

## **Gupta Empire (Rise, Golden Age, Fall)**

Source: Boundless. "The Golden Age of India." *Boundless World History I: Ancient Civilizations-Enlightenment*. Boundless, 19 Nov. 2016. Retrieved 07 Dec. 2016 from <https://www.boundless.com/world-history/textbooks/boundless-world-history-i-ancient-civilizations-enlightenment-textbook/early-civilizations-in-the-indian-subcontinent-4/the-gupta-empire-29/the-golden-age-of-india-119-13221/>

### **Explain the factors that contributed to the rise of the Gupta Empire**

- ☑ Sri Gupta founded the Gupta Empire c. 240-280 CE, and was succeeded by his son, Ghatotkacha, c. 280-319 CE, followed by Ghatotkacha's son, Chandragupta, c. 319-335 CE.
- ☑ After Chandragupta married princess Kumaradevi from the kingdom of Magadha, he conquered or assimilated the nearby kingdoms and assumed the imperial title of Maharajadhiraja, meaning "King of Kings."
- ☑ Chandragupta's son, Samudragupta, assumed the throne in 335 CE, and conquered several neighboring kingdoms; eventually, the Gupta Empire extended across the entire Indian subcontinent.
- ☑ Samudragupta was succeeded by his son, Chandragupta II, who continued to expand the Gupta Empire through conquest and political alliances.

Despite the expansion of the Gupta Empire through war, there were numerous examples of cultural sophistication during the Gupta era, with architecture, sculptures and paintings surviving as reminders of the creativity of the time. Under Gupta rule, a number of notable scholars thrived, including Kalidasa, considered the greatest poet and dramatist of the Sanskrit language; Aryabhata, the first of the Indian mathematician-astronomers who worked on the approximation for *Pi*; Vishnu Sharma, thought to be the author of the *Panchatantra* fables, one of the most widely-translated, non-religious books in history; and the Hindu philosopher Vatsyayana, author of the *Kama Sutra*.

### **The period of Gupta rule, especially the reign of Chandragupta II, is still remembered as the Golden Age of India.**

The prosperity of the Gupta Empire produced a golden age of cultural and scientific advancements.

- ☑ Prosperity in the Gupta Empire initiated a period known as the Golden Age of India, marked by extensive inventions and discoveries in science, technology, engineering, art, dialectic, literature, logic, mathematics, astronomy, religion, and philosophy.
- ☑ Chandragupta II His reign, from 375-415 CE, promoted the synthesis of science, art, philosophy, and religion, in part because his court contained the Navartna, or the Nine Jewels, a group of nine scholars who produced advancements in many academic fields.
- ☑ Chinese traveler Fa Xian visited India from 399-405 CE, during the reign of Emperor Chandragupta II. He recorded all of his observations in a journal that was later published.

☑ Golden Age of India A period at the height of the Gupta Empire, marked by extensive inventions and discoveries that contributed to Hindu culture, in subjects such as science, technology, engineering, art, dialectic, literature, logic, mathematics, astronomy, religion, and philosophy.

The prosperity created under the leadership of the Gupta Empire, which covered much of the Indian subcontinent from approximately 320-550 CE, enabled the wide pursuit of scientific and artistic endeavors. This period became known as the Golden Age of India because it was marked by extensive inventions and discoveries in science, technology, engineering, art, dialectic, literature, logic, mathematics, astronomy, religion, and philosophy. These discoveries crystallized elements of what is generally considered Hindu culture.

### Science, Literature, and Art

Although Chandragupta I and his son, Samudragupta, were prominent rulers, the reign of Chandragupta II included the greatest promotion of science, art, philosophy, and religion by the government. Chandragupta's court was even more influential than those that came before or after advancements in many academic fields.

These scholars included Aryabhata, who is believed to have envisioned the concept of zero, as well as working on the approximation for the long-form number Pi. Aryabhata is also believed to be the first of the Indian mathematician-astronomers who postulated the theory that the Earth moves round the Sun and is not flat, but instead is round and rotates on its own axis. He also may have discovered that the moon and planets shine due to reflected sunlight.

Varahamihira was an astronomer, astrologer, and mathematician, whose main work is a treatise on mathematical astronomy. Sushruta, a famed Indian physician of the Gupta period, wrote the *Samhita*, a Sanskrit text on all of the major concepts of ayurvedic medicine, with innovative chapters on surgery. Other scholars of the Golden Age helped create the first Indian numeral systems with a base of ten. The game of chess also likely originated during this period; where its early form, *Chaturanga*, contained game pieces for infantry, cavalry, elephants, and chariots, each of which would evolve into the modern pawn, knight, rook, and bishop, respectively.

Kalidasa, considered the greatest poet and dramatist of the Sanskrit language, also belonged primarily to this period. He wrote plays, such as *Shakuntala*, which is said to have inspired the famed German writer and statesman, Johann von Goethe, centuries later. Kalidasa also became renowned for his study of the *shringara*, or romantic, element of literature. The Indian scholar and Hindu philosopher Vatsyayana, authored the *Kama Sutra*, which became a standard work on human sexual behavior, while Vishnu Sharma was thought to be the author of the *Panchatantra* fables, one of the most widely-translated, non-religious books in history.

The cultural creativity of the Golden Age of India produced magnificent architecture, including palaces and temples, as well as sculptures and paintings of the highest quality. The walls of Buddhist shrines and monasteries were decorated with colorful frescoes, a type of wall paintings. These showed scenes from the life of the Buddha, the ascetic and philosopher, who lived in the eastern part of the Indian subcontinent sometime between 6th and 4th centuries, on whose teachings the Buddhist religion is based. Some shrines were cut out of the cliffs, and although dark, they were also decorated with sculptures and paintings.

### Influence on East and Southeast Asia

The Gupta Dynasty promoted Hinduism, but supported Buddhist and Jain cultures as well. Gupta Buddhist art influenced East and Southeast Asia as trade between regions increased. The Gupta Empire became an important cultural center and influenced nearby kingdoms and regions in Burma, Sri Lanka, and Southeast

Asia. Classical forms of Indian music and dance, created under the Guptas, are still practiced all over Asia today.

Fa Xian was one of the first Chinese travelers to visit India during the reign of Gupta Emperor Chandragupta II. He started his journey from China in 399 CE, and reached India in 405 CE. He recorded all of his observations in a journal that was eventually published.

During his stay in India, until c. 411 CE, Fa Xian went on a pilgrimage to Mathura, Kanauj, Kapilavastu, Kushinagar, Vaishali, Pataliputra, Kashi, and Rajgriha. His writings express pleasure in the mildness of the administrations in these places.

**After many years of dominance, the Gupta Empire collapsed in 550 CE, due to invasions and weak leadership of successive rulers.**

- ☐ The Gupta Empire flourished under Chandragupta II, but began to falter under his son, Kumaragupta, and grandson, Skandagupta.
- ☐ The Huna People, also known as Huns, invaded Gupta territory and caused significant damage to the empire.
- ☐ The Gupta Empire ended in 550 CE, when it disintegrated into regional kingdoms after a series of weak rulers and invasions from the east, west, and north.

Thereafter came a succession of weak kings, beginning with Kumaragupta II from 473-476 CE, followed by Budhagupta, the son of Purugupta. The Hephthalites broke through the Gupta military defenses in the northwest in the 480s, during the reign of Budhagupta, and by 500 CE much of the empire in northwest was overrun by the Huna.

The empire thereafter disintegrated into numerous regional kingdoms, ruled by chieftains. A minor line of the Gupta Clan continued to rule Magadha, one of the 16 Indian Mahajanapadas, or "Great Countries," but the Gupta Empire fell by 550 CE.