a priestly class or a spiritual community. For instance, the grandfather of Charudatta who was a Brahmin, is said to have been a prominent Sresthin. A Brahmin dining at a courtesan’s house or engaging in active politics or even in committing theft and the low caste persons like Viraka and Chandaka having opportunities to rise to high offices... these are some of the striking examples of freedom of profession depicted in this drama of the Gupta Age. The inscriptions of the Gupta period show that some Brahmins were traders while other were architects and still others government servants, Sikharaswami, a minister of Chandra-gupta I was a Brahmin. The case of Matrivishnu who was a feudatory chief of the Guptas shows how ambitious Brahmin families gradually made their way to the throne. The Indor Copper Plate of 465 A.D. records that the chief officers of the guild of oilmen were Kshatriyas. An inscription of the 5th century A.D. refers to two Kshatriya merchants living in a city in the upper Ganges basin, while the Mandasor inscription of Kumara-gupta I relates how a body of weavers from Gujarat gradually adopted various other occupations in their new home in Malwa. Dr. R.C. Majumdar suggests that the Sudras who according to the strict Smriti law had to remain content with the menial type of service of the three high Varnas took to martial profession and formed the bulk of the Gupta army.

Inter-marriages between the people of different castes and Varnas
were not uncommon. For instance, a daughter of Chandra-gupta II, a princess of Vaisya dynasty was married to Rudrasena, the Vakataka ruler who belonged to the Brahmin caste. The Kadamba ruler Kakushthavarman, a Brahmin gave his daughter in marriage to a Vaisya ruler of the Gupta dynasty. A Brahmin named Ravikirti married a Kshatriya girl named Bhanugupta. Such intercaste marriages continued even after the Gupta age but such matrimonial alliances became rather uncommon in subsequent times.

Untouchability, however, continued in the rigid form. Fabien says that in the Maithyadesha, "the Chandalas (out-caste tribes) are named 'evil men' and dwell apart from others...if they enter a city or market, they beat a piece of wood in order to separate themselves; then people knowing who they are, avoid coming in contact with them." For them were reserved the occupations of hunting, fishery scavenging and similar low professions. Huen Tsang writes that butchers, executioners, scavengers etc., corresponding to Chandalas and similar castes lived in dwellings marked by distinctive signs and lying outside the city. The references in the Gupta literature also confirm Huen Tsang's account.

Among the four Varnas, Brahmins and Kshatriyas enjoyed high status, though some Brahmins used to follow secular and non-Brahminical pursuits, the number of those who followed religious and literary pursuits must have been fairly large. The inscriptions refer to the ideals and duties of Brahmins. They stood for intellectual and spiritual life discarding worldly pursuits. Brahmins produced Yogis who concentrated on contemplation for achieving self fulfilment and salvation. They also produced Munis who gave themselves up to total and extreme penance as their only concern in life. Several inscriptions of the Gupta period record grants of land and Agraharas to Brahmins to help them in their life of learning and religion and performance of extensive Vedic ceremonies like Agnihotra and Pan-chamahayainas. This class as a whole continued to inspire respect as in the earlier days. The Kshatriyas were also held in high esteem because of the power and prestige which they enjoyed. They enjoyed the status of Dvijas (twice born) and had the privilege of Upanayana and Vedic studies. The jority of the Vaisyas were also respected like the Kshatriyas. This community was famous for its charitable disposition. They were running free hospitals and kitchens for the poor and the needy in Magadha Desha and Pataliputra. They also occupied positions of honour and responsibility on the Parishads or town councils. According to R. C. Majumdar, the prehistoric view that the Sudras should be content merely to become the servants of the twice born was not accepted in theory or followed in practice. The Yajnavalkya-Smriti permits the Sudras to become traders, artisans and agriculturists and there is no doubt that they availed themselves of this
concession. Many of them also enlisted in the army and rose to the high posts of captains and generals.

Slavery

Slavery was prevalent during the Gupta times but not in so rigid a form as it was in Greece and Rome. The contemporary literary works give description of numerous categories of slaves like prisoners of war, slave debtors, loser gamblers, female slaves etc. Sometimes during acute famines, people would voluntarily sell themselves to the rich who would undertake to feed them. Slavery in India, however, was not life long. Gamblers, debtors and famine slaves became free as soon as their dues were paid either by themselves or by their relations or friends. Prisoners of war were liberated by providing substitutes. If a slave saved his master's life, he was set free and was also given a son's share. A female slave bearing a child to her master, was immediately released from servitude. Katyayana writes that a Brahmin should not be made to work as a slave even by an individual of his own caste and that the sale and purchase of a Brahmin woman were to be annulled. It is thus evident that it was relatively very easy for slaves to regain freedom in India than in the West. The procedure for emancipating the slaves was interesting. The master took a jar from his slave's shoulder and smashed it. The master then sprinkled his head with water containing gram and flowers, and declared him a free man three times.

Joint Family System.

During the Gupta period, joint family system continued to be the characteristic feature of Hindu society. Smritis of the age are against the partition of the family in the life time of the father. The joint family with two or three generations living under the same roof continued to be the unit of society. The Gupta epigraphical records show patriarchs living together with their eight grown up sons and numerous grandsons and brothers often continuing to live jointly even after the death of their father. The patriarch managed the family and was shown great respect. The ownership of the family property was vested in him but when the family was divided, the property was divided equally among the sons. What later on came to be known as Mitakshara system of inheritance was prevalent. On some occasions, the eldest son received preferential share. A daughter having brothers had no share in the father's property. The father was expected to spend liberally, generally to the extent of one fourth of a son's share at the time of her marriage.

Position of Women.

The women seem to have enjoyed a considerable freedom during the Gupta age. They generally followed the rules for the life of a
virtuous wife sketched in the Smritis and Kamasutra. The girls of high families received literary and cultural education and even took a prominent part in the administration. The contemporary records show that the queen consort occupied a high position in the Gupta period.

The Smritis show that the age of marriage became low in this period. Pre-puberty marriages were very common; consequently the girls had little choice in the settlement of their marriage. However, the practice of choice of husband by a woman had not gone out of use. Though polygamy was widely prevalent, women were not permitted to contract a second marriage. The widow got a life interest in her husband's share if the property was divided at the time of his death, otherwise only a maintenance from the family. The literary works of the age differ on the practice of niyoga i.e. a widow's right to conceive a son from the deceased husband's brother. Brihaspati opposed it while Narada and Yajnavalkya allowed it. The custom of sati i.e. burning widows on the funeral pyre of their husbands was coming in general use among the royal families. (For details see next question)

**General Character of the people.**

The general character of the people varied in different parts of the country and among various classes. Huen Tsang records that while the people of the Ganges and Brahmaputra basins generally had a love for learning, were courageous, upright, honourable and not treacherous or deceitful, the people in the extreme north, east, west and south on the other hand were generally of a contrary disposition. On the whole, the character of the people was marked by an exceptionally high degree of honesty. The Brahmins and Kshatriyas in particular were known for purity and simplicity of life. The records of the Chinese pilgrims frequently refer to the love of charity and benevolence of the people of India. For instance, Fa-hien refers to the endowments made by the kings and the private individuals for free hospitals for poor patients, orphans, widowers and cripples. He further records that “they are well taken care of under an attending physician and are given prescribed food and medicine and are discharged when they are cured.”

**Dress and Ornaments.**

The dress of the people particularly in the Northern India was affected by foreign models. The coats, overcoats and trousers of the Scythian type came to be worn by the Indian kings which can be seen from the effigies of the Gupta emperors on their coins. The official court dress of the king was, however, the national one and the coins show the Gupta emperors hunting the lions and tigers with dhotis and sashes. The head-dress was worn on auspicious
occasions. The use of shoes was not very common and most people went without them. The dress of the women was almost the same as it is now. In some parts of the country they wore a petticoat below and the Sari over it while in other parts a longsari served both the purposes. The jacket, blouse and frock of the Scythian women were not imitated by the Indian women except by the dancing girls. Cotton was the common stuff for garments, but silken clothes were worn by the rich and fashionable persons on auspicious occasions. The sculpture and paintings of the time give us a graphic idea of the variety and gracefulness of the ornaments worn by the women. The different patterns of necklace of gold and pearls in vogue are striking. Men too were not much behind in the use of ornaments. They wore gracefully designed ear rings, armlets and other ornaments. Rings were quite common but the nose ring was still unknown. The paintings at Ajanta and the terracotta figures of the time indicate that the fashions of dressing the hair were numerous and graceful. The use of paints, pastes and lipsticks was also common.

The Brihatsamhita shows that clubs, umbrellas, elephants, goads, canes, bows, canopies, standards and chowries were in general use.

Water clocks (nadikas) were used in government offices, monasteries, temples and other public places. This clock consisted of a small vessel with a hole at the bottom. It was kept floating in water held in a larger vessel. The pot was filled with water every 24 minutes. An attendant emptied it out and refloated it again the moment it was filled.

Amusements.

Dice and chess were the popular indoor games and hunting, ram fighting and cock fighting were the principal outdoor pastimes. The women and children played the ball game (kandukakrida) which was very popular with them. Drama shows and fairs also provided a variety of entertainment and added colour to the life in the country.

Food and Drinks.

During the Gupta age, the Hindu society was partly vegetarian and partly non-vegetarian. The Smritis of the age expressly permit meat eating in the case of sick persons and enjoin it at Sradha time. According to R.C. Majumdar, when Fabien records that there were no meat shops in the Madhya Desha, he is obviously referring
to the Buddhist sections of the community. Intoxicating drinks were also used by the rich classes including the women and did not involve the least social stigma.

Normal Life of the People.

The above account shows that the general standard of the people during the Gupta age must have been quite high. The country was studded with beautiful and prosperous cities. The citizens of Deccan, for instance, are described as enjoying themselves on the flat roofs of their houses with sandalwood pastes, palm leaf fans and necklaces. Fashionable ladies moved about wearing artistically prepared garments and beautiful ornaments. Men and women used betel leaves and flowers. The country as a whole was on a sound economic footing and there was a general feeling of security, well being and progress.

Points to Remember.

The contemporary Smitis, and the literary works, and the accounts left by Faheen and Huien Tsang give us information about the social conditions of the Gupta age. Social Organisation:—Society divided on old age doctrine of four Varnas or castes. Each caste expected to follow the code of duties prescribed for it. Life for individuals of all castes divided into four stages or Ashrams. The king expected to uphold Varanadharma. Although Smitis prescribe svarata professions for different castes, yet departures made from it; many authentic instances available. Inter-marrriages between the people of different castes not uncommon. Untouchability, however, continued to exist. Brahmins and Kshatrayas were most respected castes. Slavery:—Slavery prevalent; not in so rigid form as in Greece or Rome; many types of slaves; emancipation of slaves was easy; the Brahmins could never be slaves. Joint Family:—Joint Family characteristic feature of the society; the patriarch managed the family; highly respected. Position of Women:—The position of women was better in the Gupta age than in the previous period; girls of well-to-do families received high education; pre-puberty marriages common; the custom of Soti coming in general use. Dress and Ornaments:—The dress of the people affected by foreign models; use of coat, overcoat and trousers of Cythian type made by the Gupta kings, the women wore Sari; cotton common stuff for garments; the women wore ornaments like necklaces, and bracelets men wore rings and armlets; the Ajanta paintings give information about the fashions of dress and hair. Water clocks used in government offices. Amusements:—Dice, chess hunting, ram fighting and cock fighting popular games. Food and
drinks:—The society partly vegetarian and partly non-vegetarian; intoxicating drinks used by rich classes. Normal life of the people:—The general standard of living of the people high; many beautiful towns existed in the country; there was a general feeling of security, well being and progress.

Q. Write a note on the position of women in the Gupta Age.

Though from the official records of the Guptas, we get but little information regarding the position of women, the law books of Yajnavalkya, the contemporary literature and the paintings at Ajanta can be exploited as very useful sources in this connection.

The status of women had been considerably raised under the Imperial Guptas as compared to the previous period. Dr. Dandekar suggests that it was due to the kindly and liberalising influence of Buddhism. Buddhism attempted to remove as far as possible, the invidious distinction between the status of a man and that of a woman. It considered all persons irrespective of sex, caste and creed equal in spiritual matters. This lead given by Buddhism in spiritual matters was followed to a certain extent in legal and social matters as well by the Imperial Guptas.

For the first time in the history of Hindu law the right of a woman to inherit was legally recognised by Yajnavalkya and Brhaspati. A widow had the right to receive her husband's share as a life estate if the family of her husband was divided. The daughters having no brothers could share the father's property.

Yajnavalkya explicitly declares that women were not eligible for the study of Upanishads and Vedas. The girls of well-to-do families, however, had sufficient opportunities for receiving literary and cultural education. Kama-sutras gives some instances of princesses and daughters of nobles who had knowledge of Sastras. The same work gives us a list of as many as 64 subsidiary branches of knowledge (angavidya) which a woman should learn. The picture of a good wife as portrayed by Vatsyayana shows that she was expected to be sufficiently educated to frame the annual budget and regulate her expenditure accordingly. The literary works of the Gupta age show the girls of well-to-do families living in hermitage and studying works on ancient history. Some women during this period figured as authoresses and poetsess: The girls living at the royal court were generally trained in the arts of singing and dancing. Amarakosa, a contemporary work refers to words meaning female teachers.
(Upadhyaya and udadhyayi) as well as female instructors of Vedic mantras (acharya).

Pre-puberty marriages were common during the Gupta period. Writers of earlier period like Manu permitted a father to keep his daughter unmarried up to any age, if a suitable match was not available but Smritis of this period like Yajnavalkya and Narada condemn a guardian to hell, if he does not marry his daughter before the time of puberty. Yajnavalka even suggests that after puberty a girl may select her own husband. We can gather from the plays of Kalidasa that post-puberty marriages were also in vogue in the days of the Guptas. Most of his heroines are shown to have been adults. As the girls were married at a considerably low age, they had hardly any choice in the selection of their life partners. Polygamy was widely practised but a woman was not ordinarily allowed to contract a second marriage. The practice of Svayamvara or self-choice of husband had also not gone out of use.

The custom of sati i.e. burning widows on the funeral pyre of their husbands was not almost unknown among the common people. We, however, come across some instances of this practice particularly among the ruling classes. The custom is occasionally referred to by Bhasa, Kalidasa and Sudraka in their works. The Eran Stone Pillar Inscription dated 510 A.D. records that in the company of Buddha Gupta, a chieftain named Gopachandra had gone to Eran and fought a famous battle there. Eventually Goparaja was killed on the battlefield, and his wife who had accompanied him, burnt herself on her husband’s funeral pyre. There are several references to this practice of sati in the contemporary literature as well, for instance, in the play Kumarsambhava, where Rati desires to burn herself with her husband Madana and in Mrichhakatika where Duta, the wife of Charudatta prepares to enter fire in the belief that her husband has already been executed. These references, however, cannot be said to depict the normal practice of those days. They seem to idealise the characters concerned. It may also be pointed out in this connection that Bana in the seventh century A.D. seems to look upon this practice with some disfavour. The custom, therefore, had neither become popular nor had acquired a religious sanction.

The Smriti law of the Pre-Gupta period required the widow as a rule to lead a simple and ascetic life though Brhaspati refers to the possibility of a widow following her husband on the funeral pyre. The Smritis of the Gupta Age followed the older law in prescribing a life of vows and fasts as well as renunciation. Literary evidence shows that the custom of sati was extolled by some authors but strongly condemned by the others in the Gupta period. Dandin a contem-
porary writer says that a respectful woman was supposed to immolate herself on the pyre of her husband even if he was a scoundrel. On general grounds we may infer that widows in the Gupta Age as in the earlier days usually lived a chaste and austere life prescribed by the Smritis. But the remarriage of widows and other women though gradually coming into disfavour was not absolutely forbidden. We have an example of widow re-marriage in the family of the Gupta emperors themselves. Chandra-gupta II married the widow of his elder brother Ramagupta.

Opinions of the writers are divided about the practice of niyoga i.e., widow's right to conceive a son from the deceased husband's brother. Yajnavalkya and Narada seem to have recognised the changed social conditions in the Gupta Age and had no objection to this practice but Brihaspati was opposed to it.

Purdah was becoming popular among the ladies of well-to-do families. The sculptured figures of females of the Gupta Age negative the idea of Purdah. The Ajanta paintings show that the women were moving without veils and mixing freely with men in public life. Ladies of the noble families, however, used to put on veils over their faces when they went out of their homes.

There are several instances in the history of our period of the ladies in royal families taking upon themselves the responsibility of administration of a state. During the minority of her son Pravarasena II, Prabhavati Gupta, the daughter Chandra-gupta II carried on the administration of the Vakataka kingdom. She was the de facto ruler of this kingdom during the period 390-410 A.D. On the basis of numismatic evidence, we can well presume that Kumaradevi, the Lichchhavi princess who was married to Chandra-gupta I had been a capable lady and played a conspicuous role in connection with the foundation of the Gupta empire. The coins with the joint figures of Chandra-gupta I and Kumaradevi on the obverse are an eloquent testimony to the help and co-operation received by him from his consort. Again, Samudra-gupta's chief queen Datta Devi figures in his Asvamedha, type of coins. Queen Dhruva Devi had a significant role in making the career of her son Chandra-gupta II. The Junagarh Rock Inscription records that Skanda-gupta hurried to convey to his mother the good news of his success over his enemies. It is thus obvious that the girls in royal families were given the necessary training to make them fit to hold responsible positions in the state.

Thus we see that the position of women during the Gupta age was considerably improved as compared to the earlier period. Many
of their disabilities were removed and they were considered an important element of the society.

**Points to Remember.**

The position of women during the Gupta age was considerably better than in the previous periods owing to the kindly and liberalising influence of Buddhism. The girls of well-to-do families received higher education; some women figure as poets, sages and authors. Pre-puberty marriages common; polygamy also practised. The custom of Sati not very common; this custom occasionally referred to in literary works and inscriptions. The widows were expected to lead a simple and ascetic life; opinions divided about the practice of Niyoga; Purdah system prevalent among the rich families. Sometimes women took active part in the administration; Prabha Vati carried on the administration of the Vakataka kingdom after her husband's death. Kumaradevi, the Lichchhavi princess, greatly helped Chandra-gupta I in laying the foundations of the Gupta empire.

**Q. Describe the economic condition of India during the Gupta age with particular reference to the role of corporate organisations in the economy of the country.**

**Ans.** The age of the Imperial Guptas was a period of affluence and prosperity. The reunion of whole of norern India and the establishment of an efficient system of administration by the strong arm of the Guptas paved the way for the economic progress of the country. The Gupta emperors not only maintained the advancement made in the preceding centuries but also encouraged new enterprises in the economic spheres. Industry, trade and banking flourished under the system of Srenis or self-governing guild organisations. The traders carried the products of India to distant lands and brought back foreign gold in abundance. Agriculture engaged special attention of the state and considerable progress was achieved in regard to the construction of works of public utility. The progress made by the country in various spheres of economic activity during the Gupta age may be studied under the following heads.

**Agriculture.**

As in the earlier periods, agriculture remained the economic basis of the society during the Gupta age. The progress in this direction seems to have continued on the traditional lines. The development
of scientific agriculture is indicated by the minute study of rainfall, classification of crops and fields as recorded in some literary works of the times. Varahamihira, the author of Brihat-Samhita writes that the agriculture depended upon rainfall in spite of richness of soil and abundance of natural supplies of water in selected areas. There are several references in his work to careful forecast of excessive, scanty and sufficient rainfall in the light of astronomical and meteorological data as well as observations of omens and portents. Brihat-Samhita further shows that there were two principal harvests—one for the summer and the other for the autumn. One minor spring harvest was also known.

A large variety of agricultural crops, trees and medicinal plants were grown during the Gupta age as in the preceding centuries. The Amarakosa and the Brihat-Samhita mention different varieties of rice (one ripening only in 60 days), wheat, barley, peas and oil seeds. Brihat-Samhita describes methods of preparation of soil, grafting tree branches on other trees and of watering trees during proper season. It also gives directions for the treatment of seeds.

The Smritis and inscriptions of the Gupta period do not refer to any thing like the modern Zamindari system which existed till recently in the Uttar Pradesh or Bengal. The government sometimes assigned entire villages to Brahmins, temples and monasteries for 'religious and charitable purposes' but the donee acquired the right to receive a certain amount of royal revenues and could not dispossess the tenants. Landlords not tilling their own lands usually leased them to their tenants. The latter used to receive as return for their labour a share which varied between 33 and 50 percent of the gross produce. (For details of the land system see pages 209-10 of this book).

Some clauses of the late Smriti law indicate that the government framed some special laws to safeguard the interests of agriculture. A fine of a hundred punas was imposed for destroying or otherwise injuring agricultural implements, dams, roots and flowers. A small fine was imposed for obstructing the flow of water along the water channels. Fines on sliding scale were imposed on cultivators who after securing lands neglected cultivation. On the other hand the peasants who turned a fallow or waste land into arable land or cultivated a field when its actual owner was unable to do the same or was dead or was unheard of, was entitled to enjoyment of its produce (less an eighth part) for a period of seven or eight years.

According to R. K. Mookerji, the progress of agriculture during the period under study is evident from the fact that various epigraphi
cal records of the land transactions of the times indicate that it was
difficult to secure any fallow, uncultivated or unsettled land for the
purpose of charitable grants. It seems that the progress of intensive
cultivation hardly left any land that was cultivable but not settled.
The government made grants of lands out of small slices taken from
different villages as it could not find at all lands in one continuous
area. When the government made grants of land to educational
institutions it also made provision for labour and bullocks necessary
for cultivation which were to be maintained out of the yield of the
land.

Industries.

Because of the abundance of raw materials, skill and enterprise
of the artisans and craftsmen, various industries flourished in the
country. In the first place, cloth manufacture was the principal
industry which offered employment to millions of people both male
and female. The Amarakosa mentions different terms for finer and
coarser varieties of cloth as well as for unbleached and bleached silk.
Cloth was manufactured all over the country but its famous centres
were located in the cities of Gujrat, Malwa, Bengal and Deccan.
The Mandasor Inscription of Kumara-gupta I suggests that the Western
Malwa was rapidly developing into a flourishing centre of cotton
and silk goods and that the silk wares of the weavers of Mandasor
had such a fine finish that they captured the entire markets of central
and northern India in a short time.

Among other important industries were sculpture, inlaying, ivory
work, painting, smyth and ship-building. The work of cutting
diamonds was also done. The country seems to have been self-
sufficing in weapons of war which were manufactured all over the
country. Technical sciences were utilised for smelting metals. The
famous iron pillar at Mehrauli is an excellent example of Indian
metallurgical skill. It is over 23 feet high and 16.4 inches in diameter
and inspite of centuries of exposure to weather, it has not yet rusted
and the inscription remains to day as clear as when it was cut. The
pillar is of fineness unknown to iron smelters until recent times. Some
scholars have traced the representations of metallic mirrors among
the Ajanta paintings. The literary works of the Gupta period contain
numerous references to the use of gold and silver ornaments such as
rings, bracelets and necklaces. The art of jewellery and the work in
semi-precious stones were in the same advanced conditions as in the
erlier periods. Beads and other small objects made of jasper,
agate, carnelian, quartz, lazulite, and the like pertaining to the
Gupta period have been discovered at Basrah and Bhita.
Trade.

We have no detailed evidence about the condition of trade in the Gupta times. It can, however, safely be presumed that the unification of northern India and the benefits of peace and order bestowed by the Imperial Guptas gave a very great impetus to both internal and overseas commerce. The issue of abundant gold and silver coinage by the Gupta emperors further helped this process. The Mauryans carried on their trade mainly with the east through the Kalinga ports whereas the Guptas not only increased their eastern trade effectively but opened up western sea-borne trade also and thus led to unprecedented economic prosperity.

Different varieties of cloth, food grains, spices, salt, bullion and precious stones were the principal articles of internal trade. It was carried both by road and river. The chief market towns like Broach, Ujjain, Paithan, Vidisa, Prayaga, Benaras, Gaya and, Pataliputra, Vaisali, Tamralipti, Kausambi, Mathura, Aichchhatra, Peshawar etc., were connected by roads and were well protected. Goods were generally transported in the carts and on the backs of animals. Elephants, where available were also used for carrying goods. The traders followed certain well-established routes connecting various parts of the country. The two land routes most favoured were along the east coast across Jubbulpur and west coast via Karwar, Nasik and Ujjain. The river traffic was also well organised and was carried along the Ganges, the Brahmaputra, the Narmada, the Godavari, the Krishna and the Kaveri.

India had brisk commercial relations with the foreign countries on the west by way of the Persian gulf and Red Sea as well as the land routes converging on Palmyra and Petra. The acquisition of the maritime province of the Surashtra and the ports on the Arabian Sea poured into Northern India for the first time the wealth of Roman empire through Kalyani, Chaul, Broach and Cambay. Broach was the biggest port and international market of Northern India.

Tamralipti (at the head of Ganges delta) was the principal port of Bengal. Because of its happy geographical position at the meeting place of land and water communications, it became the emporium of vast trade of Eastern India across the seas. From this port, extensive trade was carried with China, Ceylon, Java and Sumatra.

The major Indian export was textiles since weaving was the major Indian industry. It was the textile industry which purchased Indian imports and gave India as a whole a favourable balance of
trade. The other important items of export were pearls, precious stones, perfumes, incense, spices, indigo, drugs, coconuts, ivory articles. The chief necessary items of import were gold, bullion, coins of silver and copper, lead, silk, camphor, dates and horses.

Ship building industry had made a considerable progress in India and the ships big enough to carry 500 men on high seas were engaged in trade with the colonies in the east.

**Guilds.**

One of the most important features of the economy of the Gupta age was the organisation of trade and industry or handicrafts under the guilds called Srenis. The contemporary inscriptions and seals mention the guilds not only of merchants (nigamas), bankers (Srashtin) and traders (sarthavaha) but also of manual workers like artisans (Kulikas), oilmen (Tailika Sreni) and weavers (Pattavaya Sreni). It thus appears that the trades and industries both high and low were organised in guilds. A large number of seals of guilds discovered at only one city like Vaisali shows that this institution was astonishingly developed and that it played an important part in the economic life of the country. Dr. R. K. Mukerji writes that the guild system indicates an advanced stage in economic life implying the development of a business instinct which recognises the benefits of a collective organisation.

The guilds were corporate bodies as is indicated by the seals which were issued by them. Sometimes a number of guilds were federated together into a central guild. For instance, the expression Sreshti sarthavaha kulika nigama inscribed on some seals shows that there was a Federation of three guilds of bankers, traders and artisans. Blochman points out, “It looks as if during those days, something like a modern Chamber of Commerce existed in Upper India at some big trading centres.”

Some inscriptions and seals of the Gupta period bear testimony to the growth of the guilds and afford concrete examples of their working. The Indore Copper Plate Inscription of 465 A.D. refers to a guild of oilmen (Tailika Sreni) of which Jivanta was the head. This guild of oilmen was entrusted even by a Brahmin with the custody of his donation of a sum of money to be held by it in perpetuity for the purpose of daily provision of a fixed quantity of oil for a Sun temple under a contract which was duly registered. The Bihar Stone Pillar Inscription of Skanda-gupta also shows that s-
permanent endowment was created in favour of a guild of the town of Ajapuraka. The Mandasor Inscription of 472-73 A.D. refers to a guild of weavers who migrated from Lata (Southern Gujarat) to Dasapura (Mandasor) and erected a temple there in A.D. 436 when Bandhuvarman son of a chief Vishwavarman was the ruler. It further records that the same guild carried on repairs to this temple in 473 A.D. A large number of sealings of the 4th century A.D. belonging to a joint guild of bankers, traders and transport merchants were found at Basrah, the ancient Vaisali. This guild had its membership and branches spread over a large number of cities all over northern India. The seals of this great guild indicate that every time an article or letter was despatched under the seal of the guild, the seal of a private individual was always used in addition to the common seal of the great guild. Dr. R. C. Majumdar suggests that as there were branches of this guild in a number of cities, duplicates of its seals must have existed in each branch. It was, therefore, naturally felt necessary that the common seal of the great guild should be used along with the seal of the president or the secretary of each local branch to authenticate its letters or documents. It may be well presumed that the guild enjoyed a great reputation and status, for it often entered into transactions jointly with the office of the heir apparent of the great Gupta empire.

Guilds were autonomous bodies having their own constitutions and had evolved a set of rules to guide their work. Narada says that guilds had their own laws, their religious duties, their rules regarding attendance and particular modes of livelihood prescribed for them. Katyayana gives some information regarding the laws governing the working of the guilds. He says that a penalty of fine was imposed on the members of a group who opposed what was reasonable, who gave no scope to a speaker in a meeting of the group or who spoke absurdly. The rule as mentioned by Katyayana shows that the proceedings of the general assembly of the guild were based on democratic principles. But at the same time it was provided that the principle of equal opportunity for all to represent their views should not be exploited to hinder the working of the assembly.

The late Smritis show that the actual work of a guild was in the hands of a small executive committee of 2, 3, or 5 executive officers called advisors. The executive officers seem to have been men of power and authority. Sometimes they could even punish the members. These officers were in charge of the corporate property and could contract a loan on behalf of the guild. They represented their guild before the king. The guild in turn was responsible for any work done by them. The inscriptions show that a guild had a president also who held a position of honour and dignity.
The unique feature associated with the craft guilds of our period was that sometimes they undertook banking functions to secure necessary working capital for themselves. They received permanent and irrevocable deposits and undertook to arrange a specified charity out of the interest on the endowments. The interest was paid annually in cash or kind at the rates agreed in advance. The document for the deposit was duly registered. The fact that the deposits carried interest shows that these guilds were able to earn high rate of interest by investing these deposits as profitably as possible. Dr. R. C. Majumdar suggests that "even if the members of the guild in a body migrated to another place offering better trade prospects, the public had full confidence that they would honour their obligations."

The Naradasmriti and the Mandasor Inscription of 472-78 A.D. refer to the military power of the guilds. It appears that in case of emergency a big guild could raise a militia from among its own members and afford for the protection of the person, property and merchandise of its members. The guilds had enough military power which sometimes made the king to appease them for enlisting their support.

The individual members of the guilds were both rich and cultured. The Mandasor Inscription of 472-473 A. D., claims that the weaver's guild at Dasarpura or Mandasor had some members who excelled as archers, others were advanced in the pursuit of religious life, while some others took to astrology, some were well versed in folklore and some in military profession.

The late Smritis show that the state maintained a benevolent attitude towards the guilds. The king patronised them and did not let their cause suffer. All disputes among the members of the guilds were settled according to the custom and tradition of each of these bodies and not by the state tribunals. The state intervened only in case of a drift likely to affect the guild adversely. Yajanavalkya shows that the king was to extend to the guilds a patronising hand. He was required to honour and bestow gifts on executive officers of the guilds when they approached him on some business of their guilds. The Smritis require the king to confiscate the property of a person and banish him from his kingdom if he misappropriated the property of the guild or violated the agreement made with it. Narada also shows that the king, ordinarily, did not interfere in the affairs of the guild. It was only in exceptional cases when the guilds indulged in acts opposed to the interest of the king or those of competitive nature or formed combinations or took to arms or fought among themselves that the state intervened to check such activities.
Works of Public Utility.

Several inscriptions of the Gupta period show that considerable progress was achieved in the construction of works of public utility. The Junagarh Rock Inscription of Skanda-gupta records the restoration of the dam of the great Sudarsana Lake and the renewal of its embankments at an "immeasurable cost". This stood as a witness to the care which the Gupta rulers gave to the works of public utility, (For details see pages 148-149 of this book). The other reference to these engineering works occurs in the Gangdhara Stone Inscription dated Malwa Era 480=423 A.D. of Visavavaran. It shows that Visavaran equipped his city built on the bank of the Gargara with wells for irrigation (vapi), tanks (tadaga), temples and halls of gods (surasadama sabha), drinking wells (udapana), parks of different kinds of (upavana), causways (samkarma) and lakes (dirghika). Similarly the Mandasor Stone Inscription describes how the district of Lata was adorned with shrines of gods, halls of temples and rows of storied mansions decorated with paintings like rows of aerial chariots.

Cost of Living.

The cost of living during the Gupta age was low. We can form some idea about the prices from the inscriptions and tables of fines as given in the Smritis. The Sanchi Stone Inscription of 450 A.D. shows that interest on 12 Dinarae (one Dinar=½ Tola of gold) was enough for feeding five monks per day. From the normal interest of 12% on permanent endowments, it may be deduced that a dinara would suffice to maintain a man for a year. The cowries generally served the purpose of daily transactions which shows that living was cheap.

General Economic Condition.

The above account of the economic condition of India shows that as a result of the development of agriculture, industry and trade, the country enjoyed an era of unprecedented prosperity. But this prosperity was a characteristic of the aristocratic and rich mercantile classes who enjoyed a high standard of living and lived a life of luxury. We do not have any direct evidence about the condition of the common people. However, it seems that the common people had to be, content with a life of few wants and fewer opportunities to satisfy them. But they were patient and content for the incidence of crime, as Fahien’s account shows, was considerably low.
Points to Remember.

The Gupta age, a period of development and prosperity; industry, trade and commerce flourished; the trade and industry organised under self-governing guild organisations. The economic condition may be studied under the following heads: — Agriculture:— The cornerstone of the economy of the country was agriculture; the progress in this sphere continued on traditional lines: agriculture depended mainly on rainfall; two principal harvests—summer and autumn; a large variety of crops produced; state made special laws to safeguard the interests of agriculture, the modern Zamindari system absents; cultivable land not easily available; government made grants of land to religious and educational institutions. Industries:—Cloth manufacture was the principal industry; offered employment to millions of people, other important industries were sculpture, inlaying, ivory works; painting, smithy and ship building; the famous Mehruari pillar is a unique example of Indian metallurgical skill. Trade:— The unification of Northern India under the Gupta rulers gave impetus to both internal and external trade, the chief centres of trade were Pataniputra, Vidisa, Tamaralipi, Parayag, Kausambi, Mathura etc. The chief trading centres were connected with the roads. The chief ports were Tamaralipi, Cambay and Broach. The chief items of export were perfumes, spices, indigo, cloth, drugs, precious stones. The chief items of import were gold, bullion, camphor, corals, dates, horses; the balance of trade in favour of India. Guilds:—called Srenis, trade and industry both high and low organised in guilds, inscriptions mention guilds of trade: merchants, bankers, artisans, weavers and oilmen. Sometimes many guilds federated themselves into a larger corporation; a large number of seals of a great guild of Skanda-gupta discovered at Vaisali. The Indore Copper Plate Inscription the Bihar Stone Pillar Inscription of Kumara-gupta II and Mandasor Inscription of Kumara-gupta II bear sufficient testimony to the growth of guilds. Sometimes guilds performed banking functions, the affairs of the guilds managed by an executive committee of 2, 3 or 5 members. The guilds were autonomous bodies; had their own constitutions and had evolved their own rules of working; the disputes among the guilds were decided by their own tribunals and not by the state; the state patronised the guilds and interested in their affairs in rare cases. Sometimes guilds raised their own militia in times of emergency, the guilds had their own seal for business and official correspondence.

Works of Publicity:— Considerable progress was achieved in the works of public utility; the dam on the great lake Sudarsana restored; the cities enjoyed various amenities. Cost of Living:— From inscriptions and tables of fines we may infer that living was cheap. General Economic Condition:— The upper classes enjoyed a high standard of living; no direct evidence available about the condition of common people.
Q. What do you know of the personal religion of the Gupta kings. What was their attitude towards other religions than their own. Illustrate your answer with concrete examples and Fahien’s views as far as possible.

Q. What light do the inscriptions throw on the policy of religious toleration under the sway of Imperial Guptas.

Personal Religion of the Guptas.

Ans. The scholars both European and Indian generally are of the view that most of the Gupta emperors were the devout followers of Vishnu and that the Gupta age is the age of Vashnavism. They give the following arguments in support of their view.

In the first place, the scholars suggest that in the majority of their coins and inscriptions, the Gupta emperors styled themselves as Parama-bhagvatas i.e. worshippers of Vishnu. Chandra-gupta II proudly described himself Parama-bhagvata in the Mathura Stone Inscription and in the Gadhwa and Nalanda seals. His son and successor Kumara-gupta I also delighted in the use of same title in some of his silver coins. Skanda-gupta also used the same title in his Garuda type of silver coins. Secondly, the figure of Lakshmi, the consort of Vishnu is found on many coins of the Gupta kings. The coins of Kacha bear the image of goddess Lakshmi on the obverse. Skanda-gupta’s special devotion to Lakshmi is expressed in his coins of the King and Lakshmi type. It also gives expression to what Skanda-gupta owed to goddess Lakshmi in retrieving the lost glory of his family. His inscriptions mention Kula-Lakshmi as the tutelary deity of the Gupta family. Thirdly, the Gupta emperors introduced the figure of Garuda, the Vahna of Vishnu on their coins. The representation of the Garuda standard on the coins of Kacha probably stands as a testimony to Samudra-gupta’s Vashnav leanings. Lastly, the Junagarh Rock Inscription of Skanda-gupta contains eulogy of Vishnu. The Bhitari Stone Pillar Inscription records that after his victory over his enemies, Skanda-gupta got an image of the God Sarngin erected, who was none else but Vishnu. The Eran Stone Inscription of Budh-gupta records the erection of a flagstaff of Vishnu which indicates that he had leanings towards Vashnavism. All the above facts go to prove that the Gupta rulers were the devout followers of God Vishnu.

Dr. Dikshitar, however, does not agree with the above view on the following grounds.
In the first place, he holds that, no doubt the term Paramabhagavata is used to-day for a devotee of one Lord Vishnu but it was not the case in the Gupta times. This term Parama-bhagvata also meant a devotee of Bhagwan. The term Bhagwan does not mean one particular deity. It is a general term which refers to the name of Almighty who is said to have permeated the Universe with all its attributes. About three centuries before the times of Guptas, the author of Turukkural referred to Adi Bhagwan as the first of all the world. It cannot be inferred that he referred to Lord Vishnu. Again, there is a stanza in Bhagavatva-janotsva Paddhati which mentions Prahlada, Parasara, Narada, Pundiraka, Vyasa, Rukmangada, Suka and Saunaka as Parama-bhagvatas. This obviously indicates that this term did not refer to particular devotion to Lord Vishnu. The term Parama simply implies that the Gupta kings believed in one God as the creator, protector and destroyer. This term cannot apply only to Lord Vishnu who is only one of the many deities worshipped during those days.

Secondly, accordingly to Dikshitar, there is no doubt that Lakshmi was the consort of Vishnu but this word also means prosperity. The image of Lakshmi in the Gupta coins represents Rajyashri or the wealth of the kingdom of the ancient Hindu kings. As it was generally believed that the wealth and prosperity of a country depended upon finance, so the Gupta rulers invoked the blessing of goddess of wealth. This is the main reason why the image of Lakshmi is so frequently found in the coins of many Gupta kings. Again we can explain certain inscriptions only if we interpret the word Lakshmi as wealth and prosperity. For instance, the first line of Junagarh Rock Inscription relates that Lakshmi was kept away by the demon king Bali from Indra who through the help of Vishnu got her back. Lakshmi here clearly implies prosperity. The idea that Lakshmi is the consort of Vishnu was known during the Gupta age but that was not magnified. Only Lakshmi as the goddess of wealth and prosperity was glorified.

Thirdly, according to Dr. Dikshitar it is not correct to attach too much importance to the appearance of Garuda the vehicle of Vishnu in the Gupta coins. It is suggested that Garuda is only a paraphernalia and cannot be put forward as an argument in favour of the view that the Gupta were Vaishnavs. If Garuda is the Vahana or vehicle of Vishnu, Risabha or bull is the Vahana of god Shiva. Some of the Gupta coins also bear the figure of Nandi. The Guptas seem to attach importance to Nandi or bull also. It does not seem logical to assert that the Guptas were the ardent followers of Vishnu but they also paid tribute to Siva. Thus we cannot attach any special importance to the figure of Garuda in the Gupta coins.
Fourthly, as regards the reference of Vishnudhawja or flagstaff of Vishnu on the Eran Stone Inscription of Budha-gupta, this fact alone cannot establish that the Guptas were worshippers of Vishnu alone. A Dhavja or flagstaff is a necessary paraphernalia in a Hindu temple. There is nothing special about the installation of a flagstaff in a temple built by Budha-gupta. In fact, the Gupta kings built shrines, chapels and temples for various gods who were worshipped by Hindus. This fact also shows that why there is a Dhavajasthambha in each and every temple erected by the Gupta kings or the individual devotees.

Fifthly, the view that Skanda-gupta invoked God Vishnu in Junagarh Rock Inscription, hence the Guptas were the followers of Vishnu can also be not accepted. It is pointed out that during the Gupta times, there were no sectarian god like Vishnu, Shiva or Devi. The devotees invoked each god or goddess for a definite purpose according to particular circumstances. The Gupta kings worshipped all Hindu deities such as Shiva, Vishnu, Devi or Kartikeya without any difference. They did not worship Vishnu alone and ignored all other deities.

Sixthly, according to Dikshitar there are several contemporary records which show that the Guptas were also the followers of Saivism and that it had come to occupy prominent position in the religious life of the people. Several Siva temples were built during the Gupta period for example at Bhumara and Khoh in Central India. Some Siva images have been discovered at Kaman in Ajmer, e.g., the linga bearing faces of Brahma, Vishnum Siva and Surya and a sculpture depicting the marriage of Siva and Parvati. There is also a temple of Parvati at Nachana Kuthara in Ajaigarh. The devotion of Chandra-gupta II to Saivism is evident from the Udaigiri Cave Inscription which records that Chandra-gupta personally visited the temple of Siva (Samdhru). The Mathura Pillar Inscription of Chandra-gupta II refers to the installation of two lingas by him. The influence of cult of Saivism on the Gupta kings is clearly shown by the names of kings like Kumara and Skanda-gupta. Besides several coins of the Gupta monarchs have been discovered which bear the figure of the bull, the vahna of Siva. An examination of the Bull type of silver coins of Skanda-gupta clearly indicates that he also had his leanings towards Saivism. The Kamnadaka Inscription of Kumara-gupta records the words “Namo Mahadevaya” in its first stanza. In this inscription offerings were made for the worship of god Mahadeva. The Kohoh copper plate inscription of Maharaja Hastin also opens with the verse “Namo Mahadevaya”. The above records thus clearly indicate that the Gupta kings also worshipped Siva in different manifestations. They were not only the devotees of Shiva but also of his wife Parvati.
Lastly, the inscriptions and coins of the Gupta period show that the Gupta kings also worshipped various other popular gods during those days. Chandra-gupta II's coins of Lion Slayer Type has on its reverse the image of Durga as Simhavahini. This image is also found on the Lion Slayer type of coins of Kumara-gupta I. The Tiger Type coins of Samudra-gupta introduces goddess Ganges as Makra Vahna. His lyrist type of coins bear the figure of goddess Srasvati as goddess of music. The worship of god Kartikeya, the god of war was also popularised by the Gupta emperors who invoked him for victory in their many wars. The Bihar Stone Pillar Inscription of Skanda-gupta mentions the erection of a Yupa or pillar and the construction of a group of temples dedicated to gods headed by god Sikandar. The Guptas also patronised the cult of Surya or Sun. The Mandasor Inscription of 462 A.D., contains an interesting datum about the worship of Surya and also of Divine Mothers. In the Indore Copper Plate of Skanda-gupta, a prayer is made that the Sun may protect the people.

From the above discussion, we may conclude that the Gupta emperors were not fully inclined towards Vashnavism but they were the close followers of Hinduism. They respected all the different deities worshipped during those times. As Dr. Dikshitar suggests that as the Vedic injunctions were the law of land at that time, the state religion could not be narrowed down to one particular form.

**Attitude of the Gupta kings to the other faiths than Hinduism.**

The Guptas were the close followers of Hinduism, and patronised this faith according to their lights. If one king was the devotee of Vishnu, the second was the follower of Shiva, the third one of Kartikeya and the fourth one of Surya. This, however, did not make them intolerant towards other religions. They had imbided in themselves the exemplary spirit of toleration towards other forms of faith i.e. Buddhism and Jainism. They rather patronised them in a variety of ways. Private and royal gifts to the Buddhist monasteries and Jain temples and installation of the images of Buddha and the Tirthankaras are on the record. Tsing records that one Maharaja Sri-gupta erected a temple for some pious Chinese pilgrims near Mrigashikhana. In the reign of Samudra-gupta, the king of Ceylon requested the Gupta king to permit him to build a monastery and a rest house at Bodh-Gaya for the Ceylonese students and pilgrims and the necessary permission was readily granted. The Sanchi Stone Pillar Inscription of Kumara-gupta I records that an official named Upasika Harisvaminendowed a Buddha Vihara at Sanchi for maintaining Bhikshus and permanent lighting of lamps before the image of Buddha. The
Manukwar Buddha image inscription refers to the installation of an image of the Buddha by a Bhikshu Buddhimitra. References to the construction of the images of Buddha are also found in the inscriptions of Kumaragupta II and Budha-gupta. A large number of Buddha and Buddhiststva images discovered in different parts of Northern India testify to the religious freedom enjoyed by the Buddhists under the Gupta rule. Faqien's account shows that a large number of monasteries received liberal endowments by the state and by the private individuals. His account testifies to the amity and concord which united the people of different faiths in a common brotherhood. He does not give any hint of any form of religious persecution or any attempt on the part of the orthodox Hindu rulers to deprive the Buddhists of their endowments or privileges. Faqien records that on his way from the Indus to Mathura he noticed numerous monasteries tenanted by thousands of monks. At Mathura alone he found 20 monasteries. He writes that there existed in the city of Pataliputra two imposing and elegant monasteries one occupied by the followers of the Hinayana faith and the other by those of the Mahayana sect. The monk residents in both the establishments together numbered about seven or six thousands. These monasteries attracted seekers after knowledge from all parts of India. Faqien also describes with great admiration the splendid procession of richly adorned images of the Buddha and Bhodhistvas carried on some twenty huge cars all constructed according to a certain pattern but differently painted and decorated. Such procession was organized every year. He also observes that similar processions were common in other parts of the country. His account thus clearly shows that the Buddhists enjoyed full freedom of conscience and the Gupta rulers did not interfere with the tenets of their faith.

The Gupta rulers unhesitatingly conferred high offices upon persons who differed from them in faith. The votaries of other faiths enjoyed the royal patronage and the Buddhist and Jain ministers continued to be appointed to high jobs in the government and in the public schools and universities in a great part of the country. Although Samudra-gupta was a devout Hindu and took special pride in performing the Asvamedha sacrifice, he entrusted the education of his son to Vasubandhu, who was a famous and erudite Buddhist scholar. Among the Gupta officials there were many who were Buddhists. For instance, Amar Kardeva, a Buddhist was a famous general of Chandra-gupta II. He loyally served his master and won him many battles. Buddhism had powerful exponents during the Gupta age in the famous sages and philosophers like Asanga, Vasubandhu, Kumara-gupta and Dignaga.

The archaeological discoveries have revealed that some of the most magnificent Buddhist monasteries were erected in the Gupta age.
According to the Buddhist traditions the great Buddha monastery at Nalananda was founded by Sakarditya (Kumara-gupta I) and additional buildings and grants were made by Budha-gupta, Baladitya and other Gupta-kings. The Buddhist University at Nalananda owed most of its prosperity to the patronage it received from the Hindu Gupta emperors. Vinaya-gupta one of the later Imperial Gupta kings was a follower of Shiva yet he gave donations to Mahayana Buddhist establishment known as Vaivartika sanga. The imperial gupta rulers were particularly partial and sympathetic towards Buddhism.

Some inscriptions of the Gupta period record the installation of images of Jaina deities. Two of them record the installation of Jaina Tirathankaras in 424 A.D. and 457 A.D. at Udhagiri and Kahaun respectively. An inscription of Kumara-gupta I dated G.E. 121 = A.D. 431 mentions the setting up of a Jaina image at Mathura. Jainism enjoyed rich royal patronage as well and it had many adherents and patrons about this time. No doubt, the Gupta emperors were the devout followers of Hinduism but the best tribute has been paid to their administration by some contemporary Jaina records.

Points to Remember.

**Personal Religion of the Guptas.**

Scholars generally hold that the Gupta rulers were the devout followers of Vishnu on the following grounds:— (1) Gupta emperors like Chandra-gupta II, Kumara-gupta I and Skanda-gupta adopted the title Parama-bhagavata i.e. the worshipper Vishnu. (2) Many Gupta coins bear the figure of Lakshmi, the consort of Vishnu and that of Garuda the Vahna of Vishnu. (3) Several inscriptions show their inclination towards Vashnavism. The above view not accepted by Dr. Dikshitar on the following grounds:— (1) Parambhagavata means devotee of Bhagwan and not a particular god. Bhagwan means almighty one Lord. (2) The conception that Lakshmi was a consort of Vishnu not materialized during the Gupta age; it meant wealth and prosperity. (3) Flagstaff necessary paraphernalia in all the Hindu temples; no special importance can be attached to it. (4) There were no sectarian gods during the Gupta age; each god or goddess invoked according to particular circumstances. (5) The inscriptions and monuments show that Guptas were also inclined towards Sivaism; worshipped other Gods and Goddesses like Sun, Kartikeya, Durga as well. (6) The Guptas were close followers of Hinduism.

**Attitude towards other Religions.**

Guptas themselves orthodox Hindu; showed exemplary tolerant policy towards other religions such as Buddhism and Jainism and patro-
nised them in various ways; Sri-gupta erected a temple for Chinese pilgrims; Samudra-gupta granted permission to the king of Ceylon to erect a monastery at Bodh-Gaya for Ceylonese pilgrims; a large number of Jaina and Buddha images discovered; Fa-hien's account shows that there was no religious persecution; he found a large number of Buddhist monasteries flourishing; the Guptas appointed Jainas and Buddhists to high jobs in government, and in public schools.

Q. How far is it justified to describe the Gupta period as the age of Hindu renaissance?

Q.2 The Gupta period witnessed the culmination and not the revival of Hindu religion. Discuss.

Ans. Scholars like Max Muller and Dr. Keith have characterised the religious activity of the Gupta age as 'Hindu Renaissance' or 'Brahmanical revival.' There is no doubt that during this period, the Brahmanism enjoyed the royal patronage as well as the status of state religion and that some of the Gupta rulers made a pointed claim to have revived orthodox rites that had been in abeyance for a long period. But this claim cannot be taken too literally. It is not correct to hold that the revival of Hinduism began in the Gupta age and that Hinduism had become extinct in the days of Asoka and Kanishka. In fact, it was only temporarily eclipsed during the period of the supremacy of Buddhism. The revival of Brahmanism which reached its culmination during the Gupta age was a long process which started in the 2nd century B.C. under the Sungas. The Sunga dynasty founded by Pushyamitra made the first successful attempt to reorganise the forces of Hinduism. The adoption of the popular form of the Hindu religion and philosophy as represented in the great epics, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, strengthening of the Hindu ideal of social and political life as laid down in the Manusamriti; the revival of ancient Vedic rites including the imperial Vedic Aryanvedha sacrifices and the glorification of Sanskrit—these were the chief characteristics of revival of Hinduism in the Sauga period. The case of Heliotors, the Greek ambassador in the court of Bhagvata, a ruler of Sunga dynasty proves that Bhagvata or Vaishnava form of Hinduism attracted even the Greeks in the North—west of India. The dynasty of the Kanavas was itself a Brahmìn Hindu family. The great Saka Satraps of Ujjain were also Brahminical Hindus. Some of the Kushan rulers like Kophises II and Vasudeva worshipped Hindu gods. Besides the Sungas, several other dynasties of North and the South such as Bharasivas Nagas, the Vakatakas, the Satavahanas, the Pallavas and the Salankayanas performed the Asvamedha sacrifices. The very development of
Mahayana school of Buddhism which took place in the times of Kanishka was itself a clear testimony to the reviving power of Hinduism, for this new school of Buddhism is closer to Hinduism than to primitive form of Buddhism. All the above facts show that the way was already prepared for the Guptas.

The Gupta age was a period of an assertion of Hindu civilization rather than revival of Hinduism. Commaraswami has rightly remarked that the period of Guptas is one of culmination or efflorescence rather than of renaissance. It was an age of blossoming of Hindu religion in its thousand petals and its myriad scents. It was in this period that old Brahanamical faith transformed itself into what is known as modern Hinduism. Sinha and Banerji write that the Puranas recast in their present form during the Gupta period, created the necessary mythology, and sculpture brought the deities to the home of common people. When the principles of Hinduism were restated in a simple fashion in the Puranas, Hinduism further gained its ground. During this period Brahmanasism became supreme patronised by the powerful rulers. Through its elasticity and assimilativeness, Brahanamisms had won over many foreigners and Indian masses by adopting their practices, beliefs and superstitions. It included Buddha among its Avtaras and some of his teachings in its own faith. Dr. Tripathi remarks, "Besides, the worship of images of Buddha and Bodhivstvas, the growth of its pantheon, the introduction of ceremonial solemnities and religious processions, carried Buddhism so far away from its pristine purity that to the ordinary man it became almost indistinguishable from the popular phase of Hinduism."

As already observed, the regeneration of Hinduism had started quite earlier and the Gupta rulers simply helped to accelerate its growth. Hinduism enjoyed their uninterrupted patronage and they made it the state religion. As the idol worship became popular, the Gupta rulers got erected many temples and idols of the Hindu gods, such as Siva, Vishnu, Sun, Kartikeya etc. Several inscriptions of the Gupta period show that the Gupta sovereigns, their feudatories and even private individuals granted lands to Brahmans. Donations were also made for the maintenance of temples and of other accessories of worship e.g. lamps etc. The sacrificial rites which had already been revived by the earlier dynasties were also enthusiastically encouraged by the Guptas. The Mathura inscription of Chandra-gupta II and the Bihar and Bhitiari inscriptions of Skanda-gupta clearly indicate that Samudra-gupta performed the Asvamedha sacrifice in right royal epic fashion. Similarly the coins of Kumara-gupta I show that he also performed Asvamedha sacrifice. Still another instance of the florescence of Brahmanism and its recognition by the Gupta kings was the adoption of the title of Parama Bhagvata by Chandra-gupta II.
Kumara-gupta I and Skanda-gupta. As a result of efflorescence of Hinduism, Sanskrit also rose in esteem as the Guptas felt proud of themselves in embracing ancient Indian civilization and culture. R. N. Danekkar writes that the very fact that all epigraphical records which were generally intended for public information were inscribed in Sanskrit language clearly indicates that the study of Sanskrit language and literature were very popular even among the common people during the Gupta age. Here too we cannot say that it was renaissance. The Sungsas, the Bharasivas and the Vakatakas who lived before the Guptas had patronised this language. The Mahabhashaya of Patanjali, an exposition of Sanskrit grammar was the basis for the literary activity in the time of Guptas. In fact Sanskrit language reached its perfection in times of Guptas and was not simply revived.

The glory of Hinduism cannot be regarded as renaissance in an other sense. The word renaissance may imply that other religions were treated with contempt, but as a matter of fact toleration was the key note in the religious sphere during the Gupta age.

It is thus evident that the glory of Hinduism during the Gupta age cannot be regarded as renaissance. This period witnessed the efflorescence of Hinduism and marks the culmination of the process by which Brahmanism was transformed into modern Hinduism.

Points to Remember.

Scholars generally hold that the Gupta age was a period of revival of Hinduism; this view, however, cannot be accepted. The revival of Hinduism was started in the 2nd century B.C. by the Sungsas. Many other dynasties before the Guptas patronised Hinduism and revived ancient Vedic rites like Asvamedha. Hinduism patronised by the Gupta rulers, the ancient Brahmanical faith transformed into something like modern Hinduism during the Gupta age.

Education, Literature and Sciences.

Q. Write a short note on the system of education during the Gupta age.

Ans. The great intellectual activity during the Gupta age shows that the system of education then in vogue, must have been sound. As the Gupta rulers themselves were great scholars they must have paid special attention to the education of their subjects.
As in the earlier times, the private teacher was the pivot of the system of education during the Gupta age. According to the inscriptions the teachers were known as Acharyas and Upadhyayas. Learned Brahmin teachers were content with such honorarium as might be voluntarily paid to them by the guardians of the pupils. Their uncertain income was supplemented by their professional earnings as priests and by such grants and donations which they occasionally received from the state and the generous public. Holy places and capitals of kingdoms like Benaras, Mathura, Nasik, Kanchi, Pataliputra, Valabbi, Ujjaini and Padmavati were centres of education because they offered the best chances to teachers to supplement their income from the above sources. Besides these cities, the Agrahara villages which were consecrated to the use of religious students (Brahamcharis) and contained learned Brahmins, also became the centres of higher education during the Gupta age. Nilkanth Sastri writes that numerous grants were made to learned Brahmins by the state and the private individuals in the expectation that their recipients would maintain and develop traditional learning and culture by imparting it to the rising generation of scholars. The teachers as a class were generally wedded to plain living and high thinking and on the whole faithfully discharged the trust that society placed in them.

During the late Gupta period, the Buddhist monasteries at Nalanda and Valabhi were developing into famous centres of higher education. Rising compared these two places to the most famous educational institutions of China. We have some detailed information about the Nalanda university. Nalanda which like Valabhi was originally a monastery had become a real university of learning about the end of the 5th century A.D. According to the Buddhist traditions, this monastery was founded by Kumara Gupta I. Additional grants to this establishment were made by Buddha-gupta, Tathagata-gupta, Baladatiya and other Gupta rulers. Thus when this monastery began to receive rich endowments consisting of cash and revenue assignments enabling it to offer free tuition, boarding and lodging to a large number of students, it started its career as a university centre. Additional buildings were erected to accommodate the growing number of monk students. The university was renowned alike for the magnificence of its establishment and the moral pre-eminence of its inmates. As the establishment was ‘the Oxford of Mahayana Buddhism’ it must have naturally concentrated on the studies of the works of Asanga, Nagarjuna, Vasubandhu and Dignaga. But the Jain and Hindu systems of philosophy and the principles of dogmatic controversy were also taught in the university in order to enable the Buddhist controversiast to meet his opponents on their own grounds. Nalanda thus followed a very comprehensive course of studies and gradually it rose to such eminence that students from all over India
and abroad flocked there in order to satisfy their intellectual and spiritual thirst. The monks spent their time wholly on study and debates and the monastery had a long line of distinguished alumi to its credit. It is said that "eminent and accomplished men assembled there in crowds, discussed possible and impossible doctrines and after having been assured of the excellence of their opinions by wisemen, became far famed for their wisdom". The students were admitted to the university as a result of an examination but so tough was the examination test that only two or three out of ten candidates succeeded in getting admission. I-tsing tells us that this university was supported out of the produce of 200 villages which were given as endowment to it by the people. With its six colleges, its numerous students (about 10000) its 300 rooms and eight great halls it must have been an establishment of consequence.

According to Dr. Altekar, the Vedic studies definitely fell into back ground. The Puranas, Smritis logic, metaphysics, philosophy, and Sanskrit grammar were taught in the schools and colleges of our period.

The cause of female education, however, suffered a good deal during the Gupta age owing to the disappearance of girls' Upanayans. It received practically a death blow owing to the lowering of the marriageable age to 12 when serious education worth the name was impossible. In the well-to-do families, however, special tutors were employed for imparting higher education to girls, some of whom distinguished themselves in literay sphere.

There were no special institutions for imparting technical education. Generally it was imparted in the family itself as most of the professions had become hereditary. Sometimes the students worked as apprentices for a number of years to artisan masters to learn their trade. Primary education was imparted in the Lipisalas or primary schools existing in several villages. The curriculum in primary schools consisted mainly of 3 R's. In advanced schools, however, the students were encouraged to memorise primers of Sanskrit grammar. Children of well-to-do families used to write on wooden boards in some kind of colour but the poor students wrote the alphabet by the fingers on the ground covered with sand or fine dust. Dr. P. K. Mukerji points out that there were no libraries where knowledge could be stored up in manuscripts. Teachers were themselves the living and walking libraries and custodians of the nation's heritage and stock of learning.
Points to Remember.

The Gupta rulers paid special attention to the education of their subjects. Private teachers known as Acharyas and Upadhyayas were the pivot of the whole educational system; Capitals of kingdoms and holy places were centres of higher learning; Agrahara villages also centres of education; State and private individuals made endowments to learned Brahmín teachers. Nalanda was originally a monastery probably founded by Kumara-gupta I, and endowed by later Gupta emperors; developed into a university in the late Gupta period; became the Oxford of Mahayana Buddhism; Curriculum of studies very comprehensive; Huen Tsung's account shows that the university was renowned alike for magnificence of its establishment and the moral pre-eminence of inmates; Female Education suffered a great set back owing to disappearance of girl's upanayanas and lowering of marriageable age. Technical Education imparted in the family; apprentices also employed by master artisans; Primary Education comprising of 3 R’s, imparted in Lipisalas. Non-Existence of Libraries :- There were no libraries where knowledge could be stored up in manuscripts, teachers were the walking and living libraries.

Q. Describe the development of literature, philosophy, and sciences during the Gupta period showing that in these spheres it was not so much an age of revival as of efflorescence.

Ans. The Gupta age was a great period in the literary history of ancient India. Much of what is best in almost all the branches of Sanskrit literature including even sciences like Astronomy and Mathematics was the product of this era. This is evident from the fact that great poets and playwrights like Kalidasa, Bharvi, Visakhadatta, philosophers like Isvarakrishna, Vatsyayana and Prastpada and astronomers and mathematicians like Aryabhatta and Varahamihira all flourished during this age. This epoch has, therefore, been aptly described as the “Golden Age” or the “August an Age” of Sanskrit literature and learning. But we cannot say that it was an age of revival of Sanskrit literature. In fact, Sanskrit language was not in a state of abeyance during the post-Asokan and pre-Gupta periods. The Sungas who lived about five centuries before the Guptas, patronised Sanskrit. The Mahabashya, an exposition of Sanskrit grammar was written by Patanjali during the reign of Pushyamitra Sunga. Celebrities of the post Mauryan period like Susruta and Nagarjuna were also well versed in Sanskrit. Avsvagoshya and Charaka who were probably the contemporaries of Kanishka wrote their great works in Sanskrit. Rudradaman’s famous Junagarh Rock Inscription is entirely in Sanskrit. It is indeed remarkable that Mahayana Buddhists
accepted Sanskrit as the vehicle of their literary and philosophical expression more than a century before the rise of the Guptas to power. It is thus evident that Sanskrit had never been moribund or dead before the times of Guptas. The Guptas emperors in fact vigorously patronised this language and gave it an additional momentum. The Sanskrit language flourished and reached its perfection during the Gupta times. It was now the language of the inscriptions and coin legends and was used for all literary compositions. K. M. Panikkar rightly remarks that “Classical Sanskrit after 500 years of evolution from the time of Panini reached its transcendental glory in the times of Kalidasa.” It was thus an age of florescence of Sanskrit literature rather than of its revival. This remarkable development of literature, philosophy and sciences during the Gupta age may be studied as follows.

Secular Literature

As stated above, the spread of Sanskrit literature was mainly due to its patronage by the Gupta kings some of whom were themselves learned Sanskritists. For instance, Samudra-gupta has been described in the Allahabad Pillar Inscription as a “prince of poets” (Kaviraja). He associated with great scholars and there is little doubt that many poets received his patronage. The most notable poet of his court was Harisena. He composed the Allahabad Pillar Inscription which is a remarkable specimen of poetical narrative. If the identification of Chandra-gupta II with the Vikramaditya of traditions is accepted, he must be regarded as one of the greatest patrons of literature known to Indian history. Virasena-Saba, a high minister of Chandra-gupta II is described as a poet who was also proficient in subjects like logic and statecraft.

Among the great luminaries of the Gupta age, Kalidasa stands out as the most prominent. By universal consent he has been regarded as the best poet in Sanskrit literature and he well derves this honour. Kalidasa’s date is still open to doubt and some scholars are of the view that he was living in 57 B.C. But there are strong grounds to believe that he lived towards the end of the 4th century A.D. at Ujjain in the reign of Chandra-gupta II or Kumara-gupta I. Among Kalidasa’s famous works are the Ritusambhara, the Malavikagnimitra, the Kumarasambhava, the Meghaduta, the Sakuntla and the Raghuvamsa. His masterpiece Sakuntla is “among the hundred best books of the world”. His lyrical nature poem Meghaduta or “The Cloud Messenger” captivated Goethe and Early European romantics. A distinguished American scholar, Ryder has paid a splendid tribute to this poem and remarks, “the former half is a description of external nature, yet interwoven with human feeling; the latter half is a picture of human heart yet picture is framed in natural
beauty”. Regarding Kalidasa’s Ritusambhava Prof. Macdonnell remarks that “Perhaps no other Sanskrit poems manifest such striking sympathy with the physical world, keen power of observation and skill in depicting the Indian landscape in vivid colours”. Dr. Altekar remarks, Kalidasa’s “poetry is characterised by grace, simplicity and sentiment and is decorated by striking figures of speech. He is deservedly famous for his smiles, which appeal to us by their beauty, appropriateness and variety. In characterisation he has few equals. He is superb in describing the emotions of love and pathos. His love of nature is as unequalled as his power of describing it. Works of Kalidasa are not only note worthy for their asthetic beauty and poetical appeal, but they are equally valuable for the ideals which they place before the society.... His writings abound with pithy sayings containing salutary advice couched in beautiful language, from which persons in all walks of life can derive immense benefit”.

Bhasa another great writer of the times seems to have flourished about a century or so before Kalidasa and his time may be taken to be 300 A.D. There is a controversy among the scholars as to whether we have really discovered the works of Bhasa who has been so highly praised by Kalidasa and Bana. A bunch of thirteen plays known as Trivandrum plays have been ascribed to him. The majority of these plays are based on epoch themes which Bhasa dramatises with considerable skill. Sudraka was another great scholar of the age. His great work Mrichchhakatika or the Little Clay Cart stands “pre-eminent among Indian plays for the distinctively dramatic qualities of vigour, life and action, as well as skill in the delineation of character”. Visakhadatta who flourished in about 4th century A.D. wrote Mudra-Rakhsa or the Signet Ring. This is a purely political play with no love motive or story from mythology. Bharvi who is famous for excellence of his ideas wrote Kirtar Jumiyam. Bhatta wrote the Ravandha. In this work he illustrates the rules of grammar while relating the story of Rama. Dandin who is noted for the beauty of words employed, wrote his Kavyadanda a work on the art of poetry, and the Dasakumaracharita, a prose romance.

Panchatantra, the most remarkable storehouse of fairy tales and fables was also composed during the gupta period. Its influence on the literature of the world is astonishing, this work was first translated into Arabic and then into Persian and it was from Arabia that it travelled into Europe. This book has been translated into more than 50 languages. Macdonnell suggests, “Probably no book except the Bible has been translated into so many languages, certainly no secular book.”

Religious Literature

Gupta age was also the age of afflorosence and perfection in
the history of Sanskrit religious literature. Although the origin of the Puranas, "a storehouse of ancient Indian traditions, myths, legends, dogmas, rituals, moral codes and religious and philosophical principles" is to be traced to an earlier period, the principal among them were recast into their present form in the Gupta period. They were brought in line with the new social and religious requirements of the new Hinduism evolved during this period. The Puranas now came to be regarded as the scriptures of the masses. The Mahabharata and Ramayana were also finally revised and given their present form. The Mahabharata was rearranged and edited in such a manner as to make it completely a new literature. Smritis of Yajnavalkya, Narada, Katyayana and Brihaspati were written during this period to give canonical sanction to the new changes which had taken place. The Nitisara of Kamandaka was written by some minister of the Gupta kings. Various law books associated with the name of Manu became codified thus finally fixed the main outlines of Hindu law and custom.

**Philosophy**

Indian speculative philosophy also made great progress. Sabarasvamin wrote Bhashya a famous work on the Mimaśa-sutras. The Bhashya is the earliest commentary on the Purva mimasa of Jaimini. In Sabarasvamin's hands, Mimamsa becomes a complete system of philosophy and not merely ritualistic practices. Isvara-krishna wrote Sankhya-karika which is the earliest commentary on the Sankhya philosophy. This is a small work consisting of only 70 karikhas (stanzas) but on account of its excellence and almost complete treatment of the Sankhya metaphysics within such limited compass, it is often described as the pearl of the whole scholastic literature of India. Vyasa wrote a commentary on the Yogasutra of Patanjali. Vatsyana, a scholar of Kanchi composed the Naya-bhasha, the most authoritative commentary on the Sutras. Prastapaḍa gave us the earliest independent and systematic exposition of the Vaiseshika philosophy, in his Padartha-dhīmaṇa-saṃgraha. Many celebrated Hinayana philosophers like Buddhabhadra and Buddhada and the great Mahayana teachers and philosophers like Asanga, Vasubandhu and Dīgāṅga also flourished during the Gupta age. The writings of the Mahayana Buddhist philosophers are marked by a polemic zest in the refutation of rival systems and anticipated much of the method and thought of Gaudapada and Sankara, the great teachers of Advaita philosophy in the next age. Nīlkantha shastri remarks that this is the age when the long philosophical debate begins in which all schools took part without exception, and which lasted for many centuries as late as the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries A.D.
Side by side with the literature and philosophy, the study of exact sciences also received great impetus. The great scholars of this period occupy a high place in the history of sciences not only of India but also of the whole world. Their researches in Arithmetic, Astronomy and Medicine guided scientists in other lands for centuries and exercised a direct influence on scientific thought in Arabia and other Islamic countries and indirectly in Europe. Among the notable astronomers and mathematicians of the Gupta age, Aryabhata stands out as the most prominent. A few of his works such as Aryabhatiya, Diśagitiśasūtra and Aryashtasata have come down to us. He was the first to treat mathematics as a distinct subject. His most epoch-making achievement was the discovery of the principle of the place value of the first nine numbers and the use of zero which simplified arithmetical calculations. He gives a value for \( \pi \) more accurate than any suggested before him. He was the first Indian astronomer to declare that the earth was a sphere; that it revolved round the sun and rotated round its axis. He was also the first to describe the true causes of solar and lunar eclipses and the methods of calculating them precisely. His calculation of the size of the earth is very near that estimated by modern astronomer. On the whole Aryabhata has been deservedly called the father of astronomical science in India. The other notable astronomer of the period was Virhamihira. Though less original, he was second only to Aryabhata in Indian astronomy. In his Pancha-sidhanta, he has given a description of the five systems of astronomy in use in his times. His work on astrology Bṛhat-samhitā is a compendium of all available knowledge on technical sciences like architecture, metallurgy, physiology etc. His other works on astrology were Bṛjījīlatka and Laṅgū-jataka. It has been remarked that Virhamihira was a man of such a comprehensive mind that there was hardly any branch of natural sciences to which he did not make any contribution. Some years later, Brahmagupta (born 598 A.D.) wrote his Brāhma-sphuṭa and Khandakhadyaka. His works deal with ordinary arithmetical equations, square and cube roots, rules of three, interest, geometry, elementary mensuration, and simple algebraic identities. He taught the easier methods of compilation of the longitude of the planets. He anticipated Newton when he declared that "all things fall to the earth by a law of nature, for it is the nature of the earth to attract and keep things".

Medical sciences were also widely studied. The Indian surgeons were well versed in the art of dissection, plastic surgery, veterinary surgery and even in such specialised branches of surgery as that of eye, ear and nose. The physicians also knew the symptoms of
many diseases. The great medical writer of this period is Vagbhata. He wrote Astanga-sangrah which is a systematic summary of Charaka and Sustra. Palakapya wrote Hastyayurveda, a treatise on the diseases peculiar to elephants and their treatments.

The sciences of metallurgy, chemistry and physics also flourished, unfortunately no books on these subjects have been discovered, but there is no doubt that metallurgy and chemistry made a striking progress. The famous Mehrauli pillar stands as a silent witness to proclaim the excellent skill in working metals of the metallurgists of the Gupta age. This huge pillar is made of wrought iron, 24 feet high and weighs 6½ tons. It is so skilfully manufactured that inspite of exposure for centuries to sun and rain, it shows the least signs of rusting and corrosion. The discovery of several colossal copper statues of Buddha also represent the triumph of metallurgical skill of the Gupta age. Dr. Altekar writes that use of mercury and iron with proper treatment for the preparation of medicines had begun to be advocated by writers like Varahamihira, and it is likely that the close association of medicine and chemistry, which was to achieve great progress in chemical knowledge in the later period, began towards the end of the Gupta period. In fact, “the scholars of the Gupta period were gifted with an insatiable scientific curiosity, a desire to go forward in seeking knowledge and a courage in facing conditions which is almost modern in its outlook.”

Points to Remember

Literature. Gupta age, a great period in the history of Sanskrit literature; best specimens of classical Sanskrit literature produced in this era; Sanskrit language flourished owing to the patronage of the Guptas; the revival of Sanskrit language started centuries before the Guptas; it was not revived by the Guptas; they simply patronised it. Numerous Sanskrit poets and playwrights wrote their great works. Kalidasa, the greatest poet and dramatist probably belonged to the Gupta age. His important works were Sakuntala, Meghasamdesa, Ritu-samhara, etc. Other notable writer was Visakhadatta the author of Mudrarakshasa, Sudraka wrote Mrichchhakatika. Panchatantra a store house of fairy tales and fables was written during the Gupta age; it exercised great influence on the literature of the world, translated into 50 languages. Principal Puranas were recast; Mahabharata and Ramayana re-arranged and re-edited.

Philosophy. Indian speculative philosophy also developed, Sabara wrote Bhashya, a commentary on Mimamsa philosophy, Isvarakrishna wrote Sankhya-Karika; Vatsyana, Vyasa and Buddhist philosophers like
Vasubandhu, Digamba, Asanga wrote their famous works.

Science. Remarkable progress made in the fields of medicine, mathematics, astronomy and astrology and other technical sciences. Aryabhata, Virhamhira and Brahmagupta famous mathematicians and astronomers. Aryabhata called the founder of Indian astrology. Art of surgery also developed; the great writer on science of medicine was Vaghbata, Palakapya wrote a treatise on diseases of elephants. Science of Metallurgy made striking development, the Mehrauli pillar is a great marvel of the metallurgical skill of the Hindu metallurgists.

CULTURAL EXPANSION.

Q. Discuss the cultural activities of the Indians in Central Asia and China during the period 320 and 520 A.D.

Ans. By the beginning of the 4th century A.D., Buddhism along with Indian culture had spread over Central Asia and had obtained a definite footing in China. The whole of Turkistan from Kashgir up to the frontiers of China had grown into a sort of Greater India. The slow but regular infiltration of Indian civilization in these areas was largely due to the work of Indian missionaries who visited and settled there in the preceding centuries. During the Gupta age also Buddhist missionaries continued pouring into Eastern Turkistan and China and carried on the dissemination of Indian civilization to almost all the corners of these regions. A large number of Indian scholars settled there and dedicated their lives to the spread of their mission and translation of the Buddhist works into Chinese language. The work of the great missionaries who went to Eastern Turkistan and China may be studied as follows:

The greatest of these missionaries was Kumaraśīva. His father Kumarayana who was born in a respectable family of hereditary ministers and adopted a religious life by choice, left India for foreign countries. He went to Kuchi where he was cordially welcomed and shortly rose to the position of Rajguru of the king of Kuchi. Here he married Jiva, a princess of royal family and Kumaraśīva, whose name combines the name of his father and mother, was the first son of this marriage. Kumaraśīva along with his mother came to Kashmir where he studied the Buddhist scriptures under Bandhavatī, a cousin of the king of Kashmir and a famous teacher. After completing his studies, he came back to Kuchi and settled in the ‘King’s new monastery’ of the city which was the biggest monastery
of the city. He started preaching Buddhism to the common people in Eastern Turkistan and soon won celebrity as the most famous Buddhist scholar in Central Asia. In A.D. 400 as a sequel to Chinese invasion of Kuchi, he was carried away as a prize prisoner to China. The Chinese emperor accepted him as the royal spiritual preceptor. Kumarañjiva studied Chinese with great alacrity. His profound knowledge of Buddhism and proficiency in both Chinese and Sanskrit languages made him the most successful among the many translators of Sanskrit Buddhist works into Chinese. From 401 A.D. till his death in 422 he stayed in the Chinese capital and devoted his whole energy to translating Buddhist texts and interpreting Buddhist religion and philosophy. He translated as many as 108 Sanskrit Buddhist texts into Chinese including the Saddharma-Pundrika, the Sutralankara the biographies of Nagarjuna and Asvaghosha and several other works of Mahayana school. He was the first Buddhist scholar to propagate Mahayana Buddhism among the Chinese people and is justly regarded as the most distinguished among the Indian monks who visited China and lived there. Many scholars from different parts of China became his disciples. He may be aptly regarded as having ushered in a new epoch in the history of Buddhism in China.

Another notable Kashmirian Buddhist scholar who is well known for his missionary work in Eastern Turkistan and China was Buddhayaña. He was born in a Brahminical family but became a Buddhist. After doing missionary work in Kashgar and Kuchi he went to China and worked there with Kumarañjiva. He was a man of strict principles and never accepted any present from the Chinese emperor on the ground that it was unbecoming of a monk to do so. Gunavarman was another noble son of Kashmir who went to China to spread the Indian culture there. His fame as a missionary in Ceylon and Java induced the Chinese emperor to invite him to Nankin. The emperor erected the Jetavahra for his preaching work. Gunavarman died there within a year but so industrious was he that during his short stay of one year there, he translated no less than eleven Buddhist texts into Chinese.

Many other Kashmirian scholars e.g. Sanghábbhuti (A. D. 381-384) Gautama Sanghadeva (A. D. 384-397), Punyatātra (A. D. 404), Vimalaksha (A. D. 406-413) Buddhajíva (A. D. 423), Dharmamītra (A. D. 424-4442) and Dharmayasa (A. D. 400-424) also braved the perils of journey to these countries for the spread of their mission. Two of the above scholars namely Punyatātra and Vimalaksha were collaborators of Kumarañjiva, while Dharmayasa was a pupil of Punyatāra. They all engaged them selves in translating Sanskrit texts into Chinese and expounding Buddhist philosophy, and were loaded with high honours by the people as well as the kings.
Several scholras from other parts of the country went to China with the torch of Buddhist religion and Indian culture. Among these, special mention may be made of Gunabhadra of Madhyadesha (A. D. 516-43) Uпасуя of Ujjayini (sixth century) and three monks Janabhadrā, Jinayassas and Yasogupta (sixth century) from Eastern India (i.e. Assam and Bengal). Three others, Buddhahadra Vimokshaśena and Jinagupta hailed from North-western frontier. We may refer in some details to a few other monks who spread the light of Buddhism in China, as their lives offer special points of interest.

Bodhidharma who “came floating on the sea to Pan-yu” (Canton) in 526 A.D. obtained the greatest celebrity in China. He travelled over a great part of China during the reign of the devout emperor Wu, disseminating the Buddhist doctrine of meditation and paving the way for the rapprochement of the Northern and Southern schools. His introduction of the Dhayana school of Buddhism almost revolutionised the Chinese life. Gunabhadra who was a translator of the Samyukta agama went to China from Ceylon in 430 A.D. Samghabhadrā came to China and translated Samantapasadika in 488 A.D. Paramartha, who became very famous in China was born in Ujjayini. He was probably sent by Gupta ruler to China on the request of Chinese emperor to send a renowned Buddhist monk to China; Paramartha took with him a large number of Buddhist texts and reached China in A.D. 546. He stayed there till his death in 569 and translated no less than 70 Buddhist texts. It is recorded that there were as many as 3000 Indians in China at the beginning of the 6th century A.D. By the end of the 4th century, A.D. 1768 temples had been built and about 263 Buddhist works had been translated by 27 scholars.

It is thus evident that every part of India shared in the arduous, marvellous march of the religion, culture and philosophy of India to Central Asia and China. Even batches of Buddhist (nuns) Bhikshus went from Ceylon to China in 433-34 A.D. on a ship called Nandi. They established in China the Bhikshuni order. The activities of the Indian missionaries in China during the fourth, fifth and 6th centuries had a profound effect upon the Chinese. It aroused greater interest than before among the Chinese in Indian culture and Buddhism. It also wetted the desire of the Chinese to know Buddhism at first hand and come into direct contact with Indian culture by visiting India.

Points to Remember.

During the Gupta age, a large number of Buddhist missionaries went to Central Asia and China; they disseminated Buddhism and Indian
culture in almost all the corners of these regions; they translated the Sanskrit Buddhist works into Chinese language. The most prominent among these missionaries was a Kashmiri scholar, Kumaraṇa; he settled in the “king’s new monastery” at kuchi and preached Buddhism to the common people in Eastern Turkistan. In 400 A.D. he was carried as a slave prisoner to China; the Chinese emperor accepted him as a royal preceptor. Kumaraṇa translated “106 Sanskrit Buddhist texts into Chinese; justly regarded as the most distinguished among the Indian monks; he ushered a new epoch in the history of Buddhism in China. Other Kashmiri scholars who visited Eastern Turkistan and China were Buddhāyaṇa, Gunavārman, Sanghabhuti, Gautama Sanghadeva, Punyavatā, Dharmamitra, Buddhajīva and Dharmayasya. The Scholars from other parts of India who went to China to preach Buddhist religion and Indian culture were, Gunabhadra, Upasunya, Janabhādra, Jinaṇayasas, Yasogupta, Buddhabhāra, Vimoṣhásena, Jinaṇagupta, Bodhidharma, Gunabhadra, and Paramartha. By the beginning of the 6th century A.D. about 17068 temples had been erected in Central Asia and China and about 263 Buddhist works had been translated by 27 scholars. The activities of the above missionaries aroused great interest among the Chinese in Indian culture and Buddhism; also made many Chinese scholars to visit India to have first-hand knowledge of Buddhism and Indian culture.

ART AND ARCHITECTURE

Q. What were the three great schools of Gupta sculpture? Point out their outstanding features.

Ans. According to Dr. R.D. Banerji, “the general impression that the Gupta Age is the Golden age of Indian culture is almost entirely based on the evidence of its plastic art.” The increase in the material prosperity of the country during the Gupta age, left an indelible mark on the history of plastic art of the country. In the words of Dr. V.S. Agarwala, “Under the stroke of the master’s chisel the stone became malleable, as it were and was transformed into figure of permanent beauty and grace.” Indian sculpture shook off its subservience to foreign traditions and motifs and asserted its personality. The greatest centres of artistic activity were Mathura, Benaras and Pataliputra. There were also certain minor centres of activity such as Eran, Dasapura and Mandasor. The plastic remains of this period are comparatively few but enough survives to show the achievement of the time.
Mathura School.

The Mathura school began about the end of the 1st century B.C. and it continued to flourish during the Gupta age. The Mathura work is known by its material of mottled red stone quarried at Karri in Mathura district and also by its foreign features. According to Dr. R. K. Mookerji, stylistically the Mathura School was influenced by Graeco Buddhist or Gandhara school and copied some of its features in many images of the Buddha and the Bodhisattvas. The well known product of this school is the Manukwar image of Buddha seated (dated 448 A.D.) which is a typical example of great conservative force in the Mathura school. There is another specimen of this school which is dated 16 years earlier than the Manukwar image. This is the Mathura Jaina image of G.E. 113 = 432 A.D. dedicated during the reign of Kumara-gupta I. The generic resemblance between these two images is very striking. The modelling of the torso is typically Kushan in both the figures. The legs in the Jaina image are shapeless and out of proportion but the method of modelling is the same in this figure as in the Manukwar figure. The lions on the throne, the wheels and its base and even modelling of the Buddha on the Manukwar image and the kneeling worshippers on the Jaina specimens are typically Kushan. The marked features of the Kushan school lingered on right up to the middle of the 5th century A.D. when they were modified by certain influences which were simultaneously at work all over northern India. The works of Mathura school were carried far and wide and had much influence on the later sculpture. That is why that the products of this school had been found at such distant places as Manukwar in the Allahabad district. The Mathura school in the later Gupta period succumbed to the influences of the Benaras school and the great Mathura school finally ceased to exist by the beginning of the sixth century A.D.

Benaras School.

The discoveries of Marshall and his assistants have proved that Benaras school of sculpture existed at least from the post-Mauryan period. During the 3rd and fourth centuries of Christian era the output of this school diminished but suddenly in the 5th century A.D. there was a great increase in plastic activity at Benaras. There was a total change in the ideals of the artists of this school. The products of Benaras school are declared by their material of Chunar sandstone, and their artistic features which are free of foreign influence. The specimens of this school betray very little connection with the Gandhara school. It evolved a purely indigenous style and also produced a particular type of its stelae on which are graphically
represented the main incidents in the life of Buddha in the manner of Gandharan art. Generally eight or four incidents and in some cases even one incident is elaborated in detail. The Sarnath (Benaras) image of the seated Buddha in the act of his preaching the first sermon is considered to be one of the best examples of figure art of this school. This figure is a fine expression in stone of the meditative and compassionate Buddha giving his first message of deliverance to the world. The wheel or Chakra, the symbol of the dharma, occupies the centre of the pedestal and on its two sides are the figures of the five disciples to whom the first sermon was preached. The woman with a child, whose figures are added at the left corner, is probably the figure of the donor of the image, which in some respects represents the highest watermark of the art of sculpture in ancient India. Sarnath in fact is a treasure-house of Gupta figures and reliefs, among which are many of high quality dating from the time of Samudra-gupta and his successors.

Pataliputra School.

According to R. D Banerji, the excavations at Nalanda have thrown such a brilliant flood of light on the plastic art of the northern India during the Gupta age that there is little doubt that there existed a third school of Indian art, the Pataliputra school. This school specialised in its work of metal images. The best specimens of this school are to be found in Nalanda and Sultanganj. The colossal copper statue of Buddha about 74 feet in height discovered at Sultanganj (the statue now placed in the Brimingham Museum) is a beautiful specimen of the work of this School. The other example of this school is the great metal image of the Buddha discovered at Nalanda. Dr. R. D Banerji observes that this image shows the tangential eyebrows, the systematic arrangement of the curls of hair, and the typical usnisa of the Benaras School. But this image differs from the regular Benaras type of Buddha in its stylistic arrangement of both the upper and lower garments and in the presence of the conventional lines indicating the folds of the drapery. Exactly similar characteristics are to be found in the colossal copper image of the Buddha discovered at Sultanganj. Dr. Banerji further holds that the curly fringe of the upper and lower garments along with the conventional lines indicating the folds of drapery show the indebtedness of the Pataliputra school to the Indo-Greek school of Gandhara. The Pataliputra school also produced bronze images of great artistic merit at two chief centres of Nalanda and Kurkihar.

Dr. R. D. Banerji observes that the three great schools of Gupta sculpture agree in their method of treatment of bas-reliefs. Another important feature of which is common to all the three great Gupta
schools is the introduction of subjects from the orthodox Brahmanical or Hindu religion into bas-reliefs. Bas-reliefs were primarily employed for the depiction of the Buddha-charita or the Jatakas but later they were employed for the depiction of scenes of Hindu mythology, the best known examples of which are the great lintels from Gadhwa (Allahabad district), and the three great panels on the Dasavatara temple at Deogarh.

Points to Remember

The Gupta art is represented by three schools, those of Mathura, Benaras, and Pataliputra. Mathura school continued the traditions of Kushan Gandhara art; Mathura work known from its material of mottled red-stone quarried at Karri; well known products of this school are the Manukwar image of the Buddha and the Mathura Jaina image; the products of this school in great demand; this school ceased to exist by the end of the 6th century A.D. Benaras School indigenous school; free from foreign influence; the products know from its material of Chunar sand-stone; the best specimen is the Sarnath Buddha image; Pataliputra School specialised in its work of metal images; the best specimens of this school are colossal copper Buddha statue discovered at Sultanganj and the great metal image of Buddha discovered at Nalanda; Pataliputra school also produced bronze images of great artistic merit. Certain features common to all the three great Gupta schools.

Q. Describe in brief the development of Architecture with special reference to Hindu temple buildings during the Gupta age.

Ans. The Gupta period is marked by a great activity in the domain of architecture. The contemporary inscriptions clearly indicate that a large number of temples and other edifices were raised which were notable for the magnificence of their style and execution. Certain fundamental innovations were also made in the technique of building construction and the Indian builders began to apply the principles of architecture as an art. Percy Brown observes, "In the art of building two progressive movements of fundamental significance are discernible, one relating to its aesthetic character, and the other to structural procedure. The former marks the begetting of a new sensibility, a change from the mere imitative to the infinitely creative, from the servile copying of meaningless forms expressive of undeveloped mind and unskilled forces, to a reasoned application of the first principles of architectural compositions. The latter records the use for the time
of dressed stone masonry, a pronounced step in the technique of building construction, the introduction of which placed a new power in the hands of the workmen. It was when the art was in such a formative state that there emerged the earliest known conception of the Hindu ‘house of god’. And with the appearance of this type of building, architecture composed of stone masonry made its beginning”. Unfortunately most of the edifices of the Gupta age perished owing to various destructive wars which ravaged from century to century, but the few that have survived bear ample testimony to the richness of creative genius of Indians. The development of architecture during the Gupta age may be studied as under:—

Temple Buildings.

According to Dr. Agrawala the wave of creative enthusiasm and the intensely religious purpose behind it that swept the country in the Gupta age found full expression in the architectural activity of the period which produced Brahmanical temples in large numbers. The inscriptions show that temples were dedicated to Vishnu, Siva and Parvati. Votive columns were erected in honour of the Sun, monasteries were given over to the Buddhist Sangas and even temples were built for the spiritual culture of the Jainas. Among those which have survived, the following are well known — (1) The Dasavatara temple at Deogarh in the Jhansi district (2) the temple at Bhitargaon near Kanpur (3) Vishnu temple at Tigawat in Jubbulpore district (4) Siva temple at Bhumara (Nagod State) (5 & 6) two Buddhist shrines at Sanchi and Buddha Gaya (7) the Siva temple at Khoj (Nagod State) containing a beautiful Ekamukhi Linga, (8) a beautiful Parvati temple at Nachna-Kuthara (Ajayagarh state) and (9) a temple in a ruined state but of great artistic merit at Dah Parbatia on the banks of the Bramhaputra (Darrang district, Assam).

The temple at Bhitargaon is most notable for its well preserved and moulded bricks of excellent designs. The temple has a pyramidal roof and its walls are decorated outside with terracota panels representing scenes from Hindu mythology. Dr. Agrawala observes that architecturally this temple is important as it possesses the earliest true arch found in India.

The Dasavatara temple at Deogarh had originally a pyramidal tower (Sikhara) about 40 feet in height. It stood on a raised plinth in the centre of the open terrace. It had a plain interior, but its door way was exquisitely carved and decorated, the figures of Ganga and Yamuna being carved on the jambs. According to Percy Brown, this temple, when complete, was one of rare merit in the correct
ordering of its parts, and its structural panels were the most superb of their kind. It appears that the plan of this temple derives its main features from the adaptation of the Stupa-idea to the requirements of a Hindu temple. Dr. Agarwala points out that "few monuments can show such a high level of workmanship combined with ripeness and rich refinement in its sculptural effect as the Gupta temple at Deogarh."

The Siva temple of Bhumra and the Paravati temple at Nachna Kuthara add to the main structure a processional path. The Bhumra temple has its ceiling decorated with figures of foliage and also ornamented with Chaitya windows and medallions bearing the images of Ganesha, Brahma, Yama, Kubera and Karttikeya, Siva dancing on bull, Kama and Mahishamardini.

Dr. Basham points out that the Gupta temples show the same general pattern. Pillars were usually ornate with heavy bell-shaped capitals surmounted by animal motifs and the entrances were often carved with mythological scenes and figures. All the Gupta temples were small, and most had flat roofs. The masonry was held together without mortar, and was far larger and thicker than was necessary for comparatively small buildings.

Buddhist Buildings.

Several Buddhist buildings, stupas, chapels and monasteries have been discovered at Jaulian, Charsadda and other ancient sites near Puhkalavati. At Mohra Maradu have been found an assembly hall, refectory, kitchen, store room, bath room and latrine which were used by the monk residents. One of the two stupas found at Jarasandha-ka-Baitthak in Rajgir and the Dhamek stupa at Sarnath belong to the middle of the 6th century A.D. The stupa at Sarnath is 128 high and has four niches for Buddha images at four cardinal points. Its decorative work comprises scrolls and geometric patterns and has evoked high praise. Narasimha-gupta Baladitya built a magnificent brick temple of the Buddha at Nalanda. It was about 300 feet in height and was greatly admired by the Chinese travellers who later visited this place. The main structure has entirely disappeared and only its massive basement has been unearthed.

Cave Architecture.

In the cave architecture of the Gupta age, Ajanta takes the first place. The Ajanta caves are no doubt famous for their paintings but they are equally interesting for their architecture. Two of the
Vahara caves Nos XVI and XVII were excavated in the last quarter of the fifth century but Chaitya Cave No. XIX was completed a little later. Each cave has a large number of pillars which are remarkable both for their beauty and variety. No two pillars are exactly alike but they have a general harmony of design and form. The roofs and pillars have ornamental designs in bold outlines and pleasing colours. The caves at Mogulrajapuram and Undavalli also belong to the Gupta period. They resemble Udayagiri caves of Central India in their plan. The Undavelli caves have similar architectural features but are three storeyed. There is a Brahminical cave temple at Udayagiri near Bhopal. It has an inscription dated 410 A.D. and refers to the reign of Chandra-gupta II. It is the earliest dated Hindu temple known so far. The building is partly rock-cut and partly stone-built. Its style marks a transition from the pure cave shrines to structural ones. The portico, the carved entrance and the pillars of this cave temple show the typical features of the Gupta style.

Points to Remember:

The Gupta age witnessed great architectural activity; many Hindu temples, Buddhist shrines, stupas and monasteries were built; a few buildings have survived the destruction carried on by the foreign invaders. Among those survived, the Dasavatara temple at Deogarh, the temple near Bhitargaon, Vishnu temple at Tigaon, Siva temple at Bhumara, Parvati temple at Nachna Kuthara and two Buddhist shrines at Sanchi and Bodh-gaya are well known. The Gupta temples are very small and most of them have flat roofs; the doorways are often carved with mythological scenes and have figured panels. The Buddhist buildings of the Gupta age found at Jaulian, Charsadda and near Pushkalavati. The cave architecture also practised; the Chaitya and Vihara caves at Ajanta are highly artistic monuments. The caves at Mogulrajapuram, Undavelli and the Brahminical Cave temple at Udayagiri also belong to the Gupta period.

Q. Describe the progress of arts of (a) Sculpture (b) Painting and (c) Terracotta during the Gupta age.

Ans. Sculpture.

The sculpture attained a high degree of perfection and excellence during the Gupta age. It was at this time that the Gupta artists produced some of the best specimens of sculpture which India has ever produced. The sculpture of the time is characterised by natural refinement, elegance, simplicity of style, freedom from extravagance,
exquisite technique, remarkable sympathy with nature, nice balance and freedom from dead-weight conventions. The Gupta artists liberated themselves from the Gandhrian influence and evolved a Gupta style which has combined all the various elements of the Indian art. A large number of images of the Buddha and Bodhisattvas and Hindu gods have been unearthed at different places in India which enable us to identify and appreciate the Gupta style.

**Buddha and Bodhisattva Images.**

Stone and bronze images of the Buddha and Bodhisattvas have been discovered largely at Mathura and Sarnath (Benaras). The artists of the Gupta period introduced following innovations with reference to the Buddha statue:—(a) introduced beautiful curly hair (except in the Manukwar image) in contrast to shaven head of the Kushan Buddha statues (b) bands of graceful ornamentation of different kinds introduced in the halo of the Buddha figure (c) transparent drapery, plain or with folds clearly revealing the form (d) introduced a large variety of Mudras (hand poses and attitudes) (e) the Buddha images reveal a more spiritual calmness of face than in the Gandhara counterparts.

The most famous of the Buddha sculptures of this period is the Sarnath image of the seated Buddha turning the wheel of law or preaching his first sermon, which, more than any other Indian sculpture, seems to convey the message of Buddhism. It is justly regarded as the finest in the whole of India. The standing Buddha in the Mathura museum and the colossal copper statue of Buddha 7½ feet in height from Sultanganj are other leading examples of the Gupta sculpture which fully confirm the artistic canons of this enlightened age. The Manukwar stone image of Buddha of 448 A.D. also belongs to the Gupta age. It is an example of Kushan artistic style continuing in the Gupta age.

**Hindu Sculpture.**

The Gupta artists created beautiful images of Hindu gods and the scenes from Puranic mythology with remarkable fineness. In doing so, they introduced fresh ideas and new techniques which were absolutely free from the trammels of the Graeco-Buddhist school. The Gupta school of art was mainly employed to the service of Hinduism whereas the old schools were almost invariably devoted to the service of Buddhism. Among the Hindu sculptures of the Gupta age, the figure of Surya (sun-god) at Gwalior is the best example. Broad and sturdy, cheerfully smiling, the god looks straight ahead at his
worshipper, his right hand raised in blessing. The Deogarh temple (in Jhansi district) contains many effective representations in sculptures of episodes of Rama Krishna legends. A few of the many panels bear scenes of exploits of Krishna as a child. Other notable panels in the Deogarh temple are Ganjendra Moksha, Vishnu reclining on Ananta, and Nara and Narayana in the Himalayas which rank among the best products of Gupta sculpture. There are many artistic Siva sculptures in the Deogarh temple. One of these representing Siva as a Yogi is regarded as one of the masterpieces of Indian art. Siva sculptures have also been found at Kosam in Allahabad district and at Kaman in Ajmer district. Ekamukhi Lingas showing artistic workmanship have been found at Khoh and Bhumra. Perhaps the most immediately impressive of all the Guptan sculptures is the Great Boar, holding mother earth on his tusk, with accessory figures of praying Rishis and seers carved in relief at the entrance of a cave at Udayagiri. Mr. Basham remarks "the deep feeling which inspired the carving of this figure makes it perhaps the only theriomorphic image in the world’s art which conveys a truly religious message to modern man."

The Gupta artists thus were not lost in the admiration of physical beauty. They had a spiritual purpose in view and wanted to portray the blending of the external form with inner spirit. Dr. Agrawala remarks, "Art was worshipped in order to deepen the consciousness of the soul and awaken it to a new sense of spiritual joy and nobility. To create lovely forms and harness them to the needs of higher life—this was the golden harmony that made Gupta art a thing of such perpetual and inexhaustible attraction". The types of sculpture evolved during the Gupta age not only remained as models for succeeding generations in India but they also served as such in the Indian colonies of the far East. The sculpture of the Malay Peninsula, Sumatra Java, Cambodia Annam and Celebes bear the indelible stamp of the Gupta style. (Also see pages 263-266 of this book)

Painting.

The art of painting reached its height of glory and splendour during the Gupta age. This art was widely practised and used for the adornment of royal palaces as well as temples and Buddhist halls. A few paintings of this age have survived, but there is enough to attest to the excellence of this art and to place the Gupta age in the forefront of mural artistic excellence. The most celebrated examples of the paintings of this age are the wall paintings in the Buddhist caves at Ajanta in Central India, the Bagh Caves in Gawaliar, the Sittannavasal temple in Pudukottai and the rock-cut chambers at Sigirya in Ceylon.
The paintings in the Ajanta caves represent "the climax which genuine Indian art has attained". They are masterpieces both in their vivid imagination and their realistic portrayal of contemporary life, and give us "an idea of the masterful impulses which were then stirring the mind of India". On the walls of these caves are painted scenes of the life of Buddha. There are also charming and delicate scenes of home and palace life, toilet and sports, festivities and processions. "On the hundred walls and pillars of those rock-carved temples", remarks Rothenstein, "a vast drama moves before our eyes, a drama played by princes and sages and heroes, by men and women of every condition, against a marvellously varied scene, among forests and gardens, in courts and cities, on wide plains and in deep jungles, while above the messengers from heaven move swiftly in the sky. From all these emanates a great joy in the surpassing radiance of the face of the world; in the physical nobility of men and women, in the strength and grace of animals and the loveliness and purity of birds and flowers and woven into this fabric of material beauty we see the ordered pattern of spiritual values of universe". The most notable of the pictures are those of the Mother and Child, the Hunting scene (Cave No. XVII) and the Dying Princess (Cave No. XVI). The last named picture has received unstinted praise from Griffiths, Burgess and Ferguson. It is remarked that "For pathos and sentiment and unimpeachable way of telling its story this cannot be surpassed in the history of art. The Florentine could have put better drawing and the Venetian better colour, but neither could have thrown greater expression on it". Cave No. XVII has been aptly described as a picture gallery. It illustrates some of the most interesting episodes concerning the birth, life and death of Buddha. In this cave, there are also remarkable paintings depicting scenes of hunt of a lion and black buck and of elephants. Mrs. Herringham points out that these pictures are composed in a light and shade scheme which can scarcely be paralleled in Italy before the seventeenth century A.D.

The paintings in the caves at Bagh in Malwa are of the same quality as those of Ajanta. They form an extension of the Ajanta school to secular themes. There are scenes of dancing acted by a troupe of women led by a man. The paintings in the galleries of a rock-cut citadel on the top of a hill at Sigiriya in Ceylon depict a procession of noble ladies, richly attired and profusely adorned, going to a Buddhist temple. The ladies are attended by their maid servants who carry the materials of worship. The portraits are only half length and obviously fall in the same class as the Ajanta paintings.

In short, the paintings of the Gupta period show the Gupta art at its best. They are notable for their freshness and vigour, their
naturalistic grace, and the variety of their subjects. These paintings possess delicacy of lines, brilliancy of colours and richness of expression. Everything in these pictures from the composition as a whole to the smallest pearl or flower testifies to the depth of insight coupled with the greatest technical skill.

Terracotta

The art of terracotta reached a high level of perfection during the Gupta age. The clay moulders of this period created things of real beauty and achieved a wide popular basis for their art. The clay figures served as a common man’s sculpture and contributed largely to popularise art and culture of the time. A large number of terracotta figures of Hindu deities such as Vishnu, Surya, Durga, Ganga and Yamuna have been found all over the Gangetic plains. Some of them are almost life size. The baking of these large terracotta figures must have presented difficult technical problems but they were successfully tackled by the potters of the age. A large number of figures of foreigners from Central Asia and Persia have also been found. We have ordinary figures of attendants of all classes such as grooms, elephant-riders, jesters, dwarfs etc. Feminine figurines discovered at Rajghat are marvellous for the varied type of beauty they represent and for the variety of the coiffure they exhibit. They present a feast of beauty to the eyes and appear like lyrics expressed in clay. Some of the figures seem to have been painted with appropriate colours. The colours used were red, pink, yellow and white. Dr. Agrawala suggests that “much of the terracotta work of the Gupta period is imbued with the spirit of true art’ prevailing at that time. It can rightly be claimed for the Gupta artist that he adorned whatever he touched.”

Points to Remember.

Sculpture. The best specimens of sculpture produced during the Gupta age; images of the Buddha and Bodhisattvas, of Hindu gods and scenes from Puranic mythology carved; the Gupta art shook off its subservience to the Indo-Greek traditions and motifs and asserted its own personality. The Sornath seated Buddha image, the standing Buddha at Mathura, the colossal copper statue of the Buddha and the Manukwar Buddha image belong to the Gupta period. Among the famous Hindu sculptures were—the sculpture of Sun-god at Gwalior; the images of Shiva, Vishnu and scenes from Puranic mythology in the Deogarh temple, the sculpture of Great Boar at Udayagiri. The Gupta artists were not lost in the admiration of physical beauty, they had a spiritual purpose in view. The Gupta sculptures served as models for
later Indian artists and influenced the art in the Indian colonies in the Far East.

Painting. A high degree of proficiency was attained in the art of painting; the paintings at Ajanta, Bagh, and Sigiriya (in Ceylon) discovered. The most notable of the paintings in the Ajanta caves are those of the Mother and Child, the Hunting Scene, the Dying Princess. The Bagh paintings are secular in nature; the paintings at Sigiriya consist of a procession of noble ladies going to the Buddha temple, the Gupta paintings possess delicacy of lines, brilliancy of colours and richness of expression.

Terracota formed a branch of Gupta art. Figures of Hindu deities, feminine figurines and ordinary attendants such as grooms, elephant-riders, and dwarfs discovered; some figures painted with colours. The clay figures served to popularise art and culture of the time.

GUPTA COINAGE

Q. Write a brief account of the Gupta coinage. What light do the coins throw on the history of the Imperial Guptas? Describe the coins you refer to in answering the question.

Ans. The Gupta period is marked by a great numismatic activity in the history of ancient India. A large variety of coins were issued by the great Gupta monarchs. The coinage of this age represents the high watermark of early Indian coinage. Whatever the type and size and the intrinsic value, they exhibit delicate workmanship, clarity, and elegance of design and lettering, regularity of shape and form and precision and refinement of execution. With the weakening of the imperial authority after the reign of Kumara-gupta I, however, the standard of coin production deteriorated rapidly. Towards the end of the Gupta rule, it reached the bottom from which its recovery seemed well neigh impossible.

The early gold coins issued by the Gupta emperors closely resemble those of the Later Kushans, not only in design but also in treatment and execution. The Gupta artists borrowed the following Kushan features (a) the king’s name is written perpendicularly under the arm, the custom which survived till the end of the Gupta dynasty (b) retaining the meaningless traces of the back of the throne on the reverse in imitation of the Kushan coinage (c) giving the king Kushan dress with slight variations (d) the foreign Kushan name Dinara applied to Gupta coinage (e) Ardoksho seated on a high
blocked throne on the obverse of the coins (f) the king standing and offering incense on the altar is very common in the earlier stages of the Gupta coinage.

There was, however, a definite move to Indianise the Gupta coinage and the foreign features were gradually eliminated. The following Indian features were introduced (a) The Greek legend on the Kushan prototype was replaced by the Brahmami one (b) close-fitting cap on the king’s head (c) Garuda standard in place of Kushan trident (d) Jewellery, ear, rings necklace etc., introduced (e) Ardoksho on the reverse was replaced by the goddess Lukshmi and seating her on a lotus (f) the type of human figuration increasingly conforms to the contemporary Indian conception.

The Gupta mint-masters introduced many original artistic types. Samudra-gupta’s new types of coins were the Archer type, the Battle-axe type, the Tiger-slayer type and the Asvamedha type. Chandra-gupta II added Lion-slayer, Horse-man and the Chhara type which are by far the best specimens of coins struck in ancient India. Kumara-gupta I issued three new types viz., Swordsman type, Peacock type and Elephant rider type but his coins show a definite artistic deterioration. Skanda-gupta was content with the issue of old type of coins and issued three types of coins. The successors of Skanda-gupta issued gold coins only of one type, the Archer type.

Chandra-gupta II was the first Gupta emperor to issue silver coinage. The size, weight and fabric of his silver coins closely resemble those of the Kshatrapas. Kumara-gupta I also issued silver coins meant for circulation in the Saka dominions conquered by his father. He also introduced a new type which was from free foreign influence. Kumara-gupta I also issued copper coins of which two specimens have been discovered. Skanda-gupta and Budha gupta continued the silver coinage of Peacock type.

The Gupta coins at first followed the Kushan weight standard of 120 grains but in the time of Chandra-gupta II, it was raised to 124 grains. Some of the coins of Kumara-gupta weigh as much as 132 grains. Skanda-gupta raised the weight to 144 grains and thus transformed his gold coins into Hindu standard Savarna of eighty rattis. Later Gupta rulers usually followed this standard. The Gupta silver coins (rupakas) were similar to those of the Sakas of Ujjain and weigh 32 to 36 grains. The metrology of the Gupta copper coinage is obscure. They weigh from 3.3 grains to 101 grains.

The majority of the legends on the Gupta coins are metrical and possess considerable poetic merit. The legend Vijitavaniravanipath
Kumara-gupta divamjayati on the silver coins of Kumara-gupta was copied with necessary change of proper name not only by later Gupta emperors like Skanda-gupta and Buddha-gupta, but also by the Huna chief Toramana and the Maukhari kings like Isana-varman and Avantivarman. Even the Vardhana king Harsha used the same line for his gold coin-legend.

**Historical value of the Gupta coins.**

The Gupta coins throw a flood of light on the political history of the Gupta period and the personal qualities of the Gupta kings. They indicate the social and economic condition of the country and reflect the poetic renaissance which was gathering strength in this age. Dr. Altekar remarks that the Gupta coins depict Indian life, Indian dress, Indian animals, Indian customs and the weapons of war then in use. The coins corroborate and supplement in many cases the information derived from the inscriptions and the literary sources.

The Chandra-gupta type of coins give us a valuable information about the reign of Chandra-gupta I. These coin bear on the reverse the portrait of Chandra-gupta I presenting the wedding ring to his queen Kumara-devi and the legend Lichchhav. On the obverse, the goddess Durga is seen seated on a lion. Dr. Mookerji points out that these coins show that Kumara-devi was associated with the sovereignty of Chandra-gupta I as his queen and that his sovereignty included the Lichchhavi republic as the result either of this matrimonial alliance by way of dowry or of direct military conquest. The legend Lichchhavi is probably in acknowledgment of the political influence of that clan over Chandra-gupta I. These coins also indicate that Chandra-gupta I was a brave and adventurous king and that he worshipped goddess Durga to achieve success in military expeditions.

Samudra-gupta’s coins, as remarks, Dr. Altekar, form an illustrated commentary on his military prowess and military glory as well as his versatile genius. His Asvamedha type of coins show that he made a large number of conquests. They also indicate that he was a great champion of the Vedic religion and had a belief in the performance of sacrifices as a means of winning heaven. His Battle-axe type of coins refer to his martial personality and seem to proclaim the triumphant march of his army. His Archer type of coins indicate his proficiency in the art of archery. His Lyrist type of coins exhibit his proficiency in fine arts and music. The legends on his coins describe him as “he who spread his triumph in hundred battles”, “the matchless warrior”, and “the battle-axe of death”. Dr. Altekar observes that the personal
appearance of the king, so far as we can judge from his figure on the 
coins, is fully in keeping with the impression we otherwise form of 
his tall stature and strong physique. The weight of his coins, their 
gold contents and excellent craftsmanship reflect the great material 
prosperity of the country during his reign.

The coins of Chandra-gupta II reveal the economic prosperity of 
his reign and to some extent also his strong personality. His Lion-
slayer type of coins indicate his conquest of the territories of Malwa 
and Gujrat. Many of his coins are dated which have enabled the 
scholars to fix the year 409 A.D. as the date of his final conquest of 
Kathiawar. Again the use of new title Bhagavata on the Lion-slayer type 
of coins go to prove that he did not remain the worshipper of Shakti 
after he had accomplished the programme of his conquest. The legend 
Paramabhadragvata appearing on his Horseman type coins give us some 
idea about his personal religion.

Kumara-gupta's coins are also a valuable source of the history 
of his reign. His Asvamedha type of coins indicate that he added 
some territories to the empire which he had inherited from his father. 
His silver and copper coins indicate the financial pressure on the 
Gupta treasury due to foreign invasions. Some legends on his coins 
speak of his personal qualities and indicate that the glory of the 
Gupta empire was at its height during his reign. They describe him as 
"the glory of the Gupta family on which he shed lustre like moon" 
"the embodiment of Supreme being," attribute to him "the invincible 
valour of both the lion and the tiger", and compare him to god 
Vishnu. His coins also help us to fix his reign period with more or 
less certainty.

The Luxmi type coins of Skanda-gupta which represent him as 
wedded to the Goddess Luxmi indicate that he had succeeded 
in restoring the fallen fortunes of his house. The coins of the later 
Gupta kings are the only source of the history of their period. The 
names of Chandra-gupta III, Dvadasadhitya, Vishnu-gupta, Hari-gupta 
Ghatatokcha-gupta and Jaya-gupta are only known from their coins.

Points to Remember

The Gupta emperors issued a large variety of coins; their coins marked 
by elegance, clarity and delicate workmanship; the standard deteriorated 
during the later Gupta period. The early Gupta coins followed Kushan 
features; gradually the foreign influence eliminated and Indian features 
introduced. Various original types introduced by Samudra-gupta,
Chandra-gupta II and Kumara-gupta I. The early Gupta coins followed standard weight of 120 grains, in the time of Skandagupta the weight raised to 144 grains, the silver coins weighed from 32 to 36 grains; The Gupta coinage influenced the coinage of Maukharis and of Harsha.

Historical Value. The Gupta coins are very useful in constructing the political, social, economic and cultural history of India; throw a flood of light on the character and personal qualities of the kings; the names of some of the later Gupta kings known from their coins only.

THE GOLDEN AGE

Q. The Gupta period is the golden age of Indian history. Discuss.

Ans. The period of the great Gupta emperors extending from 330 B.C. to 465 A.D. and comprising the reigns of Samudra-gupta, Chandra-gupta II, Kumara-gupta I and of Skanda-gupta forms the brightest interlude in the history of ancient India. It has been hailed as “the golden age of Gupta history”, the Elizabethan period of Indian history” or “the Augustan Age of Indian history.” Mr. Barenst an eminent European scholar remarks that the Gupta period is in the annals of classical India, what the Periclean age is in the history of ancient Greece. There is a great justification in heaping upon this age so many high sounding epithets. It was an age when a large part of Northern India was brought under “one political umbrella” and an orderly and stable government was established in the country. Both inland and foreign trades flourished and the material prosperity of the country increased by leaps and bounds. The affluence in the country found expression in the unique progress of all branches of culture. It was in this age when Indian genius gave birth to some of the world’s best creations in art, literature, philosophy and religion. Indian civilization was quick with life, crossing the seas, teaching the world as well as learning from it. The glory of this age enhances further when we observe that centuries of Hindu rule before and after the Gupta period, “were almost barren of any striking achievement in political, social and literary spheres”. But during the Gupta age, there was not a single aspect of life viz., political, social, economic or religious which did not reach its high watermark. This age is thus deservedly called the golden age of Indian history. The achievements of this age may be studied briefly as follows.

Political Unity. The Gupta age was an age of political unity. Aryavarta was once again released from foreign domination and
asserted its national independence under the Gupta rulers. During the five centuries preceding the Gupta rule, India had been ruled by the princes of foreign races like the Indo-Scythian, the Sakas and the Kushans. But in the 4th century, the entire political map of India was changed. Samudra-gupta conquered Bengal, the Upper Jamunaganges Valley and parts of Central India. In fact his empire, except for the Punjab, embraced the traditional limits of Hinduism from Indus to the Bay of Bengal, from Narmada to Northern mountains. His successor Chandra-gupta II added the territories of Malwa and Gujerat and thus wiped out the last vestiges of the foreign rule. The conquest of these territories by Chandra-gupta may be said to represent "the consummation of the political aspect of the renaissance which was the most characteristic feature of the Gupta period". The unification and consolidation of India under one strong government was a great achievement of the Gupta rulers.

**Enlightened Monarchs.** The Gupta age produced a galaxy of able, powerful and versatile emperors under whose enlightened and vigorous rule India reached the height of its glory. The most eminent of these rulers was Samudra-gupta. He was an invincible warrior who marched from one corner of the country to another and conquered a greater part of India. He fought battles with more than twenty-four kings and was never defeated. He was not only a great conqueror and a soldier but he was also equally distinguished in the arts of peace. Dr. K. M. Munshi remarks, "A brilliant general, a far-sighted statesman, a man of culture and patron of letters, he became the symbol and architect of mighty creative urge among the people". His son Chandra-gupta like his father was a great conqueror and a liberal patron of art and literature. His period of rule in Indian tradition, represents the most glorious period in the annals of ancient India. During his reign, the Gupta empire reached its widest limits and the country made a unique economic progress. Again it was the same dynasty which produced brave sovereigns like Skanda-gupta. Like a true patriot, he devoted himself to the task of securing the safety of India from the foreign invaders. He stemmed the tide of the Huna onslaughts and the victories obtained by the Gupta armies were solely due to his bravery and personal courage. Dr. R.D. Banerji remarks that his administration, his heroic wars, his patriotic ambition all these made him one of the greatest Gupta emperors. Besides, all the Gupta monarchs exhibited a remarkable spirit of religious toleration. The people of all the religions lived in perfect harmony under their benevolent rule. Thus the personal achievements of the great Gupta emperors contributed much to make this age glorious epoch in ancient Indian history.

**Welfare State.** The Gupta state was essentially a welfare state.
Fahien observes that the Gupta administration was benevolent and the people were singularly free from bureaucratic tyranny. The government followed the policy of "let alone" towards their subjects and did not interfere with the lives of the people. They were not required to have their households registered or to attend to any magistrates or their rules. There were no passport restrictions. The government took special care for the construction of works of public utility. The renovation of the embankments of the great Sudarsana lake stood as a witness to the care which the Gupta rulers gave to the welfare of the people. The Gangdhar stone inscription shows that how a city built on the banks of Garagra was equipped with wells for irrigation, tanks, temples, halls of gods, drinking wells, parks of different kinds, cause-ways and lakes. Fahien tells us that at Pataliputra, there were free hospitals for the poor patients, orphans, widowers and crippled. They were all taken care of under an attending physician and were given prescribed food and medicine and were discharged when cured.

An Era of Peace and Economic prosperity. The benevolent and efficient administration of the Guptas gave the people peace and material prosperity and provided with the scope and freedom for creative activity along different lines. The general air of prosperity and peace is reflected in Fahien's account. He writes that the people were well off. The king governed without corporal punishment; criminals were fined according to the circumstances lightly or heavily. Even in cases of repeated rebellion only the right hand was cut off. The chief officers of the king received fixed salaries and were not tempted to extort money from the poor people. Again, the fact that Fahien was not robbed anywhere on his travels whereas his successor Huien Tsang who followed him to India two centuries later, was robbed thrice, attests to the effectiveness of the Gupta administration and the prevalence of peace in the country.

The age of the Guptas was one of material prosperity, in the country. Both inland and foreign trades flourished and the wealth of the country multiplied. The acquisition of the Saurashtra province and the ports of the Arabian seas poured into India for the first time the wealth of the Roaman empire. Industry and trade flourished under the system of self governing guild organisations. Agriculture engaged the special attention of the state. Taxes were light and the government charged 1/6 as its share of the gross produce as compared with a quarter of it in the Mauryan period and one third in the time of Akbar. All this shows that the Gupta age was an epoch of unique peace and prosperity in the country.
Religious Liberalism. The Gupta age was an age of liberal thought and religious toleration. Although the Gupta rulers were the close followers of Hinduism, they showed exemplary spirit of toleration towards other forms of faith i.e. Buddhism and Jainism. A large number of Buddha and Bodhisvata images belonging to the Gupta age discovered in different parts of the country and especially at Sarnath, Mathura and Nalanda testify to the religious freedom enjoyed by the Buddhists. Like the Brahmanic Vishnu-s thanas, Deva-kulas and Deva-sabhas, the Buddhist and Jaina Viharas were also objects of support and protection by the state. The Buddhist monastery at Nalanda, according to Hiuen Tsang, was founded by a Gupta king Sakarditya, (probably Kumara-gupta I). The high offices of the realm were open to all irrespective of their creed. Chandra-gupta II's Commander-in-chief Amarakardëva was a Buddhist. The famous Mahâyana scholar, Vasubandhu was one of the ministers of Samudragupta. Fa-hien's account also testifies to the fact that the people of different faiths lived in amity and concord and formed a common brotherhood.

Progress of Literature. The Gupta age was marked by a great outburst of literary activity. Since much of what is the best in the Sanskrit literature was the product of this era, this age has been deservedly called the golden age or the Augustan age of Sanskrit literature. A large number of intellectual celebrities of the age enriched the different branches of literature. The greatest name amongst the poets and playwrights of this age is that of Kalidasa. He wrote his great works Shâkuntla, Vikramorvasi, Raghuvamsa and the Rituvrddhâva which have been translated into many languages and are widely read all over the world. His drama Shâkuntla is "among the hundred best books of the world." "His natural poem, Mughanduta captivated Goethe and early European romanticists. Among the other authors of the age special mention should be made of Sudrâka, the author of interesting drama Mrichchhkathāikam, Visakhadatta the author of Mûdru-râksha, and Dandin the author of Kayâdarsha. Harîsenâ's Allahabad Pillar prastati "shows a mastery of style rivalling that of Kalidasa and Dandin." Panchavantara, the most remarkable storehouse of fairy tales was also written in this age. This book has been translated into more than 50 languages and has greatly influenced the literature all over the world. The great epics of Mahabharta and Ramayana were re-edited and various collections of writings were standardised. The principal Puranas were rewritten in this age. The Manusmariti and several other ancient Sanskrit books were recast into their present forms. Indian speculative philosophy also made a great progress. Sabrasvamin wrote his famous work Bhasha, which is a commentary on the Purvamimasa of Jaimini. Isvarakrishna wrote his Sankhya-karika, which is considered
as "the pearl of the whole scholastic literature of India". The great Buddhist philosophers Asanga, Vasubandhu and Dignaga also flourished during this age. The logic of Dignaga is "comparable to that of Aristotle in its originality and in the fact that it spread over the whole eastern half of Asia".

Education. The Gupta emperors were themselves great scholars and educationists and they paid special attention to the education of their subjects. It was during the Gupta age that the famous university at Nalanda began its career and developed into a real seat of learning. It has been described as "the Oxford of Mahayana Buddhism". Nalanda followed a comprehensive curriculum of studies and students from all parts of the world flocked there to satisfy their intellectual and spiritual thirst. The graduates of this university were held in high esteem throughout Asia. Valabhi like Nalanda was also rising into great prominence and gaining an international position for itself. Besides, Pataliputra, Padmavati, Kasi and Mathura were also centres of higher education. These institutions were richly endowed by the state and the private individuals, and were thus enabled to offer free tuition, boarding and lodging to their students.

Sciences Remarkable progress was also made in the field of scientific studies. Aryabhata and Varahamihira were the foremost astronomers and mathematicians of the age. Aryabhata in his famous work Suryasiddhanta examines the true causes of the solar and lunar eclipses. His calculation of the size of the earth is very near that estimated by the modern astronomers. He discovered that the earth rotates round its own axis. His most epoch making achievements were the discovery of the principle of the place value of the first nine numbers and the use of zero which simplified mathematical calculations. Varahamihira's famous work Brihat Samhita is a compendium of all the available knowledge of the time. It deals with astronomy, physical geography, botany and natural history. Varahamihira was a man of such comprehensive mind that there was hardly any branch of natural science to which he did not make any contribution. The medical schools of Charaka and Sastria continued to flourish during the Gupta age. The sciences of metallurgy and chemistry also made a wonderful progress. The famous pillar at Mehlauri made of wrought iron and the colossal copper image of the Buddha represent the triumph of metallurgical skill of the Gupta age.

Art. The achievements in the realm of fine arts were not less striking. Dr. Smith remarks "The three closely allied arts of architecture, sculpture and painting attained an extraordinarily high point of achievement". Though many of the monuments of this period
were destroyed by the brutal vandalism of the later invaders, yet the few that exist testify to the high excellence of the Gupta art. The stone temple at Deogarh in the Jhansi district, the brick temple at Bhitargaon in the Kanpur district, Siva temple at Bhuma (Nagod state) and the Parvati temple at Nachna Kushara (Ajayagarh state) are the most interesting extant specimens. The sculpture of this age may be considered the best that India has ever produced. The figures have a dignity, a grace and a restraint of their own and show a high degree of skill possessed by the artists of the age. Among the numerous Gupta sculptures, the most pleasing and graceful is the seated Buddha at Sarnath. It is aptly regarded as the finest in the whole of India. The standing Buddha at Mathura and the colossal copper image of Buddha 7 feet in height are the other leading examples of the Gupta sculpture. The Gupta artists developed new types in sculpture which remained as models for succeeding generations in India and for some time in the Indian colonies in the Far East. Painting reached exceptional heights of artistic achievement during the Gupta age. Specimens of paintings of the Gupta age are found in the caves at Ajanta, Bagh and Sigiriya. The most notable paintings in the Ajanta caves are those of the Mother and Child, the Monkeys, the Hunting Scene and the Dying Princess. Griffiths remarks that the paintings at Ajanta are "so accomplished in execution, so consistent in convention, so vivacious and varied in design, and full of such evident delight in beautiful form and colour, that they may be ranked with the best art of the ancient world. The paintings at Bagh and Sigiriya also display high merit and infinite variety.

Cultural Expansion. During the Gupta age, India did not live in isolation from the rest of the world. There was a continuous flow of Indian missionaries to the Central Asiatic countries and China. Among the most famous scholars who went to these areas, special mention may be made of Kumara-jiva, Gunavarmman, Sanghabhuti, Buddhajiva, Gunachandra and Paramartha. They dedicated their lives for the spread of Buddhism and Indian culture and translated a large number of Sanskrit Buddhist texts into Chinese. Their influence was real and profound, it was the influence of mind rather than of physical colonisation. The Indianisation of Khotan, Kuchi and other areas in Central Asia is evident from the great mass of Buddhist literature that has been discovered there. During the Gupta age, commercial adventurers of India carried Indian culture to Java, Sumatra, Cambodia and other islands in that region. India also sent three missions to Roman Empire in 386 A.D., 381 A.D. and 530 A.D.

Conclusion. Thus the Gupta age was an era of unique glory. It was essentially "an age of triumphant nationalism, and dazzling imperialism; of benevolent administration and ordered freedom; of fruitful activity and widespread prosperity; of dynamic geniuses and progressive commoners." The legacy of this age was no less remark-
able. Dr. Radha Kamal Mukerjee observes, "The doctrines of universal sovereignty, associated with political expansion and unity of Aryavarta, the Messianic hope of deliverance in all cults and creeds, the clarification of universal axioms and postulates of philosophy, the fruitful development of the positive sciences, the "classicism" in literature, sculpture and painting, the fictions of Varnasankara and Kali-yuga and the entry of foreigners as new caste groups, and the mitigation of the caste distance in law and practice are all distinctive attempts of Gupta India to reach out to the universal. These, indeed, comprise the abiding legacy India derives from Gupta culture that has moulded both the ideology and institutional set-up since the spacious Periclean age of Indian history.

Points to Remember

The age of Imperial Guptas compared with the age of Pericles in ancient Greece or with the Elizabethan age in England. By its manifold achievements, the Gupta age deserves to be ranked as one such. (1) It was an age of political unity; the whole of Northern India united under one rule; an efficient system of administration set up. (2) The great Gupta emperors like Samudra gupta, Chandra gupta II, Kumara-gupta I and Skanda-gupta were brave generals, great administrators; also promoted the welfare of the subjects. (3) The Gupta state essentially a welfare state; works of public utility undertaken; the cities well provided with the amenities of life. (4) The people enjoyed peace and economic prosperity; Fa-hien's account shows that people were happy and contented; inland and foreign trades progressed, the wealth of the country multiplied. (5) The Gupta age was an age of liberal thought and religious tolerance; Hinduism; Buddhism and Jainism flowed side by side; a state offered high jobs on merit. (6) The Gupta age, the Augustan age of Sanskrit literature, the Mahabharata, Ramayana and principal Puranas re-edited and given final shape; the great intellectual luminaries of the age were Kalidasa, Sudraka, Visakhadatta, Bharvi etc.; speculative philosophy highly developed. (7) Education received the special attention of the Gupta emperors; Nalanda and Vallabhi developed into real universities. (8) Sciences of Astronomy, Mathematics, and Metallurgy made a great progress; Aryabhata and Varahamihira famous mathematicians and astronomers of the age. (9) The allied arts of architecture, sculpture and painting attained an extra ordinary point of advancement; the Dasavatara temple at Deogarh, the seated Buddha image at Sarnath, and the paintings in the Ajanta caves are the best specimens of Gupta art. (10) Indian missionaries spread Indian culture and Buddhism in China and Central Asia; Kumarajiva, Buddhajiva, Gunavarman and Pramarastra etc; went to these countries; translated Sanskrit Buddhist texts into Chinese, India also maintained contact with Malayan peninsula and Roman empire. (11) The Gupta age deservedly called the golden age in ancient Indian history; the legacy of the Gupta age equally remarkable.
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