

The Big Questions (Page 145).

1. Who were the Guptas? Why is the Gupta period sometimes called the 'classical age' in Indian history?

Ans. The Guptas were a powerful dynasty that emerged in northern India around the 3rd century CE. They initially ruled as regional kings in areas near present-day Uttar Pradesh but gradually expanded their control and established a vast empire with Pataliputra as its capital.

• **Why is it called the 'Classical Age' of Indian History?**

1. **Cultural Flourishing:** The period saw great achievements in art, architecture, and literature.
2. **Sanskrit Literature:** Famous poet Kalidasa wrote celebrated works like Meghadutam and Raghuvamsham.
3. **Scientific Progress:** Aryabhata made significant advances in mathematics and astronomy. Varahamihira contributed to astrology, weather forecasting, and town planning.
4. **Art and Architecture:** Exquisite temples, sculptures, and rock-cut caves (like Ajanta and Udayagiri) were created.
5. **Peace and Prosperity:** A long period of stability and good governance led to economic growth and public welfare.
6. **Lasting Legacy:** The advancements made during this time had a long-lasting impact on Indian culture and history.

This is why the Gupta period is often referred to as 'Classical Age' of ancient India.

2. What was happening in the rest of the subcontinent at this time?

Ans. While the Guptas ruled northern India, several other kingdoms flourished in other parts of the subcontinent:

- Vakataka Kingdom in central India, which had close ties with the Guptas through matrimonial alliances.
- Pallava Dynasty in the south, ruling over parts of present-day Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Telangana, and Andhra Pradesh. They were patrons of temple architecture and learning.
- Kamarupa Kingdom in the north-east (present-day Assam and Bengal), known for being a cultural and religious hub.

These kingdoms contributed to the rich diversity of Indian society and culture during this time, making the period vibrant and dynamic across the subcontinent.

3. Who were some great figures of this period, and why do their stories matter today?

Ans. Some of the great figures of the Gupta period include:

- Samudragupta: Known for his military conquests and patronage of arts. His court poet Harisena wrote the Prayaga Prasasti praising his achievements.
- Chandragupta II (Vikramaditya): A powerful ruler who promoted science, literature, and art. The Iron Pillar of Delhi is associated with him.

- **Prabhavati Gupta:** Daughter of Chandragupta II, who ruled as a regent and helped strengthen ties with the Vakataka.
- **Aryabhata:** A brilliant mathematician and astronomer who proposed that the Earth rotates and calculated an almost accurate length of the year.
- **Varahamihira:** A scholar known for his work in astronomy, astrology, and town planning.
- **Kalidasa:** One of the greatest Sanskrit poets and playwrights, famous for works like Meghadutam and Raghuvamsham.

These individuals matter today because their contributions laid the foundations of Indian science, literature, and culture. Their works continue to inspire learning, creativity, and national pride even in the modern era.

THINK ABOUT IT (Page 150)

Q. Why do you think kings chose to proclaim their achievements in the form of inscriptions?

Ans. Kings chose to proclaim their achievements through inscriptions for several important reasons:

1. **To Show Power and Authority:** Inscriptions on pillars, rocks, and temple walls highlighted the king's victories, donations, and titles, helping them establish their supremacy over other rulers.
2. **To Leave a Lasting Legacy:** Inscriptions were made on durable materials like stone and metal, so their messages could survive for centuries and be remembered by future generations.
3. **To Inform the Public:** These inscriptions acted like public notices that informed people about the king's achievements, policies, and religious beliefs.
4. **To Gain Respect and Support:** By praising themselves in inscriptions, kings hoped to earn respect, loyalty, and support from their subjects and allies.
5. **As a Historical Record:** Inscriptions served as official records of important events, battles, land grants, and royal decisions, which were valuable for administration and for historians later.

Thus, inscriptions were a powerful way for kings to communicate their greatness and secure their place in history.

LET'S EXPLORE (Page 151)

Q. In the Grade 6 chapter 'Timeline and Sources of History', we listed multiple sources that help us understand the past. Compile a list of the sources we have referred to so far in the chapter. What did we learn from each source?

Ans. Here is a list of sources referred to in the chapter "The Gupta Era – An Age of Tireless Creativity", and what we learned from each:

Source	What We Learned
1. Iron Pillar of Delhi	Showed the Gupta Empire's advanced knowledge of metallurgy. Its rust-free condition proved their skill in metalwork.
2. Prayaga Prasasti (inscription by Harisena)	Gave detailed information about Samudragupta's military campaigns , his ambitions, and support for art and learning.
3. Coins (e.g. gold coins of Chandragupta I and	Revealed information about rulers, their titles, conquests, and religious beliefs. Some coins showed kings as musicians or warriors.

Source	What We Learned
Samudragupta)	
4. Faxian's Travelogue (Chinese traveller)	Described society, governance, prosperity, charity, and health care during the Gupta period, but also mentioned social discrimination.
5. Vishnu Purana (literary text)	Provided a list of regions under Gupta control and confirmed the importance of places like Prayaga, Saketa, and Magadha.
6. Temple architecture and sculptures (e.g. Ajanta, Udayagiri, Deogarh)	Showed the artistic excellence, religious devotion, and aesthetic values of the Gupta era.
7. Copper plate land grants	Gave evidence of administration and land ownership. They recorded gifts of land to priests and officials.
8. Works of scholars like Aryabhata, Varahamihira, and Kalidasa	Showed the flourishing of science, mathematics, astronomy, and literature under Gupta patronage.

These different sources together help us understand the political, cultural, economic, and social aspects of the Gupta period.

LET'S EXPLORE (Page 151)

Q. Take a political map of India and locate the present-day states and Union territories where the Guptas ruled (see Fig. 7.8).

Mark these states on the map and count how many you found.

Then, compare your findings with your friends to see if everyone got the same number or discovered something different!

Ans. Based on Fig. 7.8 from the chapter, the Gupta Empire covered a large part of the Indian subcontinent. I identified and marked the following present-day Indian states and Union territories where the Guptas ruled:

- States/UTs under Gupta rule:**

- | | | |
|-------------------|-----------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. Uttar Pradesh | 6. Odisha | 11. Delhi (Union Territory) |
| 2. Bihar | 7. Gujarat | 12. Rajasthan |
| 3. Madhya Pradesh | 8. Maharashtra | 13. Assam (partial) |
| 4. Jharkhand | 9. Chhattisgarh | |
| 5. West Bengal | 10. Haryana | |

- Comparison with Friends:** After comparing with my friends, I found that:

- Some included parts of Karnataka or Telangana based on Gupta campaigns.
- Others missed states like Assam or Chhattisgarh.
- This shows that interpretation may vary depending on how closely we observe the map.

Conclusion: The Gupta Empire was vast and powerful. Mapping their territory helps us understand the scale of their rule and encourages geographical and historical awareness.

LET'S EXPLORE (Page 153)

Read the excerpt from Faxian given above and identify the key features of the society he describes. Write down your observations and compare your notes with your friends — you might be surprised to see how differently others interpret the same text!

Ans. Based on the excerpt from Faxian's travelogue, the following key features of Gupta society can be identified:

- **Key Observations:**

1. **Peace and Prosperity:**

- i. People were described as numerous and happy.
- ii. The cities were large, wealthy, and well-organised.

2. **Good Governance:**

- i. There was little interference from officials.
- ii. Only those farming royal land had to pay grain as tax.

3. **Care for the Poor and Sick:**

- i. Charity houses and hospitals were established by rich Vaishya merchants.
- ii. Free treatment, food, and medicine were provided to the poor, sick, orphans, and needy.

4. **Role of Vaishya:**

- i. Wealthy Vaishya families played a major role in charity and public welfare.

5. **Urban Life:**

- i. Cities had well-kept lanes and beautiful houses.
- ii. There were foreign merchants living in the cities, showing active trade and cultural exchange.

- **Comparison with Friends:**

- i. Some friends focused more on the economic aspects, such as trade and taxes.
- ii. Others highlighted social values like kindness and charity.
- iii. A few pointed out that Faxian's view may be idealised, and doesn't represent the condition of all people, such as Chandala.

Conclusion: Faxian's account gives us a positive image of Gupta society—prosperous, peaceful, and compassionate. However, comparing with others helps us realise that different perspectives give a more complete understanding of history.

LET'S EXPLORE (Page 155)

Observe the painting of Prabhavati Gupta sitting in her court (Fig. 7.10). Take note of the details — her attire, posture, the people around her, and the setting of the court. What do these elements tell you about her life, role, and the time she lived in? Discuss your observations in groups and share your insights with the class.

Ans. After observing the painting of Prabhavati Gupta sitting in her court, here are my detailed observations and interpretations:

- **Visual Observations:**

1. **Attire:** She is dressed in rich royal garments and adorned with jewellery, indicating her high status and royal lineage.
2. **Posture:** Prabhavati is seated confidently and centrally, showing that she held authority and respect as a regent queen.

- 3. People Around Her:** Attendants, ministers, and possibly scholars or officials are standing respectfully nearby, suggesting she presided over court matters and was involved in governance.
 - 4. Court Setting:** The court is decorated with pillars, drapes, and carvings, reflecting the artistic and architectural richness of the Gupta period.
- **Interpretation of Her Life and Time:**
 1. Prabhavati Gupta lived during a time when women of royal families could exercise political power, especially as regents.
 2. She played an important role in maintaining alliances between the Guptas and the Vakatakas.
 3. The respectful environment and her central position show she was highly educated, capable, and revered.
 4. The setting reflects the prosperity, culture, and elegance of the Gupta era.
 - **Group Discussion Insights:**
 1. Some friends focused on her religious devotion to Vishnu, as seen from historical records.
 2. Others noticed how women's leadership was possible under certain conditions.
 3. We all agreed that this painting symbolises a time of intellectual, political, and cultural richness.

Conclusion: The painting of Prabhavati Gupta in court tells us that she was a powerful and respected woman leader in a flourishing empire. Her life reflects the progressive and vibrant society of the Gupta period.

LET'S EXPLORE (Page 159)

Let's join Bhavisha and Dhruv with their time machine in the time of the Guptas. You are getting an opportunity to meet Aryabhata and Varahamihira—what would you ask them? Divide the class into two groups and create a series of questions for an interview with them.

Ans. Let's imagine the class is divided into two groups:

- **Group 1: Interview with Aryabhata (Mathematician & Astronomer)**
 1. What inspired you to study astronomy and mathematics?
 2. How did you calculate the length of the year so accurately without modern tools?
 3. Can you explain your idea about the Earth rotating on its axis?
 4. What methods did you use to explain eclipses?
 5. How did people during your time react to your scientific ideas?
 6. What is your most important message for future scientists?
- **Group 2: Interview with Varahamihira (Astronomer, Astrologer & Scholar)**
 1. How did you gather so much knowledge on such a wide range of topics?
 2. What is your most important work and what does it include?
 3. How did you combine observation with tradition in your writings?
 4. Did your predictions about weather and astronomy help the common people?
 5. What role did the city of Ujjayini play in your learning?
 6. How do you think your work influenced scholars after you?

Conclusion: These questions help us understand the contributions, thinking, and scientific spirit of two of the greatest minds from the Gupta era. This activity connects history with curiosity and imagination, making learning fun and meaningful.

LET'S EXPLORE (Page 160)

Take a close look at the samples of Gupta sculptures shown in Fig 7.15.1. and 7.15.2. By looking at the attributes, can you guess which deities are depicted here? Write your observations in the space provided and share your thoughts during the class discussion!



Ans. After observing the Gupta sculptures in Fig 7.15.1 and 7.15.2, here are my observations:

- **Fig 7.15.1 – Deity Identification: Likely Vishnu**
 1. The figure appears calm, majestic, and symmetrical, showing Gupta style.
 2. The deity is holding symbolic objects (possibly chakra and shankha) in the hands.
 3. The crown, ornaments, and posture suggest this is Lord Vishnu, the preserver god.
 4. The facial expression is serene, symbolising peace and balance.
- **Fig 7.15.2 – Deity Identification: Likely Ganga and Yamuna**
 1. This sculpture likely shows two female deities standing gracefully.
 2. One figure stands on a Makara (a mythical crocodile-like creature), which represents Ganga.
 3. The other figure stands on a tortoise, the vahana of Yamuna.
 4. Both figures hold water pots, reinforcing their connection to sacred rivers.

Conclusion: These sculptures are excellent examples of Gupta artistry, showing refined features, symbolic attributes, and deep religious meaning. They help us understand how deities and nature were beautifully represented in ancient Indian art.

Questions and activities (143)

1. Imagine you receive a letter from someone living in the Gupta Empire. Complete the letter.

Ans. Letter:

Greetings from Pataliputra! Life here is vibrant and full of excitement. Just yesterday, I witnessed a grand procession celebrating the Ashvamedha yajna performed by our great king Samudragupta. The streets were filled with music, dancers, and decorated elephants. People gathered in large numbers to pay respect to the king. Life in the city is peaceful and prosperous. Merchants from distant lands like China and the Mediterranean visit our markets, trading goods like silk, spices, and gems. Our city is clean and well-organised, with charitable houses offering food and medicines to the poor. In the evenings, I enjoy listening to poets and scholars in the royal court. The great Kalidasa often recites his beautiful verses here. Our temples and sculptures are truly divine, and art flourishes all around us. Many scholars study astronomy and medicine, including the works of Aryabhata and Varahamihira. Truly, it feels like I am living in a golden time!

2. Which Gupta ruler was also known as the 'Vikramaditya'?

Ans: Chandragupta II was also known as Vikramaditya.

3. “Periods of peace support the development of various aspects of sociocultural life, literature, and the development of science and technology.” Examine this statement in the light of the Gupta Empire.

Ans:

- The Gupta period was a time of political stability and peace, which allowed people to focus on art, education, science, and literature.
- Scholars like Aryabhata and Varahamihira made great advances in astronomy and mathematics.
- Kalidasa created literary masterpieces in Sanskrit.
- Magnificent temples and sculptures were created, showing artistic brilliance.
- This progress was possible because peaceful times allowed talent and creativity to flourish without fear of war or destruction.

4. Recreate a scene from a Gupta ruler’s court.

Ans: Sample Script:

- **Characters:** King Chandragupta II, Minister, Poet Kalidasa, Astronomer Aryabhata, Guard
- **Minister:** Your Majesty, the merchants from the west have arrived with tribute.
- **King:** Very good. Let them be welcomed. Kalidasa, have you written something new for today?
- **Kalidasa:** Yes, Your Majesty. I present a verse from Meghadutam, describing the beauty of the monsoon.
- **King:** Wonderful! And Aryabhata, what discoveries have you made?
- **Aryabhata:** Maharaj, I have calculated the Earth's rotation and a near-exact length of the year. It is 365 days, 6 hours, 12 minutes and 30 seconds.
- **King:** Incredible! Truly, ours is an age of knowledge and wisdom!

5. Match the two columns:

Column A	Column B
(1) Kanchipuram	(a) Known for vibrant cave paintings that depict the Jataka tales.
(2) Ujjayini	(b) Famous for rock-cut caves featuring intricate carvings of Hindu deities.
(3) Udayagiri	(c) Capital of the Guptas.
(4) Ajanta	(d) Known as ‘a city of a thousand temples’.
(5) Pataliputra	(e) A prominent centre of learning in ancient India.

Ans.

Column A	Column B
(1) Kanchipuram	(d) Known as ‘a city of a thousand temples’.
(2) Ujjayini	(e) A prominent centre of learning in ancient India.
(3) Udayagiri	(b) Famous for rock-cut caves featuring intricate carvings of Hindu deities.
(4) Ajanta	(a) Known for vibrant cave paintings that depict the Jataka tales.
(5) Pataliputra	(c) Capital of the Guptas.

6. Who were the Pallavas and where did they rule?

Ans:

- The Pallavas were a powerful dynasty that rose after the decline of the Satavahanas.
- They ruled over parts of present-day Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, and Telangana.

- Their capital was Kanchipuram, and they were patrons of temple architecture and learning.

7. Organise an exploration trip with your teachers to a nearby historical site, museum, or heritage building. Write a report.

Ans. Sample Report:

Exploration Trip to the State Museum

- On our school trip to the State Museum, we explored artefacts from various historical periods, including the Gupta era. We saw ancient coins, terracotta sculptures, and inscriptions on copper plates. The guide explained how these items revealed details about Gupta administration, economy, and religious practices.
- We also viewed a beautiful replica of the Iron Pillar, which demonstrated the Gupta's advanced knowledge of metallurgy. Another highlight was a section on Ayurveda, with displays of ancient herbs and tools used by doctors of that time.
- This visit helped me connect what I had read in class to real objects and places, making history come alive. I realised how important museums are in preserving our past and how much we can learn by seeing history up close.