

**HISTORY**  
**GUPTA EMPIRE**  
**PART 1**

**POST MAURYAN STATES**

- ❖ Kanishka
- ❖ Kushana Kadphises
- ❖ Bhima Kadphises
- ❖ Kanishka 78 CE 172 CE – Saka era
- ❖ Buddhist follower
- ❖ 4<sup>th</sup> Buddhist council presided by him.
- ❖ Development of Mahayana Buddhism
- ❖ King of kings – title.
- ❖ China and Pakistan project – highway project – rock – inscription – Kujila Kadphises – rock of Hamza – Kushana Devaputra – monks might have written.
- ❖ Many secondary states formed after Mauryan period.
  
- ❖ Gupta – political Unification for almost one century.
- ❖ Had strong centralized government.
- ❖ Romila Thapar mentions that – fully strong centralized government was not visible in Gupta period.
- ❖ Centralized government can be seen only in capital or main centres like Pataliputra,
- ❖ In boundaries, peripherals we cannot see centralized government.
- ❖ Not extended as Mauryans.
  
- ❖ Feudalism emerged at this period. Structured dependence of peasantry.
- ❖ Effective guild system and overseas trade – Gupta economy boomed.
- ❖ Great works in Sanskrit were produced at this time.
- ❖ High level of cultural maturity in fine arts, architecture, sculptures.
- ❖ Education, art and study of science progressed.
- ❖ Historians – golden age, classical age.
- ❖ Hinduism reached its zenith.
- ❖ Hindu culture was strongly prevailed.
- ❖ Romila Thapar- against this opinion.
- ❖ Standard of living was different for higher caste and lower caste.
- ❖ North India – was a classical period but not in a pan India level.
- ❖ Feudalism emerged with sufferings – exploitation – forced labours – zamindars – hardships.

## ENTRI

- ❖ Scholars – based on art and architecture – classical period. Cultural florescence.
  
- ❖ **Origin of Gupta's is obscure.**
- ❖ Historians – they were a small principality in Magadha.
- ❖ They had their political base in western Ganga plains of Uttar Pradesh.
- ❖ The Gupta term indicate – them as Vaishyas
- ❖ Certain historians accord them as Brahmins.
- ❖ Dharmashastra – four different titles for Varna caste.
- ❖ Sharman – auspicious – Brahmins
- ❖ Varman – armour – kshatriya
- ❖ Gupta – hidden or protective – Vaishyas
- ❖ Dasa – servile - sudras.
- ❖ Gupta – wealthy landlords – region of Magadha.
- ❖ 300 CE – UP and Bihar – UP stronghold areas: Gupta coins and inscription are largely found.
- ❖ Prayag another important area and expanded to other places.
- ❖ Gupta's – feudatories of Kushana in UP.
- ❖ Guptas learnt to use the saddle, reins, buttoned coats, trousers, boots from Kushanas.
- ❖ Mobility and excellent horsemen from Kushanas.
- ❖ Might succeeded Kushanas
- ❖ Kushana scheme of things – horse chariots, elephants, horsemen these are also mentioned in the coins of Gupta's
- ❖ Their strength lay in the use of horse.
- ❖ They also used war chariots.
- ❖ Enjoyed material advantages – iron mines, produced iron tools and metals – central India and south Bihar.
- ❖ Areas in North India – silk trade with eastern Roman Empire, Byzantine.
- ❖ Some inscription from Madhya Pradesh
- ❖ From UP and Ganges fanned to other areas.
- ❖ Centre of power at Prayag.
- ❖ Anugagga – Ganga plain or mid gangetic basin.
- ❖ Prayaga- Allahabad
- ❖ Sakeda - Ayodya
- ❖ Magadha
- ❖ Gupta slowly became an all-India empire.
- ❖ Kushanas came to an end by 230 CE
- ❖ Substantial control over central India by – Murundas – kinsman of the Kushanas – ruled till 250 CE.
- ❖ 270 CE – after 25 years gap Gupta came back to power.

**POLITICAL BACKGROUND**

- ❖ Two important kingdoms dominated the post Mauryan period – Kushanas in the north and Satavahana in Deccan.
- ❖ No Major political power it was at this time Gupta’s emerged.
- ❖ In North and northwest India Kushanas formed the subordinate of Sassanians of Iran.
- ❖ The coins of Kushanas were found from Afghanistan, Kashmir, Punjab areas which indicated their existence during early Gupta period.
- ❖ In Punjab, Rajasthan, Haryana region many republican states evidences are found.
- ❖ Yaudheyas in Haryana.
- ❖ Malvas in Rajasthan.
- ❖ Several branches of Nagas become dominant in Mathura after the Kushanas.
- ❖ Some republican states are mentioned in the records of Gupta.
  
- ❖ Western and central India
- ❖ Kshatrapa in western India
- ❖ Line of Chastana – Saka Kshatrapa Rudra Daman – continued till 304 CE
- ❖ Kshatrapa rule ended when Chandragupta II conquered and annexed their territories.
  
- ❖ Vidarbha Maharashtra – Vakataka as an independent kingdom emerged in 250 CE.
- ❖ Vidhyasakti – important.
- ❖ A branch started in Vatsagulma -modern Basim Akola district
- ❖ Vakataka came into contact with Gupta’s.
- ❖ Matrimonial alliance was there between these two families.
  
- ❖ South and Deccan
- ❖ Kadambas – founder Mauryasarman – Brahmin.
- ❖ Talagunda Inscription – information on how kingdom was established and it’s extended.
- ❖ In Tamil Nadu – Pallavas – Divakandarasman – important ruler.
- ❖ Kanchipuram or Kanchi – capital.
- ❖ Andhra, Karnataka Tamil Nādu – present day.
- ❖ Samudragupta and Vismigopi in Kanchi – encounter.

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| <u><b>Kushanas in the north</b></u>     |
| <u><b>Satavahana in Deccan.</b></u>     |
| <u><b>Yaudheyas in Haryana</b></u>      |
| <u><b>Malvas in Rajasthan</b></u>       |
| <u><b>Several branches of Nagas</b></u> |


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| <u><b>Kshatrapa in western India</b></u> |
| <u><b>Line of Chastana</b></u>           |
| <u><b>Vakataka in central India</b></u>  |
| <u><b>Kadambas in Deccan</b></u>         |
| <u><b>Pallavas in Tamil Nadu</b></u>     |

**SOURCES**

There are three types of sources to reconstruct the history of Gupta Empire.

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| Literary source      |
| Numismatics          |
| Epigraphical sources |

| Literary source  |
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| Brihaspati, Narada, Vishnu, katyayana – smriti.  |
| Kamandas – Nitisara – political authorities or polity addressed to the king 400 CE.                    |
| Vishakadatta – <i>Devichandraguptam</i> and <i>Mudrarakshasam</i> – details about the rise of Gupta's. |
| Buddhist and Jain text.  |
| Works of Kalidasa.   |
| Travel accounts of Chinese traveller – Fa Hien   |

| Numismatics  |
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| Coins issued by Gupta rulers indicates the legends and figures. Gupta coins mentions about the titles assumed by the Gupta rulers and the Vedic sacrifices they performed. |
| Samudra Gupta - playing Vina or the lyrical type. On the reverse side we can see a Vedic deity.  |
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| Kumaragupta I coin – Ashvamedha type - with reverse side – a queen standing  |
|    |
| with Lotus.  |

Tiger Slayer type coin – Samudra Gupta - on reverse side goddess Ganga standing on Makara.



Lion Slayer type coin- Chandragupta II – goddess Ambika seated on lion.



Archer type coins – kumaragupta I – goddess Lakshmi- seated on lotus.



### Epigraphical sources

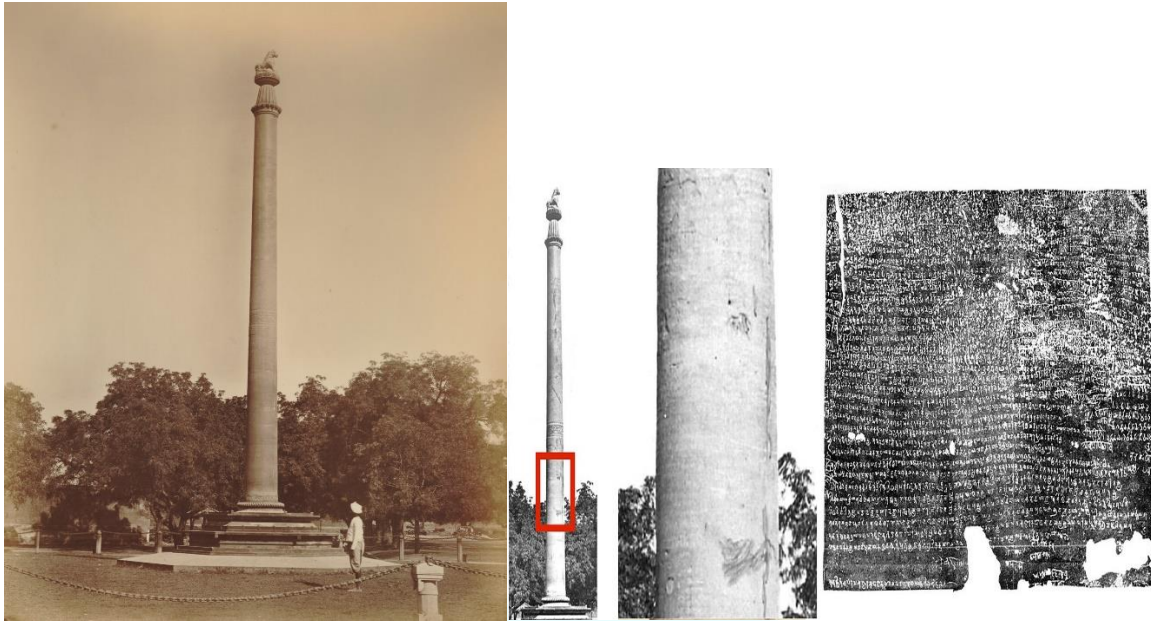
|                                  |   |
|----------------------------------|---|
| Mehrauli iron pillar inscription | Achievement of Chandragupta I   |
| Allahabad Pillar Inscription     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- description on the achievement and personality of Samudra Gupta in 33 lines.</li> <li>- Composed by Harisena.</li> <li>- Engraved in Sanskrit language and Nagari script.</li> </ul> |
| Bhitari Inscription              | - Uttar Pradesh   |



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|----------------------------------|---|
|                                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Skanda Gupta</li> <li>- chronology of Gupta rulers.</li> <li>- Description of conflict between Skanda Gupta, Pushyamitra and Hunas.</li> </ul> |
| Private record                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Donations for religious establishments</li> <li>- Installation of images for worship</li> </ul>  |
| Out of 42 inscriptions available | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 23 are private records and 19 are official records.</li> </ul>   |
| Official records                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Prasasties or charter recordings of landgrands</li> <li>- Tamra sasanas or tamra patras – copper plates</li> </ul>                             |
| Tamra sasana                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- replete genealogical information either of donor or recipient.</li> </ul>  |



Bhitari Inscription



Allahabad Pillar Inscription



Mehrauli Iron Pillar

### **ORIGIN OF THE GUPTA EMPIRE**

- ❖ In Manu smriti and Vishnu Purana – Gupta is mentioned as the Vaishya class.
- ❖ Some argue that Gupta are kshatriyas.
- ❖ Based on the matrimonial alliance with Lichchavis who are kshatriyas and Nagas – kshatriyas
- ❖ Inscription of Prabhavatigupta – daughter of Chandragupta II and wife of Rudrasena II the Vakataka ruler - describe her belonging to Dharana gotra.
- ❖ According to S R Goyal – clear indication of Brahmins.

## E ▶ ENTRI

- ❖ Genealogical accounts mention about Maharaja Shri Gupta and Maharaja Gatokcha – 280 t 319 CE – first rulers of Gupta Empire.
- ❖ Not clear whether they were independent rulers of subordinate rulers of some others.
- ❖ In *Satavahana Inscription* – names ending in Gupta – Sivagupta
- ❖ According to Al Biruni – *Tahqiq – I – Hind* – the rule of Gupta begins in 319 – 320 CE.

### CHANDRAGUPTA I

- ❖ The Gupta Era - Mark the accession of third Gupta ruler Chandragupta I – 319 – 336/336 CE – who seems to laid the foundation of Gupta empire.
- ❖ He was the son of Gatokcha.
- ❖ In inscriptions the Chandragupta I was given the title – Maharajadiraja.
- ❖ He married Kumaradevi - a Lichchavis princess.
- ❖ Records of his succession tells us that the marriage contributed to the rise of Guptas.
- ❖ Marriage was commemorated on coins either during the reign of Chandragupta or his son Samudra Gupta.
- ❖ They have the figures and names of King and queen on the obverse.
- ❖ On the reverse – has a goddess seated with a lion and the legend Lichchhavayah.
- ❖ In Allahabad inscription – Samudragupta is referred as Lichchhavi – dauhitra – grandson of Lichchhavis.
- ❖ Lichchhavi was an old established gana sangha and its territory lay between the Ganges and the Nepal.
- ❖ Alliance indicate that they had some political significance.
- ❖ A passage in Vishnu purana tells – that the Guptas conquered all the territories along the Ganga up to Prayaga or Allahabad as well as Saketa and Magadha.
- ❖ It was during the time of Samudra Gupta that the kingdom grew into an empire.

### SAMUDRAGUPTA

- ❖ 335 to 80 CE.
- ❖ Chandragupta I appointed his son Samudra Gupta to succeed him in 335 CE.
- ❖ An inscription engraved in the Ashokan pillar at Allahabad known as Prayagaprasasti – give us information about Samudra Guptas accession and military expedition.
- ❖ It says large number of people and countries were conquered by Samudra Gupta.
- ❖ He wanted to take a contrary stand to the view of Ashoka.
- ❖ Preceded by his mother – Kachagupta. Some gold coins bearing the name of Kacha have been discovered – a controversy has arisen.
- ❖ The name of kacha does not mention in the Gupta inscriptions.



## E ▶ ENTRI

- ❖ According to one interpretation – Samudra Gupta's brother revolted against him and placed Kacha the eldest brother on the throne. However, he died in the war of succession.
- ❖ Kacha's coins are similar to the coins of Samudra Gupta.
- ❖ Another view – coins were issued by Samudra Gupta in memory of his brother Kacha.
- ❖ Third view – Kacha as the initial name of Samudra Gupta.
- ❖ Later name was adopted after the conquest of south.
  
- ❖ The red sand stone inscription at Eran – about Samudra Gupta
- ❖ Allahabad inscription
- ❖ Held the title – **Sanshivigrahika** minister for peace and war, **Kumaramatya** – high ranking official, **Mahadandanayaka** – an important judicial or military officer.
- ❖ Also, king was a **skilled warrior**.
- ❖ Adopted an **aggressive policy of conquest**.
- ❖ **Four northern kings were conquered**.
- ❖ **Around Delhi and western Uttar Pradesh**.
- ❖ **Kings of south and east were forced to pay homages**.
- ❖ It appears that Samudra Gupta led his army up to Kanchi
- ❖ **Nine kings of Aryavarta Plain were violently uprooted** – Rudradeva, Matila, Nagadatta, Chandravarman, Gnanapatinaga, Nagasena, Achyuta, Nandin, Balavarman, etc.
- ❖ Achyuta was ruling over – Chichchitra.
- ❖ Nagasena over Gwalior.
- ❖ Matila over Uttar Pradesh
- ❖ Chandravarman over Bengal.
- ❖ Defeated Kota – Kulaja or ruler of the Kota family in the eastern Punjab and Delhi.
- ❖ **Forest kings or then tribal chieftains of central India and Deccan areas** were forced to pay tribute.
- ❖ **Kings of Assam, Bengal, small kingdoms of Nepal and Punjab** – were forced to pay tribute by submission.
- ❖ **Nine republics or gana sangha's** located in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh such as the Malavas, Yaudheyas, Madrakas, Abhiras, Prarjunas, Sanakanikas, Kakas, Kharaparikas were forced to accept Gupta's power.
- ❖ In addition, **foreign kings such as Daivaputra Shahanushahi a Kushana title, the Sakas, and the king of Lanka** also paid tribute as mentioned in the eulogy.
- ❖ Campaign in the south.
- ❖ Allahabad inscription refers to Samudra Gupta having captured several southern kingdoms.
- ❖ They were – Mahendran of Kosala- Raipur,
- ❖ Vyaghraraja of Mahakantara – Orissa
- ❖ Mantaraja of Kaurata Madhya Pradesh.

## E ▶ ENTRI

- ❖ Mahendragiri of pishtapura – Andhra.
- ❖ Svamidatta of koutra – Orissa
- ❖ Vishnugopi of Kanchi –
- ❖ Ugresena of Palakka – Andhra.
- ❖ Hastivarman of Vengi – Andhra
  
- ❖ At the end of his reign – **his empire comprised whole of north India.**
- ❖ With **exception – Kashmir, western Punjab, Rajasthan, Sindh, Gujarat.**
- ❖ It included the highlands of central India to the east of Jabalpur, Chhattisgarh, Orissa, area on the eastern coast at least up to Kanchi.
- ❖ Samudra Gupta is described as a kaviraja king among poets.
- ❖ His coins bear the image of playing vina or lute.
- ❖ **Sri Lankan ruler Meghavarman** – sent presents and requested permission from Samudra Gupta to **build a Buddhist monastery at Gauya** – this was granted.
- ❖ **Samudra Gupta performed Ashvamedha** – to proclaim his military conquests.
- ❖ Ardent **follower of Vaishnavism.**
- ❖ Patronized the **great Buddhist scholar Vasubandhu.**

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| <b>Legends in his coin includes</b>                               |
| Parakramah or brave.  |
| Apratirath - invincible   |
| ashwamedha parakramah – powerful enough to perform the ashwamedha |
| Vyaghra parakramah – brave as a tiger.                            |

## CHANDRAGUPTA II

- ❖ Son of **Samudra Gupta and Dattadevi.**
- ❖ A **capable ruler.**
- ❖ He ruled for 40 years from c. 375 to 415 CE.
  
- ❖ He came to power after **succession struggle with his brother Rama Gupta.**
- ❖ **Visakhadatta' s drama 'Devi Chandraguptam'** - mentions that Chandragupta II killed his elder brother Rama Gupta.
- ❖ He did this **because Rama Gupta was facing defeat at the hands of the Saka.**
- ❖ In order to save the kingdom, he had agreed to surrender his wife to the Saka king.
- ❖ Chandragupta protested.
- ❖ He went to the Saka camp in the disguise of the queen Dhruvadevi.
- ❖ He fought the Saka king.
- ❖ He killed his brother and married his wife Dhruvadevi.
- ❖ Certain other texts like the **Harsacharitha, kavyamimanasa** also refer to this episode.
- ❖ Some copper bearings the name Rama Gupta have been found.

- ❖ Inscriptions on the pedestals of some Jaina images found at Vidisha, bear the name Maharaja Rama Gupta.
- ❖ In a Vaishali seal, Dhruvadevi is described as mother of Govindaguptan (Chandragupta's son).
- ❖ *Bhoja Shringara - prakasha* has references about Rama Gupta.
- ❖ Ramachandra and Gunachandra- *Natya-darpana* also has the same.
- ❖ He is also known as Vikram Aditya.
- ❖ With the capital at Pataliputhra, Chandragupta II extended the Gupta empire.
  
- ❖ Adopted two methods for this: **conquest and matrimonial alliance**.
- ❖ Matrimonial alliances with the Nagas.
- ❖ He married the princess Kuberanaga.
- ❖ He married off his daughter Prabhavati to a Vakataka prince, Rudrasena II.
- ❖ Vakataka ruled the strategic lands of Deccan.
- ❖ The alliance was highly useful.
- ❖ After the marriage, the prince died, and was succeeded by his young son.
- ❖ Prabhavati thus became the virtual ruler.
- ❖ She promoted the interests of her father.
- ❖ Chandragupta fought against the Saka Kshetrapa rulers of western Indian with their (Vakataka) help he defeated the Saka king Rudrasimha-II.
- ❖ He conquered western Malwa and Gujrat by defeating the Saka rulers.
- ❖ They had ruled these territories for four centuries.
- ❖ The conquest gave him control over oceanic trade.
  
- ❖ He started minting Saka-type silver coins.
- ❖ Malwa was also economically prosperous city- its chief city Ujjain.
- ❖ Ujjain seems to have been made the second capital by Chandragupta II.
- ❖ Chandragupta II defeated the rulers like the Huns, Kamboja and Kiratas.
  
- ❖ He was a great conqueror.
- ❖ His conquests are glorified in Mehrauli iron pillar.
- ❖ According to this inscription Chandra crossed the Sindhu region of seven rivers and defeated Valhikas (identified with Bactria).
- ❖ The Mehrauli inscription also mentions Chandragupta's victory over enemies from Vanga (Bengal).
- ❖ Also mentions about his campaign in the Punjab.
  
- ❖ D.R Bhandarkar suggested that the king was alive when Mehrauli inscription was engraved.
- ❖ D. C sircar- the pillar was probably erected by Chandragupta II towards the end of his life, while the record was engraved after his death.
- ❖ Two inscriptions at the Udayagiri caves near Sanchi and one inscription at Sanchi, referring to his conquests.
- ❖ The inscription describes him as "**desirous of conquering the whole earth**".
- ❖ An able administrator.
- ❖

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|--------------------------------------|
| Chandragupta II had names including: |
| Vikrama                              |
| Devagupta                            |
| Devaraja                             |
| Simhavikrama                         |
| Sakari                               |
| Parama bhagavata                     |

- ❖ His court has nine jewels or Navaratnas – nine eminent people in various fields of art, literature and science.

| <b>NAVARATNAS IN CHANDRAGUPTA II COURT</b> |
|--|
| The great Sanskrit poet Kalidasa           |
| Harisena                                   |
| Lexicographer Amarasimha.                  |
| Physician Dhanavantari.                    |
| Varahamihira                               |
| Vararuchi                                  |
| Vetala Bhatta                              |
| Ghatkhar                                   |
| Kshapanaka                                 |

- ❖ Fa Hien – the Buddhist scholar from china visited India during Chandragupta's reign. he records the prosperity of Mathura and Pataliputhra the ruler's benevolence.
- ❖ He does not mention the name of king in his records.
- ❖ Chandragupta II was the first Gupta ruler to issue silver coins.
- ❖ Conducted trade with romans.
- ❖ Territorial expansion to north west and east India.

### **KUMARAGUPTA I**

- ❖ Chandragupta II was succeeded by his son – Kumara Gupta.
- ❖ [Founded the Nalanda University.](#)
- ❖ Another name – [Sakraditya.](#)
- ❖ We get information from certain inscriptions and coins:
- ❖ [The Bilsad Inscription](#) – Etah district.
- ❖ [The Karamdanda - Faizabad Inscription](#) of Kumara Gupta' s minister. It says: his fame having spread to the four oceans.
- ❖ A [stone inscription from Mandsor.](#) Mention: Kumara Gupta as reigning over the whole earth.



## E ▶ ENTRI

- ❖ The [Damodarpur Copper Plate Inscription](#) refer to Kumara Gupta as Maharajadiraja and himself appointed the governor – Uparika and Pundravardhana bhukti or province.
- ❖ He ruled over Magadha and Bengal in the east and Gujarat in the west. Last year of his reign the Gupta empire faced the foreign invasion which has been checked by the efforts of his son Skanda Gupta.
- ❖ Maintained cordinal [relationship with the Vakatakas](#) – which established through [matrimonial alliances](#).
- ❖ [Performed Ashvamedha sacrifices](#).
- ❖ His coins are the representation of the God Karttikeya.

### SKANDAGUPTA

- ❖ Son of the Kumara Gupta I.
- ❖ [Fought the Pushyamitras](#).
- ❖ [Huna invasion](#).
- ❖ [Defeated the Huns](#).
- ❖ But the [recurrence of Huns invasion](#) strained his empire.
- ❖ [Gold coins minted were limited](#).
- ❖ [Introduced new, heavier weight system for the gold coins](#); but generally, his coins had less gold in them than earlier coins.
- ❖ The last Gupta ruler to mint silver coins in the western India.
- ❖ The [Junagadh or Girnar Inscription](#) – of his reign. Tells about – [public works undertaken at his time](#).
- ❖ The [Sudarshan Lake](#) – originally built during Mauryan times – [burst due to excessive rains in the earlier part of his governor Parnadatta got it repaired](#).
- ❖ The last known date of Skanda Gupta is 467CE from his silver coins.

### LATER GUPTA KINGS

- ❖ Purugupta
- ❖ Kumaragupta II
- ❖ Budhagupta
- ❖ Narasimhagupta
- ❖ Kumaragupta II
- ❖ Vishnugupta
- ❖ Vishnugupta reigned from 540 to 550 CE – last Gupta ruler.