

Gupta Period Part 2

Administration

- Gupta administration was highly decentralised, and as patrimonial bureaucracy reached its logical conclusion.
- The Gupta kings were assisted by a council of ministers. The existence of such a council is implied in the Prayaga/ Allahabad Pillar Inscription, which speaks of the delight of the 'Sabhyas' (members) at the selection for Samudragupta for the throne.
- The Kumaramatyas formed the chief cadre for recruiting high officials under the Guptas. It was from them the Mantris, Senapati, Mahadanda - nayaka (Minister of Justice) and Sandhivigrahika (Minister of peace and war) were generally chosen.
- Important officials: Mahapratihari (the Chief usher of the Royal Palace), Dandapashika (Chief officer of Police Department), Vinava Sthitisthapak (Chief Officer of Religious affairs), Maha Pilupati (Chief of Elephant corps), Mahashvapati (Chief of Cavalry) etc.
- The administration of city was in the hand of a council (Paura), which consisted of the president of the city corporation, the chief representative of the guild of merchants, a representative of the artisans and the Chief Accountant.
- Under the Guptas, it was comprised of the local representatives.
- Decentralisation of the administrative authority began during the Gupta period.
- The Gupta military organisation was feudal by character.
- In the Gupta period for the first time civil and criminal law were clearly defined and demarcated.
- Gupta kings depended primarily on land revenue, varying from 1/4 to 1/6 of the produce.
- In Gupta period the army was to be fed by the people whenever it passed through the countryside. This tax was called Senabhakta.
- The villagers were also subjected to forced labour called vishti for serving royal army and officials.
- The Gupta period also experienced an excess of land grants. (Agarhara grants, Devagrahara grants). Land grants included the transfer of royal rights over salt and mines, which were under the royal monopoly during the Maurya period.

Society

- The varna system begins to get modified owing to the proliferation of castes. This was chiefly due to three factors:
 - i. A large number of foreigners had been assimilated into the Indian society primarily and were known as Kshatriyas
 - ii. There was a large absorption of tribal people into

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Brahmanical society through land grants. The acculturated tribes were absorbed into the Shudra Varna.

iii. Guilds of craftsmen were often transformed into castes as a result of the decline of trade and urban centres and the localised character of crafts.

- The social positions of the Shudras seem to have improved in this period. They were permitted to listen to the epics and Puranas and also worship a new god called Krishna.

Economy

- It is argued by many scholars that the state was exclusive owner of land. The most decisive argument favour of the exclusive state ownership of land is in Pahadpur Copper Plate inscription of Buddhagupta.
- Economic stand point classify land under the Gupta period into five groups: 1. Kshetra Bhoomi - Cultivable land 2. Khila - Waste land 3. Vastu Bhoomi - Habitable land 4. Charagah Bhoomi - Pastureland 5. Aprahata Bhoomi - Forest land.
- In the Gupta period land survey is evident from the Poona plates of Prabhavati Gupta and many other inscriptions.
- An officer named Pustapala maintained records of all land transactions in the district.

Bhaga	King's customary share of the produce normally amounting to 1/6th of the produce, paid by all cultivators.
Bhoga	Periodic supplies of fruits, fire wood, flowers etc. which the villagers had to furnish to king.
Bali	Originally it was a voluntary offering by the people to the king, but later it became compulsory. During the Gupta period, it seems to be an additional and oppressive tax.
Uparikara	An extra tax levied on all subjects.

Culture

- The architecture of the Gupta period may be divided into three categories:
 1. Rock - cut caves: Ajanta and Ellora Group in Maharashtra and Bagh in MP.
 2. Structural Temples: Dasavatara temple of Deogarh Chansi district, UP - the oldest and the best, Siva temple of Bhumra (Nagod, MP), Vishnu and Kankali temple (Tigawa, MP), Parvati temple of Nanchana - Kuthwa (Panna district, MP), Shiva temple of Khoh (Satna, Panna, MP), Krishna brick temple of Bhattargaon (Kanpur, UP), Laxman temple of Sirpur (Raipur, MP), Vishnu temple and Varah temple of Eran (MP).
 3. Stupas : Mirpur khas (Sindh), Dhammekh (Saranath) and Ratnagiri (Orissa).
- The fragmentary remains of Dasavatara temple of Deogarh is the example of the most ornate and beautifully composed Gupta temple building.
- The centres of the Gandhar sculptures declined and their places

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were taken by Benaras, Patliputra and Mathura.

- Among the best specimen of the images of Buddha is a seated Buddha image of Sarnath, which depicts the Buddha preaching the Dhamma.
- Of the Brahmanical images perhaps the most impressive was the Great Boar (Varah) carved in relief at the entrance of a cave at Udayagiri.
- The painting of this period found in Bagh (Dhar district MP), and Ajanta (Aurangabad district Maharashtra). The frescoes of the Ajanta caves are the masterpieces of the paintings of this age.

Note :

1. 'Manusmriti' was translated in English under the title of 'Institutes of Hindoo Law' by William Jones.
2. 'Abhijnana Shakuntalam' was translated in English by William Jones.
3. Kalidas is known as 'the Shakespeare of India'.
4. 'Mrichchakatika' love story of a poor brahman Charudatta and virtuos courtesan Vasantasena, is notable for its realistic depiction of city life.
5. 'Kamsutra' is the earliest book on sex.
6. 'Brahmasidhanta' was translated in Arabic under the title of 'Sind Hind'.

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