

10

New Empires and Kingdoms – Golden Age of the Gupta Period

Lesson Plan

Contents

- ▶ An overview of the Golden Age of the Gupta Empire, and its successors
- ▶ Understanding the greatness of the Gupta Empire

Objectives

- ▶ To understand the extent and achievements of the Gupta Empire and why it was called the Golden Age
- ▶ To learn about the achievements of the rulers of the dynasty
- ▶ To know the kingdoms that followed the disintegration of the Gupta Empire in different parts of the country
- ▶ To appreciate the special features of the Golden Age—the extent of the empire, administration, society and culture; developments in the rest of the country

■ Teacher's Aids

- ▶ Globe
- ▶ Pictures, atlas and wall maps
- ▶ Blackboard
- ▶ Internet

■ Tips for Teacher

- ▶ Explain all aspects of 'the Golden Age'—comprehensive development.
- ▶ Explain the significance of art and culture in any civilisation and how it reflects the life of the people during that period.
- ▶ Use detailed wall maps or atlas and globe to explain the lesson.
- ▶ Encourage projects—collect pictures and details about the Golden Age, books, plays, stories, etc.

■ Background and Reading

- ▶ Read the lesson aloud and explain, sharing the aids, etc., pausing to examine and explain the data in the pictures and maps.

- ▶ Particularly focus on the significant administrative and cultural developments of the Golden Age.

What was the Golden Age?

- ▶ Achievements in art and culture, literature and technology.
- ▶ Reasons: Gupta dynasty–Bihar and Uttar Pradesh belt fertile and rich in iron deposits; access to and control of the Silk Route; control over the Gangetic Basin–Magadha, Saket, Prayag; large standing army; paintings, coins, literary sources like writings by Kalidasa and travellers.

Rulers of Gupta Dynasty

- ▶ Chandragupta I: (AD 320–AD 335): Marriage alliance with the Lichchhavis, got Pataliputra.
- ▶ Samudragupta: (AD 335–AD 375): Extended empire from Himalayas in the north to Narmada and then further to Kanchipuram in the Deccan, Brahmaputra in the east to the Yamuna in the west; patron of art and literature–poets like Harisena, Asanga, Vasubandhu; he was a musician and played the veena; warrior; tolerant ruler; worshipped Shiva; encouraged Buddhism.
- ▶ Chandragupta II: (AD 375–AD 415): Called Vikramaditya; conquered Malwa and Gujarat–trade from Cambay, Sopara–second capital at Ujjain; Gupta art: Dashavatara temple at Deogarh; trade relations with Rome and Egypt; Literary sources–Kalidasa [poet and dramatist], Varahamihira [astronomer], Vishakhadatta [dramatist: 'Mudrarakshasa'], Panini ['Ashtadyayi'], Pandit Vishnusharma ['Panchatantra'].
- ▶ Kumaragupta: (AD 415–AD 445): Attacks by Huns and from other kingdoms
- ▶ Skandagupta: (AD 445–AD 467): Weakening of the Empire–declined.

Administration

- ▶ King–strong and powerful; assisted by ministers, princes, advisers
- ▶ Provinces or Bhuktis–Princes called Uparika Maharaja
- ▶ Districts or Vishayas–Ayuktas
- ▶ Villages or Gram–Gramikas
- ▶ Town or Nagaras–Nagarapatis
- ▶ Officers held many portfolios, for example, Harisena: Minister for war and peace.

After Guptas

- ▶ After 7th century–Guptas in Magadha; Maukharis in Kannauj; Pushyabhutis in Thanesar; Maitrakas in Valabhi.

Rise of Harshavardhana (AD 606–AD 647)

- ▶ Son of Prabhakaravardhana of the Pushyabhutis
- ▶ Literary sources: 'Harshacharita' by Banabhatta and reports of Hiuen Tsang–Punjab, Kashmir and Nepal in the north to Narmada in the south; Kannauj the capital–a cultural centre; travelled, popular, Buddhist, built stupas and monasteries; organised 5th Buddhist Council in AD 643. Decline of kingdom after his death.

South Indian Kingdoms

- ▶ Many kings, dynasties but a lot of fighting amongst them.
- ▶ Chalukyas – 6th to 12th centuries – Central India, capital at Aihole – most prominent: Pulakeshin II [AD 609-642 – extended empire up to Konkan, Goa and Malwa, but defeated by Narasimhavarman, Pallava king.
- ▶ Pallavas : Ruled for 600 years from 6th century – capital at Kanchipuram – constantly at war with the Cholas and Pandyas – Mahendravarman I [AD 630 to AD 668] defeated by Pulakeshin II who was later defeated by Narasimhavarman – patrons of Dravidian art: Shore Temple and Rathas at Mahabalipuram; patronised of Sanskrit and Tamil – poets: 12 Alvars [hymns to Vishnu] and 63 Nayanars [hymns to Shiva] – started the Bhakti movement that spread to the north later.

Assessment Corner

Oral Assignment

- Ask for answers at random from the students. Confirm the right answers.
Let the students write down the answers if they like.

Written Assignment

- The teacher has two options – (i) Either do these exercises orally first and then ask the students to write them down. OR (ii) Ask the students to write the answers on their own. Then the teacher can announce the correct answers to the students and ask their partners to cross-check them.

In either case, the answers can be written as homework and the teacher can check them in the class.

Think Tank

- HOTS questions:** Discuss the questions in class and let the students write the answers to F and G as homework. The teacher should assess individual work.