

Revision Notes
Chapter – 11
New Empires and Kingdoms

• After the downfall of Mauryas, many new empires emerged. In 3rd century AD, a new powerful kingdom emerged called the Gupta dynasty.

• **The Gupta Age:**

(i) The period between 320-540 AD is known as Gupta Age.

(ii) It is also called the golden age of Indian history when rapid development took place in the field of art, architecture, literature, philosophy, trade, science and astronomy.

(iii) The sources of knowing about Guptas are-archaeological and literary sources.

(iv) Archaeological sources of Guptas include the rock-cut temples of Ajanta, Ellora and Elephanta, Prayaga Prashasti pillar inscription at Allahabad. Prayag Prashasti pillar is the most important epigraphic evidences of Imperial Guptas.

(v) Coins and literary sources form the other sources of information. These include gold and silver coins issued by Samudragupta and other rulers and accounts of writers like Fa-Xian. Some other sources are the works of Kalidasa such as Raguvansha, Meghadoota and Abhijnana Shakuntalam.

• **Rulers of Gupta Empire:**

(i) Sri Gupta is supposed to be the founder of the Gupta dynasty.

(ii) The first powerful ruler was Chandragupta I who ascended the throne in 320 AD. His matrimonial alliance with Lichchhavi Princess was a turning point in the history of Gupta empire.

(iii) The next powerful ruler was his son Samudragupta whose glory and conquest is described in the Allahabad pillar inscribed by his court poet, Harisena.

(iv) The next powerful ruler was Chadragupta Vikaramaditya who expanded and

strengthened the Gupta empire. He occupied Shaka territories, Fa-Hien, a Chinese traveller visited India in his rule.

• **Gupta Administration:**

(i) The central government was headed by a king who was assisted by the ministers.

(ii) The empire was called Rajya. It was divided into 26 provinces, which were styled as Bhukti, Pradesha and Bhoga. Provinces were also divided into Vishayas and put under the control of Vishayapatis.

(iii) A part of Vishayas was called Vithi.

• **Military System:**

(i) Indian contemporary document regarded as a military classic of the time, the Siva - Dhanur-veda offers some insight into the military system of the Guptas.

(ii) The kings of this period maintained a well-organised army, with elephants, chariots, cavalry and foot soldiers.

(ii) The Mahasenapatis played an important role in heading the contingents of cavalry and elephants.

(iii) They also maintained a navy, allowing them to control regional waters.

(iv) Several other ranks in the army called Mahasandhivigrahika also existed.

• **Social Conditions:**

(i) The society was divided on the basis of four varnas.

(ii) Butchers and executioners lived in dwellings outside the city.

(iii) The Brahmins received the greatest respect. The Kshatriyas were also held in high esteem because of the power and prestige they enjoyed.

(iv) Slavery was prevalent while joint family system continued to be a feature of Hindu private life.

(v) Customs of polygamy and sati also started prevailing.

• **Science and Technology:**

(i) The study of science made great progress.

(ii) Notable astronomers and mathematicians like Aryabhatta, Varahamihira wrote their works

(iii) Brahmagupta was also a famous mathematician. He wrote Brahmasiddhanta in A.D. 628. He developed rules for operating negative quantities and with zero. He began to apply algebra to astronomical problems.

(iv) Ayurveda, the Indian medical sciences originated during Gupta period.

(v) Indian surgeons were well versed in dissection and plastic surgery.

• **Art and Architecture:**

(i) Temples dedicated to Vishnu, Shiva and Paravati were built.

(ii) Gupta architecture is very diverse in style design and features. The Gupta style was influenced by Kusana, Mathura and Gandhara and borrowed the common features.

(iii) Some famous temples include the Dashavtara temple at Deogarh, Vishnu temple at Tigawa, Shiva temple at Bhumara, Parvati temple at Nachna Kuthara etc.

• **Paintings:**

(i) The art of painting reached its height.

(ii) The Buddhist caves in Ajanta and Bagh caves at Gwalior belong to this period and represent the excellent work of Indian art.

• **Trade and Religion:**

(i) India had brisk trade relations with west through Persian Gulf and Red Sea.

(ii) Some famous ports were Kalyani, Broach, Kambay and Tamralipti.

(iii) Ship building industry was at its peak.

(iv) Buddhism and Hinduism flourished under the Guptas.

(v) Donations were made for maintenance of temples.

(vi) Sanskrit language reached its perfection.

(vii) After 468 AD Gupta empire started declining and collapsed by the middle of 6th century AD.

• **Harshavardhana:**

(i) After the decline of Gupta empire, many small kingdoms arose. One such kingdom was near Thaneshwara ruled by Vardhana dynasty.

(ii) The greatest ruler of this dynasty was Harshavardhana.

(iii) Chinese traveler Hiuen Tsang praised his rule.

(iv) Harshavardhana had tried to cross river Narmada but was defeated by the Chalukyan king, Pulakeshin II.

(v) He was a follower of Shiva and his administration was efficient.

(vi) His court poet Banabhatta wrote his biography the Harshacharita in Sanskrit.

• **Southern Kingdoms:**

(i) After the decline of Satavahanas, Chalukyas and Pallavas came into prominence.

(ii) Chalukyas extended from South of Vindhyas till river Krishna. Their most powerful king was Pulakeshin II. They had good trade relations with Arabia, Iran and South-East Asia.

(iii) Far deep in the South was the Kingdom of Pallavas who ruled from Kanchipuram to Kaveri delta. The greatest ruler was Mahendravarman I.

(iv) But the Chalukya and the Pallavas reign was short lived. The kingdoms were overthrown by the Rashtrakuta and Chola dynasties.

(v) The South Indian kingdoms had an efficient administration.

(vi) Some important administrative posts were now hereditary.

(vii) Sometimes one person held many offices and important men probably had a say in local administration.

(v) Assemblies were frequently held in Southern kingdoms. These included sabha, Ur or a village assembly and nagaram which was an organization of merchants.