

LIFE IN GUPTA PERIOD

IMPORTANCE OF THE GUPTAS IN INDIAN HISTORY

The rise of the Guptas has its own significance in Indian History.

1. First of all it struck a blow to the foreign rule of the Sakas and the Kushans and established a national empire.
2. Secondly, the Guptas were great conquerors who founded a strong empire and after several centuries brought about political unity in India.
3. Thirdly, the Gupta rulers were great lovers and patrons of art and literature and under their patronage, the Indian literature and culture proposed so well that their period came to be known as the 'Golden Period' of Indian History.
4. Fourthly, with the rise of the Gupta Empire the foreign elements in Indian art and literature faded away and both the hands and the heart of the Indian artists became truly Indian.
5. Fifthly, the rise of the Guptas also proved to be the renaissance of Hinduism and the Hindu culture.
6. Lastly, the Gupta rule is also known for its importance in setting up colonies and settlements in East Indies or the islands of Java, Sumatra, Bali, Borneo and Champa and Cambodia etc.

The Gupta Administration

Describe the Administrative system of the Mauryas.

The Gupta rulers had set up a systematic administrative machinery. The details of which are given below:

(1) **King:** The Gupta state was purely monarchical where the king himself was the only source of authority. He was also the supreme head in whom all the civil and military powers were concentrated. The king was highly honoured and even worshipped like gods. He was compared with Lord Vishnu, the preserver. The Gupta rulers had assumed high titles like those of 'Maharajadhiraja', 'Paramabhattacharaka' and 'Paramesvara', which signify that they ruled over several big and small provinces.

(2) **Council of Ministers and other Officials:** But the Gupta rulers were not autocratic rulers. They had a Council of Ministers to seek advise and aid. The chief among these ministers were the Commander of Armies, the Minister for the Foreign Affairs, the Minister for Financial Matters. The office of the ministers was hereditary which sometimes affected the administration. There were several other officials to help the ministers. The Gupta administration mostly depended on the tributary feudal, In other words, the administrative structure was feudalistic.

(3) **Provincial and Local Administration:** The empire was divided into provinces for the purpose of proper and efficient administration. These provinces were called 'Deshas' or 'Bhuktis' which were administered by governors who usually belonged to the royal family the provinces were composed of several towns and villages. The villages were administered by the Panchayats where the headman called the 'Gramika' was responsible for maintenance of law and order. In this task, he was assisted by other important persons of the village. In the administration of the town as well, the trade guilds of various occupations and traders played an important part. In this way it made the Gupta administration not only democratic but also spared them the trouble of appointing various officials to carry out the task of administration.

(4) **The Judicial System:** The Gupta emperors were fond of justice. They dispensed justice without favour. The Emperor himself was the highest court of justice and appeal. The Chief Judicial Officer was called the "Sarvadandanayaka" who was assisted by his subordinate officer called 'Mahadandanayaka' and 'Dandanayaka. Fahein says that punishments were mild and several of the offences were punished only with fines. Vishakhadutta writes that sometimes the criminals were tramped by the elephants or their eyes were gauged out.

(5) **The Military Organization:** The Guptas were great conquerors. To satiate their imperialist ambitions and to protect the country against foreign invasions they had a well-organized army which included infantry, cavalry, elephants and chariots. But in this period, chariots were

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sparingly used and more and more importance was given to the mounted cavalry. Navy had also gained in importance. In hour of need the feudal lords and governors also sent their armies to help the emperor. The Gupta army was well-equipped with bows and arrows, spears and swords, shields and axes etc. The soldiers were paid in cash.

(6) **The Police Set-up:** There was a well –organized police structure to maintain internal law and order. It included intelligence and general police force. There were special officers trained in the art of catching thieves. They were called ‘Choradharnikas’. The police chief was called ‘Dandapashika’. The police was so well-organized that a person could travel throughout the length and breadth of the country without any fear. The Chinese traveler Fahein records that he visited all corners of the land and was never met by any robber.

(7) **Income and Expenditure:** The contemporary sources tell us that there were about 18 heads of income of which land revenue was the most important. It varied from 1/4th to 1/6th of the total produce. The Guptas made every effort to increase agricultural production. Other sources of income were gifts, fines, octroi duty, and annual tributes from the tributary rulers etc. but the Gupta rulers never squandered this wealth. It was spent on public welfare besides what was spent on keeping a well-equipped army.

CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT UNDER THE GUPTAS

Advancement in the Field of Literature:

India witnessed a great advancement in the field of literature under the Gupta monarchs. They themselves were highly cultured and consequently they did all that could be done for patronizing literature and art.

Sanskrit once again became popular. The Guptas made Sanskrit as their court language and wrote all their documents and inscriptions in the same language. Even the Buddhist writes preferred Sanskrit to Pali for writing their literary works. All this encouragement gave a great impetus to Sanskrit learning and “a highly developed Sanskrit literature excellent in its style and rich in its contents began to be written.

Because of the great encouragement that the Gupta monarchs had given to learning a large number of distinguished scholars flourished during their period, whose immortal works greatly engaged the different branches of the Indian literature.

Advancement of Fine Arts:

In the field of art, the Gupta period reached a high level of excellence. All branches of art-sculpture, architecture, painting, music and metal work – made of great progress during this period.

1) In the field of sculpture India made such a great progress under the Guptas that the famous art of Gandhara was completely forgotten. The Gupta sculptures show an exquisite beauty of execution and a high degree of skill. The Gandhara artist had the hands of a Greek though he chose his subjects from his Indian environment, but the Gupta sculptor threw off the foreign element and in his hands both the art and the subjects chosen became completely Indian in their character. The discovery of large number of images and sculptures at Sarnath and various other places shows that side by side depicting scenes from Buddha’s life, now subjects from Puranic mythology had also begun to be treated with remarkable freshness. The Gupta images are characterized by symmetry, natural proportion, close fitting, transparent garments. Now the old centres of Gandhara sculptures like Taxila and Mathura declines in their importance and their place was taken by Benaras and Pataliputra. In short, we can say that “the art of image-making of men and deities reached its highest water-mark,” during the Gupta period.

2) The Guptas had made a great progress in the field of architecture like that of sculpture. Three of the finest Ajanta caves, which have been assigned by the historians to the Gupta period, further illustrate the great advancement that the Guptas had made in the field of architecture. They have been cut out of solid rocks and display a high skill.

3) The art of painting, like the arts of architecture and sculpture, also attained great heights under the Guptas. The best specimens of the Gupta paintings are represented by the beautiful

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frescoes found in the Ajanta caves. These frescoes are so excellent in their design and technical skill that tourists from all over the world specially come to see them.

4) Music also made a great progress during the Gupta period. Samudragupta himself was a great musician and was fond of playing on the lyre. He is even said to have defeated Tumburu and Narada. He was also a patron of musicians and did all for the encouragement of this art.

“The Gupta period is considered to be the most brilliant period or the Golden Age of the Hindus.” Justify.

Some of the chief achievements of the Gupta period are the following:

1) **Unity and Nationalism**: The Guptas conferred on India the long desired unity and the feeling of nationalism. After the fall of Mauryas there was a good deal of confusion on the political horizon of India. A large number of small principalities had sprung up on the ruins of the Mauryan Empire and the feeling of unity was completely lost. The Guptas, especially Samudra Gupta waged ruthless wars and established a complete unity in the country.

2) **Enlightened character of the Government**: The Guptas were enlightened despots and their government was mild in its nature. Fahein has spoken very highly of the Gupta administration. Taxes were light, roads safe and the criminal law very mild. The Guptas had established an ideal type of government. They did everything for the well being for their subjects.

3) **Peace and Prosperity**: From Fahein’s account it is also quite clear that the people were rich and the country was prosperous during the Gupta period. The discoveries of large number of gold coins of the Gupta period indicate the prosperity of the country and happy lot of the people. Both inland and foreign trade was greatly flourishing and the wealth of the country was much plying rapidly.

4) **Moral life of the people**: From Fahein’s account we learn that the people led a highly ideal and moral life during Gupta period they didn’t kill any living thing nor drink intoxicating liquor nor wine nor ate onion nor garlic. They did not keep pigs or fowls, they did not deal in cattle, trade, there were no butcher shops or distilleries in the market places.” Again the people were very honest, trustworthy and philanthropists. They vied with one another in giving donations. They had built free hospitals for the poor and the disabled. Special Sarais (rest houses) had been built on the national high ways for the use and benefit of the travelers. The people were very hospitable and treated their guests in the most respectable manner. Such an age when people lived such an ideal life deserves to be called “The Golden Age”.

5) **Revival of Hinduism**: There is no gain saying the fact that the Gupta rulers were men of exceptional ability and foresight, who governed the empire so efficiently. They extended their empire by embarking upon the career of conquests. Yet one of the most important factors was the revival of Hinduism. Ashoka and Kanishka had championed the cause of Buddhism which had killed the martial spirit in the country and as a consequence there of the Brahmanical Hinduism but at the same time they were tolerant towards the other faith. Hinduism was there all over the country and its revival was gradual. On account of the split in Buddhism. The Mahayanism was much closer to the Hinduism and the Gupta kings were highly tolerant towards the other faiths and creeds. They didn’t persecute any one on account of his faith. Every one was perfectly free to worship in his own way.

6) **Revival of the Sanskrit Language**: The Guptas encouraged the use of the Sanskrit language and large numbers of literary works were produced during this period. Kalidas wrote dramas in Sanskrit which have become the most famous dramas of that period. Works on mathematics, Astronomy and other sciences were produced. Even some of the Puranas were revised. The universities of Nalanda, Taxila and Ajanta were flourishing during this period and the Guptas liberally patronized these seats of learning. All the coins were engraved in Sanskrit. Shakuntala, Meghduta, Kumar Sambhava and Raghuvansha – all were written in Sanskrit language.

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7) **Growth of Fine Arts**: The fine arts also flourished during this period. They reached the highest point of excellence. The Gupta Kings served music; Samudragupta was himself a good musician. He is seen playing on 'Vena' on one of his coins. Besides music, sculpture, architecture and painting were also revived. At present we have very few buildings of that period yet the painting of Ajanta cave stand testimony to the artistic value of the period. The coins were also excellently minted. A huge copper image of Lord Buddha belonging to that period has been recently discovered. The metallurgical art also reached its zenith. The iron Pillar of Mahrauli near Qutab is a sufficient testimony of the excellence that had been achieved. The pillar has not yet gathered rust on it even after a lapse of so many centuries.

8) **Growth of Literature**: Sanskrit language flourished during the period and Kalidas produced highly excellent dramas. The science of Mathematics, Astronomy, Medical Sciences etc, also made a considerable progress. Charaka the best physician belonged to this period. Vishakadeeta wrote the Mudra Rakshasha, Amar Singh produced the Amarosh which is still popular. Arya Bhatta was a great Mathematician of this period. Varamihra was a great astronomer. Panchtantra the renowned book of fables also belongs to this period. Even the Puranas were re-written and revised during this period. Bhairvi, Vasubandhoha, Brahagupta and Harisen were great poets of this period.

9) **Political Unification**: During the reign of the Guptas there was peace and prosperity. The Guptas were very capable rulers. They were very wise and strong persons. They created unity in the empire and crushed the revolts of petty chiefs.

10) **Growth of Trade and Commerce**: During this period foreign trade also reached its highest water mark. Indian missions were deputed to the foreign lands and they went to China and the Roman kingdom. Roman coins have been found at several places in India. India maintained a lively contact with the European countries and thus the country became rich and prosperous by her exports of various goods.

11) **Good Administration**: The Gupta rulers were highly efficient and able to give good administration. They organized the military and civil services and the officers was honest and hard working. They were easily available to the people. The people could receive justice at their very door. A lovely spell of peace was witnessed all over the kingdom.

12) **Growth of Architecture**: Along with the other arts, architecture flourished during this period. Vaishnav and Shiva cults were gradually replacing Buddhism. The Shikhara symbol was encouraged in the beautiful temples of Surya, Vishnu and Shiva. The Brahmanas were held in high respects. The Dasavatara temple at Jhansi has survived. The period witnessed renaissance in architecture. A large number of beautiful temples were built during this period.

The above account clearly justifies the Gupta period to be called the Golden Age of Hinduism or the Elizabethian period of Indian history. During this period India witnessed glory and greatness, peace and prosperity and progress in every branch of human endeavor.

SAMUDRA GUPTA

Samudragupta was a great conqueror and empire-builder. He conquered several territories and extracted tribute from many rulers. He also made friends with many neighbouring kings.

(1) **Conquest of North India**: Samudragupta had to fight twice against the powerful confederacies. The first confederacy consisted of three rulers while the second confederacy comprised of nine rulers. But Samudragupta succeeded in vanquishing both of them and annexed their territories. These conquered territories including areas extending to modern Barreilly, Delhi, Bundelkhand, Bengal and parts of the Madhya Bharat. These conquests immensely enhanced his power and prestige.

(2) **Southern Expedition**: From his southern campaign Samudragupta is compared with Alexander and Napoleon. Samudragupta set on his Deccan campaign in 346 A.D from his capital.

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First of all, he conquered the territories of Chhota Nagpur and Kalinga. Then passing through Central India, he marched along the eastern coast of India and went as far as Kanchi near Madras. The ruler of Kutch, Vishnugupta, confronted him as the head of a confederation of several other rulers but Samudragupta turned westward and Deccan rulers in a battle, fought near the Krishna River. Now Samudragupta turned westward and returned to the North. On the way, he defeated the rulers of Maharashtra and Khandesh. In this way, Samudragupta had defeated about a dozen of the Southern rulers before he returned to Pataliputra.

Besides a great conqueror, Samudragupta was also a great diplomat. He did not annex the southern territories and contended himself by accepting tributes from them. He knew well the futility of occupying such distant territories and the difficulty in administering them. The conquest of the Deccan was a great achievement of Samundragupta.

(3) **Conquest of the Forest Tribes**: In order to keep contacts and maintain communication between the North and the South, he had also subjugated the forest tribes dwelling in Central India.

(4) **Conquest of the Frontier States**: Scared of Samudragupta's military success, the rulers of the five frontier states accepted his suzerainty and promised to pay him heavy tributes. These kingdoms were: (1) Samtata (Modern Bengal) (2) Devaka (Modern Northern Assam) (3) Kamrup (Assam) (4) Nepal (5) Katipur (Modern Tarai region).

(5) **Friendly Relations with the Neighbouring States**: Besides making many conquests, Samudragupta developed friendly relations with his neighbouring rulers like the Sakas the Kushans and the Shahi tribes and the king Megha Varman of Ceylon. Some neighbouring rulers accepted his suzerainty and paid him tributes.

(6) **Conquest of the Republican Tribe**: Harisena's inscription also records his exploits against nine Republican tribes which included the Mallas, the Yadhavas, and the Abhiras etc. all of them submitted to him.

(7) **The Aswamedha Yajna**: To commemorate his glorious victories, Samudragupta also performed the Asvamedha Yajna and assumed the title of 'Maharajadhiraja' or Emperor. Gold coins were struck on this occasion and thousands of Brahmanas were given a sumptuous feast.

(8) **Extent of Empire**: Samudragupta ruled over a vast empire which extended from the Brahmaputra in the East to the Chambal in the West and from the Himalayas in the North to the Narbada in the South. Besides, several rulers of the South and West India acknowledged his suzerainty.

(9) **Samudragupta, the Indian Napoleon**: Historians compare Samudragupta to the great French general, Napoleon. In fact, Samudragupta deserves to be called the Indian Napoleon. Firstly, like Napoleon, he was brave and courageous. Secondly, like Napoleon, he too advanced through unknown routes to conquer new territories. Thirdly, like Napoleon he smashed confederacies of rulers that were formed to oppose his advance. Fourthly, as Napoleon was dreaded throughout Europe so was Samudragupta authority held in awe by the Indian ruler. Samundragupta never faced any defeat. To sum up, Samudragupta was a great conqueror and an Empire-builder.

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CAUSES OF THE DOWNFALL OF THE GUPTA EMPIRE

The Gupta dynasty, which had made tremendous progress under the great rulers like Samudragupta, Chandragupta Vikramaditya, Kumargupta and Skandgupta, could not maintain its glory for a long time and showed signs of decay by the end of the 6th century A.D. Following were the causes of its downfall:

(1) **Weak Successors**: After Skandagupta, the whole line of the Gupta successors like Purugupta and Buddhagupta were quite weak. As such they could not maintain the empire built by their predecessors. In this way, when the central authority weakened, it gave opportunity for the small kingdoms to rise in revolt.

(2) **Lack of any Law of Succession**: There was no practice among the Gupta rulers to name their successors. As a result, the death of every ruler was followed by a war of succession. These internal wars and continuous struggles weakened the empire and undermined its prestige. When the court and palace became the centres of intrigue, the empire could no longer be safe.

(3) **Effect of Buddhism**: Some of the later Guptas like Baladitya and Buddhagupta had adopted Buddhism. This thing gave a set-back to their military power, as had happened during the reign of Ashoka. Neglect of military power proved fatal to their stability, particularly at a time when the country was surrounded by foreign invaders and threatened by internal troubles.

(4) **Neglect of the Frontiers**: The successors of Chandragupta Vikramaditya did not pay any attention to the defence of their frontiers. The defenseless frontiers gave opportunity to the invading hordes of the Hunas etc. to cross into the country unchecked. The already tottering Gupta Empire fell down like a house of cards under the blow of these invaders.

(5) **Vastness of the Empire**: The Gupta Empire was quite vast. So it could not be controlled particularly when means of transport were quite difficult. In this way, the vastness of the empire also became a factor responsible for its fall.

(6) **Weakness of the Army**: The Gupta rule was marked by its long period of peace and prosperity. It affected the army which became pleasure-loving and fond of luxury. As a result, it was sapped of its warring spirit and became weak. Such an empire which was based on spiritless army was destined to fall.

(7) **Economic Problems**: The power of money is also quite indispensable to the existence of an empire. Emperors like Skandgupta had squandered their financial resources by their continuous wars against the Pushyamanitra tribe and the Hunas. It made the treasury empty and the financial difficulties gave a fatal blow to the shattering empire.

(8) **The Hunas Invasions**: The last but not the least important reason of the fall of the Gupta Empire was the continuous Huna invasions. They felled the so-called mighty Gupta Empire already eaten within by so many other causes though outwardly it still looked strong and invisible. For some time Emperor Skandgupta succeeded in checking the Huna invasions but after his death, the Hunas shook the very foundation of the Gupta Empire with their continuous raids.

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GIVE AN ACCOUNT OF FAHEIN'S DESCRIPTION OF INDIA

Fahein was a Chinese traveller who had come to India to visit the holy Buddhist places and to collect sacred works connected with the life and the teachings of the Buddha. He came here in the beginning of the 5th century A.D. He came to India by land and returned by the sea-route. He started from China in 399 A.D. and crossed through the Gobi desert. He suffered great hardships while travelling through Khotan, Taskhand, Pamir, Swat and Gandhara before reaching Peshwar and Taxila. After visiting the holy places in the North-West of India he travelled through such places as Mathura, Kanauj, Kausambi, Pataliputra and Kasi etc. He also undertook pilgrimage to the holy places of the Buddhists like Kapilvastu, Gaya, Sarnath and Kushinagar. On his return journey, he visited Ceylon, Java, Sumatra before he reached home in 414 A.D. In India, he stayed for about 6 years (405-411 A.D) whatever he observed and recorded here is being summed up below:

(1) **Political Conditions**: Fahein (Fahsien) has lavishly praised, the Gupta administration. He says: (1) the administration was well-organized and liberal. The officials least interfered in the private affairs of the people. There was freedom of travel and they were not forced to attend to any magistrate or his rule. If they desired to go, they would go, if they liked to stop, they would stop. (2) Punishments were mild. In most cases, fines were considered sufficient. The capital punishment was never awarded. Only in case of persistent criminals their right hands were chopped off. (3) Public highways were safe from thieves and highwaymen. Fahein himself travelled widely without ever being robbed. (4) taxes were low and people could easily pay them. (5) Land was the chief source of revenue which was collected both in cash and kind. (6) Government officials were paid wages in cash, which were both sufficient and promptly regular. It made them honest and they never did wrong to the people or accepted bribes.

(2) **Social and Economics Conditions**: Fahein says that he people were rich, prosperous and happy. They excelled in charity and vied with one another. (2) Caurie shells were used in buying and selling commodities. (3) People possessed high moral and were afraid of doing any sin. (4) They had built several charitable rest-houses where the wearied travelers could stay for rest. (5) They had also built charitable hospitals where the poor were given free treatment besides food and clothing. (6) People were mostly vegetarians and practiced ahimsa. Fahein writes, "Throughout the whole country, the people do not kill any living thing, nor drink any intoxicating liquor, nor wine, or eat onions. They do not keep pigs or fowls, they are not dealings in cattle no butcher shops or distilleries in their market places." (7) Only the Chandalas practiced hunting and ate animals flesh. They lived outside the city bounds. They had to seek permission before entering the city lest other people should get polluted by their touch. India had a prosperous trade. Foreign trade was carried through the ports of Broach, Cambay and Sopara.

(3) **The Religious Conditions**: Fahein was a religious visitor and a holyman. Therefore, he gave more attention to the religious conditions of his times. He writes: (1) Buddhism flourished in the border provinces of the Punjab, Bengal and Mathura. The people followed the principle of Ahimsa and honoured the Buddhist monks. (2) Fahein nowhere observed that Buddhism was declining. Nevertheless it is clear from his other observations that Hinduism was gaining popularity. His other observations that important Buddhist places like Gaya, Sarnath, Kapilvastu, and Kushinagar were decaying in importance sufficient to prove that gradually the religion of the Buddha was declining. (3) Though the Gupta rulers were Hindus and also built beautiful temples for the Hindu gods they observed tolerance towards other religions and treated them with equal

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care. Protection was offered to the Buddhist and the Jais as well. In short, the Brahmanas, the Buddhists and the Jains lived together peacefully.

HUNAS

The Hunas were herds of foreign nomads who originally belonged to Central Asia. They roamed about from place to place. They tried to conquer China but were defeated. In fifth century A.D., they attacked northern India and were at last successful in establishing their rule in Punjab and Kashmir. Their rule over these territories continued for about 100 years and then they met their downfall.

The downfall of the Guptas is chiefly attributed to the Hunas invasions. The first Guptas ruler to bear the burnt to Hunas attacks was Sakand Gupta who, to some extent, was successful in stalling their advance. But the later Guptas failed to hold the Hunas in check and consequently their empire met its doom.

ARYABHATTA

Aryabhatta was a great scientist and mathematician of Gupta period. Following was his contribution in the field of science, mathematics and astronomy:

1. He analysed the causes of solar and lunar eclipses.
2. He, for the first time, enunciated that the earth moves round its axis and it also moves round the sun.
3. He propounded new theories in arithmetic, algebra and geometry.
4. He evolved Decimal system also.

KALIDAS

Kalidas was the greatest Sanskrit poet and dramatist that India has ever produced. He is often called the Indian Shakespeare. His great literary work “Malvikgnimitra (drama), Vikramaorvashi (drama), Shakuntala (drama), Meghdutta (Lyric), Ritu Samhara (Lyric) Rughuvansa (epic) and Kumar Sambhava are famous all over the world. Some of these works have been translated into the important languages of the world. These works mark the prime of perfection. Undoubtedly they are unvaluable gems of Sanskrit literature. Kalidas lived during the first half of the fifth century A.D. It is believed by the historian that he was one of the new gems (Nav Ratnas) of Chandragupta Vikramaditya. His literary works occupy a unique position in the Indian history and literature.

THE POSITION OF WOMEN IN GUPTA SOCIETY

In the Gupta period, the position of the women was not as dignified as before. It had sufficiently deteriorated. The girls were often married at the age of twelve or thirteen years. The question of their higher education, therefore, did not arise. In the books of this period, certain passages are available to the effect that a parent, who did not marry his daughter before the age of 12 or 13, would be doomed to be sent to hell. The practice of widow marriage was not considered as honourable in the society. Chandragupta Vikramaditya himself married his brother's widow, Dhruvaswamini. The undesirable custom of Purdah was not yet adopted by the society but ‘Sati’

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practice had commenced. There is the mention of one woman having practiced 'Sati' in the 'Era Inscription of 510 A.D. When Goparaja, the Commander of Banumati was killed while fighting against Hunas, his wife committed 'Sati' with him. However, it appears no woman was compelled to commit Sati though any one willing to do so of her own accord was not prevented from it.

TRADE IN GUPTA PERIOD

It was but natural that trade should have flourished in the Gupta period when industries of different kinds had made unusual progress. Progress in both internal and international trade had reached its great heights. There were many principal commercial towns and cities in the country that carried on roaring business day in and day out. Trade was conducted by land routes or over the rivers. These towns were thus connected with one another by rivers, roads and foot-paths. The prominent and important towns of those times were – Pataliputra, Mathura, Kausambi, Vaisali, Tamaralupti, Vidisa, Ujjaini, Paithan, Bharukuchha etc. during this period, roads were perfectly safe and merchants could go about from one corner of the country to the other freely and fearlessly. The Chinese pilgrim, Fahien forcefully supports this statement that the travelers could travel on the roads without the least fear of a thief or a dacoit.

Trade with foreign countries was carried on by land-routes and water-ways. The important ports of that time were Cambay, Kalyan, Chaul, Bharukuchha, Tamaralupti etc, Which imported and exported goods from and to the foreign countries. From these ports, different kinds of merchandise like cloth, medicines, ivory-made articles, coconuts, spices etc, were exported to the foreign countries. In exchange thereof other goods like gold, silver, tin, lead, silk, precious stones, dates, horses etc. were imported from the foreign countries. India had established commercial relations with several foreign countries, such as Arabia, Persian, Egypt, Rome, China, East Indies, some other countries of Europe as well as Africa in those days. Ships were of course, used to carry on overseas trade, while boats served the purpose over streams and rivers. At several places, light-houses were also erected in the seas, so that they might provide guidance to ships in respect of their routes. Thus, this encouragement to the development of trade by the Gupta emperors brought plenty of wealth into the country from foreign lands. The people were consequently became rich and prosperous.

ADVANCEMENT OF SCIENCE AND MATHEMATICS IN THE GUPTA PERIOD

The Gupta age also witnessed a great progress in the fields of various sciences. "The Sciences of Mathematics and Astronomy, including Astrology, were cultivated with much success during this period." The principles of cipher and the decimal fraction also originated in this period. In reality, the knowledge of writing of numbers took its birth in India. There was a time when the Europeans thought that they learnt the knowledge of numbers from the Arabs, but the Arabs themselves admitted that they imported this knowledge from India. Even today, they call these numbers as 'Hindis' or the knowledge taken from India.

Three mathematicians and astronomers of this period are most famous because they have made notable contribution to these branches of scientific study. (1) Aryabhatta was a well-known astronomer and mathematician of this age who wrote in details about the solar and lunar eclipses and brought forward the theory that earth moves round its axis. (2) Varahamihira was another great scholar and scientist of his age who has thrown an important light on various aspects of Astronomy, Geography and Botany in his book entitled "Brihat Samhita." (3) Brahmagupta was

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a great physician who made remarkable contribution to the science of medicine. In addition to these great scholars there were many other scientists (like Vridh-Vaghbhatta and Dhanvantri etc.) whose contributions to the development of various branches of scientific literature are very valuable.

PRIMOGENITURE

“Primogeniture” means the right of the eldest son of the king to succeed his father on the throne. This right is ideal in the sense that many a war of successor are averted by adhering to this principle, which otherwise would have weakened even the strongest empires. It was the breach of this principle that landed the Gupta Empire with quagmire of problems.

VISHTI

“Vishti” means forced labour when the labourers are not paid the wages due to them. During the Gupta period, villagers in Central and Western India were subjected to ‘Vishti’ or forced labour for serving the royal army and the officials.

BHUKTI

“Bhukti” Gupta Empire was divided into provinces which were called ‘Bhuktis’. Special attention was paid to the administration of ‘Bhuktis’ which were often governed by the royal princes.

VISHAYA

“Vishaya” was a unit into which a ‘Bhukti’ or a province was divided in the Gupta empire. The chief of a ‘Vishaya’ was called Vishayapati.

VITHI

“Vithi” during the Gupta period was somewhat like our present day Tehsil, which was further divided into grams or villages. There were many ‘Vithis’.

BHAKTI

“Bhakti” means the offer of loving devotion to the personalized God. In the Gupta period, it meant a kind of loyalty offered by a tribal to his chief or by a subject to his king.

AVTARA

“Avtara” means God’s incarnation in human form. There is a doctrine that supports the cycle of ten incarnation of Lord Vishnu that believes that whenever the order of Dharma decays, Vishnu appears in appropriate form such as Rama and Krishna for the salvation of the Dharma.

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