



## Mains Practice Questions

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### Approach

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- Introduce with writing about the Gupta empire and its expanse.
- Discuss the achievements of the Gupta empire in the fields of art, architecture, sciences, religion, and philosophy.
- Also discuss social issues that emerged in this period.
- Conclude suitably.

### Introduction

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The Gupta Empire stretched across northern, central and parts of southern India between 320 and 550 CE. The period is noted for its achievements in the arts, architecture, sciences, religion, and philosophy.

### Body

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- **Governance:** They ruled over an extensive empire with their capital at Pataliputra and maintained unity and integrity of India.
  - The Gupta age witnessed political unification of India after long period of more than 500 years after the decline of Mauryans.
  - The efficiency of their martial system was well known. The large kingdom was divided into smaller pradesha (provinces).

- **Economic prosperity:** Gupta age was full of economic prosperity. According to Chinese traveller Fa-hien Magadh, the power centre of Gupta empire was full of cities and its rich people.
  - In ancient India, the Guptas issued the largest number of gold coins which were called 'dinaras' in their inscriptions.
  - Gold and silver coins were issued in great numbers which is a general indicator of the health of the economy.
  - Trade and commerce flourished both within the country and outside. Silk, cotton, spices, medicine, priceless gemstones, pearl, precious metal and steel were exported by sea.
- **Religion:** They were devout Vaishnava themselves, yet that did not prevent them from being tolerant towards the believers of Buddhism and Jainism.
- **Literature:** Poet and playwright Kalidasa created such epics as Abhijnanasakuntalam, Malavikagnimitram, Raghuvansha and Kumarsambhaba. Harishena composed Allahabad Prasasti, Sudraka wrote Mricchakatika, Vishakhadatta created Mudrarakshasa and Vishnusharma penned Panchatantra.
- **Science and Technology:** Varahamihira wrote Brihatsamhita and also contributed to the fields of astronomy and astrology. Genius mathematician and astronomer Aryabhata wrote Surya Siddhanta which covered several aspects of geometry, trigonometry and cosmology. Shanku devoted himself to creating texts about Geography.
- **Architecture:** The Gupta age craftsmen distinguished themselves by their work in iron and bronze. For example, iron pillar found at Mehrauli in Delhi manufactured in the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD has not gathered any rust over the subsequent fifteen centuries which is a great tribute to the technological skill of the craftsmen.
 

The finest examples of painting, sculpture and architecture of the period can be found in Ajanta, Ellora, Sarnath, Mathura, Anuradhapura and Sigiriya.

## Social degradation during the period

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- However, it should be noted that the Gupta age did not witness progress in social development, for example the number of **chandals (untouchables) increased** and their condition worsened during the Gupta age.
- The first example of the **sati occurred during the Gupta period** in 510 AD etc.

## Conclusion

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The Gupta age began a period of overall prosperity and growth that continued for the next two and half centuries which came to be known as a Golden Age in India's history.

However, the golden character of Gupta age can be accepted only in degrees not in absolute terms.