

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The students will:

- have knowledge about the 'The Golden period of Indian history'
- know the chronology of the emperors of the Gupta dynasty
- understand why this was called 'The Golden Period'
- appreciate life in the Gupta Period
- know the causes that led to the decline of the Gupta Empire
- know about the rise of Harshavardhana and his administration
- have knowledge of the kingdoms of the south during this period.
- be able to plot the chronology on a timeline

LESSON DEVELOPMENT

TOPICS: The Gupta Dynasty, The Golden Age of Indian history, Decline of the Gupta Empire; Harshavardhana; Kingdoms of the South.

RESOURCES: Blackboard/ Whiteboard, textbook.

TIME: 4 Periods/140-160 minutes

ACTIVITY

- Begin the lesson by a recap of the kingdoms that existed previously.
- Introduce the chapter with reference to Chandragupta as most students are familiar with the stories of Vikram Baital and Chandragupta is the Vikram because he assumed the title of Vikramaditya.
- Ask the students to do research on Science and Mathematics during the reign of the Guptas.

CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING

- What does the Allahabad Prashasti tell us?
- Why is the Gupta period known as the Golden Age of Indian history?
- Who was Harshavardhana?
- What do we know about the Chalukyas from Hieun Tsang?

WEBLINKS

- http://www.gloriousindia.com/history/gupta_empire.html
- <http://www.mapsofindia.com/who-is-who/history/chandragupta-ii.html>

ANSWERS TO EXERCISES**A. Choose the correct option.**

- (b) Samudragupta is described as 'kaviraja' or king of poets.
- (a) There was no political unity under Gupta rule.
- (d) Harsha

B. Identify the correct match.

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|----------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. Banabhatta | b. <i>Harshacharita</i> |
| 2. Kalidasa | d. <i>AbhijnanaShakuntalam</i> |
| 3. Hieun Tsang | c. <i>Si-yu-ki</i> |
| 4. Harisena | a. <i>Allahabad Prashasti</i> |

C. Look at the picture and answer the questions below.

- These are gold coins of the Gupta Empire.
- These were issued by Samudragupta.
- He is also known as 'Napoleon of the East'
- Samudragupta performed the *Ashwamedha* sacrifice, though this is not mentioned in the Allahabad *Prashasti*. He had special gold coins issued with the picture of the sacrificial horse.

D. Fill in the blanks

- Pulakeshin II
- Kanchipuram
- Samudragupta
- Ravikirti

E. Short answer questions.

- We know about Samudra gupta from the famous Allahabad Prashasti. It is a stone pillar inscription. It was engraved on the Ashokan pillar in Kausambi near Allahabad. It is one of the most important sources of information about Samudra gupta who was a famous ruler of the Gupta dynasty. It was composed by Harisena, the court poet and minister of Samudra gupta in the 4rd century CE.
- The Allahabad Prashasti portrays Samudra gupta as a great poet, musician and patron of learning. He is described as kaviraja (king of poets). His love for music is attested by his gold coins which show him playing the veena.
- We know that Samudra gupta performed the Ashwamedha sacrifice because he had special gold coins issued with the picture of the sacrificial horse.
- The Chinese traveler Fa-Hein who visited India during the Gupta rule writes that the people did not lock their houses as there was no fear of thieves. The people enjoyed a high standard of living. The main occupations were agriculture, trade and industry.

Domestic and foreign trade flourished. Items like pearls, ivory, textiles and spices were exported. Agriculture thrived in the empire and was the main source of revenue. The king promoted agriculture by providing irrigation facilities to the farmers.

5. Harsha believed in Buddhism and held an assembly at Kanauj to discuss Buddhism. Another meeting was organized at Prayaga.
6. Pulakeshin II is regarded as the most outstanding of the Chalukya ruler. His court poet was Ravikirti who composed a prashasti at Aihole. According to him, Pulakeshin waged many wars and expanded his empire. He annexed Varanasi and parts of the Pallava territories. His most notable success was against King Harshavardhana on the banks of the Narmada.
7. After the Guptas, the only empire that became powerful in the north was setup by Harshavardhana. We know this from coins, inscriptions and his biography 'Harshacharita' written by Banabhatta, his court poet. Hieun Tsang, a Chinese pilgrim has also left interesting accounts of Harsha's reign.

Harshavardhana was the younger son of the ruler of Thaneshwar. His elder brother ascended the throne, but he was killed. At the tender age of sixteen, Harsha ascended the throne and took on all the responsibilities in 606 CE. After his brother-in-law who was the ruler of Kanauj died, he became the king of both Thaneshwar and Kanauj. He pursued an expansionist policy and conquered large parts of northern India.

8. The samantas were granted land and the revenue collected was used to maintain small units of soldiers and war equipment. However, whenever the king was weak, the samantas broke free of his supremacy and founded their own kingdoms.
9. After the reign of Chandragupta II, only two of his successors ruled efficiently. The last Gupta king was Skand Gupta. He put up a stiff resistance against the Huns and drove them out of India. However, his successors could check neither the continuing Hun attacks nor the revolt by the governors. Consequently, the Guptas disappeared as an independent political force in the second half of the 6th century.

F. In the question given below, there are two statements marked as Assertion (A) and Reason (R). Read the statements and choose the correct option:

2. Both A and R are true but R is not the correct explanation of A.

G. Read the source paragraph and answer the questions that follow:

1. The Guptas were patrons of arts and learning. Both Chandragupta and Samudragupta were accomplished musicians. Hindu art, literature, science and culture reached new milestones during the Gupta rule. In the court, there were persons who excelled in the fields of literature, music, science etc.
2. The literary genius in the Gupta court was Kalidasa.
3. The astronomer who lived during this period was Aryabhata.
4. We know that Samudragupta was a skilled veena player because of the gold coins of his period which show him playing the veena.

H. Answer in detail.

1. The famous Allahabad Prashasti is a stone pillar inscription. It was engraved on the Ashokan pillar in Kausambi near Allahabad. It is one of the most important sources of information about Samudragupta who was a famous ruler of the Gupta dynasty. It was

composed by Harisena, the court poet and minister of Samudragupta, in the 4th century CE.

2. The prashasti gives a vivid description of the reign and conquests of Samudragupta. It tells us about his capable personality and his succession to the throne and his coronation. He is also described as a compassionate ruler concerned about the welfare of his subjects. Also, he was an excellent warrior. The prashasti portrays Samudragupta as not just a conqueror, but also a great poet, musician and patron of learning. He is described as kaviraja (king of poets).

HOTS

- I think that the prashastis are not a very reliable source of information because they were written by court poets. These were employed by the kings so only good things about the ruler were exaggerated and written. The shortcomings were not written.