GUPTA AGE

FEATURES OF THE GUPTA POLITY

1. The Guptas established a monarchical system. One significant facet of the monarchy was its divine association, particularly vaishvanavite affiliations. Divine elements were attributed to the kingship and the king was equoated with gods is suggested by various appellations adopted by the Kings.
2. The signs of fragmentation of monarchical authority are discernable. This is manifested in weaking of central control, King's government. Losing effective powers, and loosening of administrative grasp.
3. One significant attribute which came to be greatly associated with him was his being de jure owner of all lands within the territory of his impire. This provided legitimacy to his claim of imposing taxes and conferring land grants.
4. One important royal duty was maintenance of Varnasrama Dharma besides the protection of the subjects. The three checks on the royal authority in practice were the Brahamanas, the vassals and the corporate bodies.
5. The Gupta age witnessed the emergence of a proto-feudal polity. The concept which associates the king with ownership of land lends feudal character to the state which became typical of the early medieval period. The Kings adopted high-sounding and pompous appellations (Parmesvnara, Maharajadhiraja, Parambhattaraka etc.) often equoted with gods. Adoption of such titles signifies existence of lesser Kings in empire.
6. The Gupta political system exhibits tendency towards decentralized polity. This tendency is reflected in gravting of politico-administrative rights to beneficiaries, association of local bodies in administration and greater autonomy enjoyed by the Villages.
7. There was an absence of elaborate and methodical bureaucratic structure on account of presence of feudatories, involvement of professional bodies in administration and indifferent concern of the State for regulation and control of economic activities. The Guptas did not maintain a large retinue of state officials.
8. Certain new features came to be associated with the administrative system. One important aspect of the polity was recruitment of the officials not being confined to two higher varnas. High officials were possibly paid in cash but payment through land grants was gaining ground. Several offices came to be combined and important functionaries occupied two or more offices at the same time. Hereditary tinge is also disernable in high rung officialdom. All these characteristics had serious consequences on the state system.
9. Village administration assumed new dimensions during the Gupta period. Villages assumed greater autonomy and village affairs came to be managed by the village headman with the assistance of village elders. It also involved participation of leading local elements and states close supervision over the village administrative affairs ceased to exist.
10. The Guptas established a highly developed and elaborate judicature. Legal system during this period registered a distinct advance. Law assumed wider and deeper base, criminal civil law were expounded and definite law of inheritance came into being. The period gaves birth to a rich collection of legal texts. One important aspect of law was that it conformed to varna distinction.

VARIOUS ASPECTS OF GUPTA ADMINISTRATIVE SYSTEM

PART–I - THE KING

1. King was the embodiment of all powers.
2. Tendency towards fragmentation of kingly authority and king's government losing effective powers was disernable.
3. Kingship showed divine associations particularly vaishvanite affiliations.

4. One important royal duty of the king was maintenance of varnasrana dharma.
5. King came to be associated with the ownership of land - he came to be looked as the dejure owner of all lands within his territories - this provided legitimacy to his right to appropriate taxes from lands and to make land grants.
6. In practice, three checks on the royal powers were the Brahmins, the vassals and the corporate bodies.

PART–II - THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS

1. The council of ministers appears to have been shadowy body.
2. Ministers were known by various designations viz. MANTRIN, AMTYA, SACHIVA and were most probably hereditary.
3. The post was hereditary in the same family for several generations.
4. Ministers or advisers formed part of the higher bureaucracy of the Guptas.

PART–III - POLITICO-ADMINISTRATIVE DIVISIONS

1. The core of the empire directly controlled by the Guptas was divided into a number of provinces.
2. The bhukti seems to have been the largest administrative unit under the Guptas, and there were at least six such divisions spread over Bengal, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh. It was placed in charge of an uparika.
3. The officer was undoubtedly a governor appointed by the Gupta king, but the literal meaning of the term bhukti suggests that the territory placed under his charge was intended to be enjoyed rather than governed by him in its own interest.
4. The bhukti was divided into visayas or districts, whose number is not known.
5. The visaya was in charge of the kumaramatya in early times, but later it came to be placed under the visayapati, Ordinarily in Bengal and Bihar the visayapati was the head of the visaya where he carried on administration with the help of the local office or adhikarana.
6. Representation of major local bodies was an important aspect of the district administration. Some important heads of the local bodies were Nagaresthi, head of the city merchants; Sarthavah, leader of mobile guilds; Prthama Kulika; head of the artisan Community.
7. Perhaps every district had a strong military contingent to back civil authority in times of need.
8. The visaya was divided into vithis. Several vithis are known from Bengal, and in one case full information about the composition of the committee which took part in its government.
9. Village enjoyed greater degree of autonomy. The state was least concerned with village affairs. Administrative affairs of the villages were managed; by the village headman Gramika with the assistance of village elders (Gramvriddhas).

PART–IV - MILITARY ADMINISTRATION

1. Kings maintained a standing army, which was supplemented by the army of the vassals. During the Guptas Cavalary rose to prominence and horse archery became an important part of the army. The army was paid in cash.
2. The growing importance of cavalry is supported by seals and inscriptions which speak of Asvapati, Mahasvapati and Bhatasvapati, evidently the commander of horsemen. The early Gupta records do not mention any officer connected with the management of elephants.
3. The other military officers are Mahabaladhikrta, Mahaprathara and Gaulmika. The last two are known to pre-Gupta inscriptions, but the first appears as a new military functionary in this period.
4. Civil officials such as Amatyas, Kumaramatyas, etc., performed military functions or were promoted to the rank of high military officers.

5. The gaulmika mentioned there in was a minor military officer in charge of a small detachment of soldiers. Probably he stood by the civil authorities in times of disturbances caused by peasants or unsocial elements.

PART–V - REVENUE ADMINISTRATION

1. The taxation system of the Guptas was not so elaborate and organised as in the Arthasastra of Kautilya. The villagers paid in kind certain customary miscellaneous dues, which could be measured, but these are not specified. They also paid hiranya or gold, but what it actually meant cannot be said. The artisans also had to pay some imposts, and traders were subjected to customs on commodities of trade, which were levied and collected by the customs officers.
2. The officer known as pustapala maintained records of land sale, and the village accountant (gramaksapataladhikrta) preserved records of land in the village.
3. The list of taxes enumerated in the Arthasastra of Kautilya is much longer than that found in Gupta inscriptions.
4. The royal share did not exceed one-sixth of the produce.
5. Most revenue officers mentioned in land grants seem to have been connected with the assessment and collection of land revenue.
6. Land records were maintained by the gramaksapataladhikrta or the desaksapataladhikrta, who possibly acted as accountants and patwaris. Scribes called Divira, Karanika, Kayastha, etc., were employed chiefly in the revenue office.
7. Revenues may have been collected mostly in kind; probably rich peasants paid in cash.
8. The officer who collected dues in cash is called Hiranyasamudayika.
9. The only officer connected with the collection of tolls on commodities seems to have been saulkika.

PART–VI - JUDICIAL SYSTEM

1. Inscriptions refer to such judicial officers as Mahadandanayaka, Mahakshapatalika etc. Probably, the Mahadandanayaka combined the duties of a judge and general. The Mahakshapatalika was probably the Great keeper of Records.
2. Officials of the Gupta administration from the highest down to the lowest appear to have conducted administrative duties in an Adhikarna which may be interpreted to be an office or a court. It appears that the Kumaramatya, Bhondagara, Dandapashika and the Uparika had each his separate Adhikarna. if it is conceded that the term Adhikarna meant a court where transactions partaining to land were decided, it is also possible the judicial matters were also decided there.
3. Kalidas refers to the Dharmashthana. It is possible that in the times of Kalidas, the king attended such a court in his capital. Kalidas also refers to the Dharmadhikaras. They were required to be well-versed in the scriptures of Dharma and had to maintain order in the town. They were to see that the hermits in the woods were not disturbed in the performance of their penances.

CONQUESTS OF SAMUDRA GUPTA

PART–I

Samudra Gupta was a great conqueror. Like Mahapadma Nanda and Chandragupta Maurya he seems to have aimed at the political unification of India. A more or less dealiled account of his conquests has been preserved in the famous Allahabad Pillar Inscription, an eraborate panegyric in Sanskrit composed by his court poet, Harishena. It gives a detailed account of his career and personality. Valuable information is available from an inscription found at Earn (in Madhya Pradesh) and also from Samudra Gupta's coins.

PART–II

In the Gangetic valley and Central India Samudra Gupta annexed the territories of the defeated monarchs, but in South India he remained content with victories alone he did not annex the territories of the vanquished rulers. Probably he realised the difficulty of controlling South India from his remote base in the north-east.

PART–III

The Allahabad Pillar Inscription records that Samudra Gupta uprooted many princes of Aryavarta or the upper Ganges valley and the adjoining regions. The names mentioned include Achyuta (ruler of Ahichhatra, modern Ramnagar in the Bareilly district, U.P.) Nagasena (ruler of Padmavati in Central India), a ruler of the Kota-kula or Kota family (probably of the eastern Punjab and Delhi region), Rudraveda (Rudrasena I Vakataka), Matila (probably a ruler of the Bulandshahr region in U.P.). Nagadatta (a Naga King), Chandravarman (identified with Chandravarman mentioned in the Susunia Rock Inscription, who was the ruler of Pushkarana or Pokharan in the Bankura district, West Bengal), Ganapati Naga (a Naga ruler of Mathura), Nandi (a Naga ruler?) and Balvarman (a prince of Assam?). The territories conquered I from these princes included probably Uttar Pradesh and portions of Central India and Bengal, and were placed under the direct administration of Imperial viceroys and officers. Samudra Gupta also subjugated the rulers of the forest countries in the Ghazipur Jabalpur region (in Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh).

PART–IV

After the conquest of Northern India Samudra Gupta turned his attention to the South. It is probable that his campaigns were limited to the eastern and southern parts of Madhya Pradesh, Orissa and the eastern coast of Deccan as far as Kanchi. The Southern rulers defeated by him were Mahendra of Kosala (i.e., South Kosala, or Bilaspur and Raipur districts of Madhya Pradesh and Sambalpur district of Orissa), Vyaghra-raja of Mahakantara (a wild tract of Central India), Mantaraja of Kurala (the Sonpur region?) Svamidatta of Kottura (in the Ganjam district), Mahendragiri of Pishtapura (Godvari district), Damana of Erandapalla (in the vizagapatam district), Vishnugopa of Kanchi (of the Pallava dynasty), Nilaraja of Avamukta (identification uncertain), Hastivarman (probably of the Salankayana dynasty) of Vengi (near Ellore), Ugrasena of Palakka (Nellore district), Kuvera of Devarashtra (in the vizagapatma district?), Dhanamjaya of Kusthalapura (in the North Arcot district?) and others. As we have said above, the territories of these princes were not annexed. There is no clear reference in the Allahabad Pillar Inscription to Samudra Gupta's conflict with the Vakatakas, but it has been suggested that as a result of his victory over Vyaghra-raja, who was probably a feudatory of the Vakatakas, the Guptas succeeded in establishing their suzerainty over Central India.

PART–V

Samudra Gupta's Digvijaya seems to have alarmed the frontier rules of north-eastern India and the tribes of the Punjab, Western India, Malwa, and Madhya Pradesh, who gratified his imperious commands by paying all kinds of taxes, obeying his orders and coming to do homage. Among the frontier princes who accepted the status of vassalage were the rulers of Samatata (South and East Bengal : capital at Bad Kamta near Comilla in Bangladesh), Davaka (Nowgong district in Assam? or Dacca in Bangladesh?) Kamarupa (Western Assam), Nepal and Kartripura (either Jalandhar district in the Punjab, or Kumaun, Garhwal and Rohilkhand in U.P.). The tribes which submitted to the Gupta Emperor were the following : Malavas (of eastern Rajputana and the Mandasor region), Arjunayanas (of Jaipur and Alwar, in Rajasthan), Yaudheyas (living on both bans of the Sutlej on the border of the Bahawalpur State in Pakistan), Madrakas (or Sialkot in Punjab, Pakistan), Abhiras (of the Sanchi region in Madhya Pradesh?), Kharaparikas (of Madhya Pradesh?), Prarjunas (of Madhya Pradesh?). Sanakanikas (of the Bhilsa region in Madhya Pradesh?) and Kakas (of the Bhilsa region).

PART–VI

Samudra Gupta made so great an impression on his contemporaries that the foreign potentates of north-western India, Malwa and Kathiawar conciliated him by acts of homage. Harishena refers to these foreign potentates as Daivaputra Shahi Shahanu-Shahi-Saka-Murunda. They were the successors of the Kushanas and the Sakas who had formerly ruled over a considerable portion of north-Western and Western India.

PART–VII

Samudra Gupta's fame transcended the geographical borders of India and attracted the people of Ceylon and all other dwellers in islands. Meghavarna, King of Ceylon, sent an embassy to him and secured his permission to erect a monastery at Bodh Gaya for Ceylonese pilgrims. It is possible that Samudra Gupta exercised some control over the Hindu colonies in Malay Peninsula, Java, Sumatra and other islands in the Indian archipelago. The Digvijayi celebrated his victories by the performance of the Asvameda sacrifice.

TRENDS OF SOCIETY

PART–I - SOCIAL STRUCTURE

1. Pronounced varna distinctions in various spheres of life can be seen in the writings of the Gupta period. According to Varahamihira a Brahmana should have a house of five rooms, a Kshatriya of four, a Vaishya of three and a Shudra of two. He adds that in each case the length and breadth of the main room should vary in the order of the superiority of the four varnas. The old provision making for different rates of interest for different castes continued in Gupta times. A Puranic text compiled in Gupta times associates the four colours, white, red, yellow and black with Brahmana, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra respectively. This shows the relative status of the four orders.
2. The writings of the period emphasis that a brahmana should not accept food from a Shudra because it reduces his spiritual strength. Varna distinctions were also observed in legal matters. The law books lay down that a Brahmana should be tested by balance, a Kshatriya by fire, a Vaishya by water and a Shudra by poison. In lawsuits requiring deposit of sureties distinction between the twice-born and the Shudras was made. Equally discriminatory were the inheritance rules. A Shudra son of a person belonging to the higher castes would get the smallest share. According to the lawgiver Brihaspati the son of a twice-born from a Shudra woman was not entitled to any share in landed property. He also tells us that witnesses should belong to respectable families. Other legal texts state that Shudras could appear as witnesses only for members of their own caste. All this proves the class bias of law and justice.
3. The varna system did not always function smoothly. The Shanti Parva of the Mahabharata, which may be assigned to the Gupta period, contains at least nine verses which stress the need of combination of the Brahmanas and the Kshatriyas; these may indicate some kind of concerted opposition from the Vaishyas and Shudras. In one of these passages it is complained that at one stage the Vaishyas and Shudras wilfully began to unite themselves with the wives of Brahmanas. The Shudras seem to have been particularly hostile to the existing social order. The Anushashana Parva of the Mahabharata represents them as destroyers of the king. Another contemporary work describes them as hostile, violent, boastful, short-tempered, untruthful, extremely greedy, ungrateful, heterodox, lazy and impute. All this as well as passages from the legal texts would suggest a conflict between the Shudras and the ruling classes. But reference to actual revolt by the shudras against the upper classes are not recorded.
4. The varna system seems to have been considerably modified owing to the proliferation of castes. The Kashatriya caste swelled up with the influx of the Huns and subsequently of the Gurjars, who joined their rank as Rajputs. The increase in the number of Shudra castes and untouchables was largely due to the absorption of backward forest tribes into the settled varna society. Often guilds of craftsmen were transformed into castes. It has been suggested

that transfers of land or land revenue gave rise to a new caste, that of the Kayasthas (scribes), who undermined the monopoly of Brahmanas as scribes. This explains the frequent derogatory references to them in subsequent brahmanical writings.

In the countryside in northern India there emerged a class of village elders and headmen called Mahattaras who had to be informed of the land transfers. Later they also ossified into a caste. But the social implications of land grants and subinfeudation became pronounced in the post-Gupta period, when feudalism became well-established.

PART–II - STATUS OF WOMEN

1. The inferior status of women as it was previously continued more or less in the Gupta age. Aryan Patriarchal society had become the norm and that was primarily responsible for lowering the status of women. It was advocated that girls should be married before achieving puberty. Education was limited only to upper-class women. There was no purdah system but intimate contacts between men and women were not appreciated. Probably because of the influence of the foreigners, the practice of sati (burning oneself on the funeral of the husband) had come into vogue though it was restricted to upper class families and that to only at some places.
2. Because of increased property and city-life the institutions of prostitution and Nagara Vadhu (bride of the city) had also become popular. The system of devadasis (courtesans of God) was also practised. Devadasis were kept at the temple of Mahakala at Ujjayini. Thus, woman was certainly accorded a subordinate position to men in society.
3. Wife was idealised during the Gupta age. Woman, as wife, was expected to fulfill her responsibilities in an ideal way and observe high morality. She was expected to be an absolutely chaste and dutiful wife. However in return, she was provided all respect and security. No wife could be abandoned by her husband unless she was charged of having illicit relation with a low-born man, having produced a child by other man or attempting to murder her husband.
4. The different smritis, samhitas the Kamasutra of Vatsyayana, Amarakosa etc. provide us valuable information regarding the position of women during the Gupta-age. Therefore, we can say that though woman had a subordinate position to man and suffered from certain disabilities. Yet, by then, she was free from many social evils which crept up in Hindu society afterwards.
5. In this period certain features emerged which became characteristic of their position in subsequent times. They were not entitled to formal education. References to women teachers, philosophers and doctors are available in early Indian literature. But they are few. Lawgivers almost unanimously advocated early marriage; some of them preferred even prepuberty marriage. Celibacy was to be strictly observed by widows. The practice of sati (self-immolation at the funeral pyre of the husband) gained approval of the jurists. But it seems to have been confined to the upper classes. The first memorial of a sati dated ad 510, is found at Eran in Madhya Pradesh. Women were denied any right to property except for stridhana in the form of jewellery and garments. They themselves came to be regarded a sproperty which could be given or loaned to anybody. Their perpetual tutelage was argued forcefully. The social philosophy demanding increasing subjection of woman to man was a natural development in a patriarchal class-divided society based on developed notions of private property.

PART–III - THE UNTOUCHABLES

1. The practice of untouchability became more intense than in the earlier period. Penance was provided to remove the sin arising out of touching a chandala. Fa-hsien informs us that the chandala, entering the gate of a city or market place, would strike a piece of wood to give prior notice of his arrival so that men could avoid him.
2. The untouchables in general and the chandalas in particular are described in contemporary texts in very disparaging terms. They are characterised by impurity, untruth, theft, heterodoxy, useless quarrels, passion, wrath and greed.

PART–IV - THE SLAVES

1. The land charters of the Gupta period do not speak of slaves as being engaged in economic production. Although the law-giver Narada mentions fifteen kinds of slaves, they were mostly domestic servants employed in such impure work as sweeping the gateway, the privy, the road, removing the leavings of food, ordure, wine, etc. and rubbing the master's limbs or shampooing the secret parts of his body. Those engaged in agricultural activities are described by Narada as doing pure work and are not included in the category of slaves. The institution of slavery tended to become weak.
2. The land grants paved the way for feudal developments in India. Several inscriptions refer to the emergence of serfdom, which meant that the peasants were attached to their land even when it was given away. Perhaps this began in south India in the earlier period because a third-century Pallava inscription informs us that four sharecroppers remained attached to the plot which was given to Brahmanas. According to Fa-hsien monasteries built for monks were furnished with houses, gardens and fields, with husbandmen and cattle to cultivate them. This is not corroborated by epigraphic evidence from north India. But in Gujarat, central India and Orissa inscriptions from the sixth century indicate that the peasants were often required to remain on their land even when it was granted to others. Thus in certain parts of the country the position of independent peasants was undermined, and they were reduced to serfs or semiserfs.

PART–V - STANDARD OF LIVING

1. The living standard of the common people was simple but the town-life had become glamorous and sophisticated. Big, comfortable and well furnished houses with attached gardens were built in the cities and the rich people enjoyed all luxuries of life. The cities were kept clean and beautiful.
2. The contemporary literature abundantly points out the gay life of townsmen in the Gupta Age.

PART–VI - EDUCATION SYSTEM

1. The intellectual output of the age shows that the system of education, then in vogue, must have been sound.
2. According to inscriptions, the teachers were then known as Acaryas and Upadhyayas, but sometimes the title of Bhatta was also applied to the learned Brahmans. They were supported by the grant of villages and the charities of the generous public. The religious disciples, called Sisyas or Brahmacarins, were grouped round Sakhas and Caranas, i.e., Vedic schools following a particular recension of any one of the Vedas. Regarding the subjects of study, the fourteen sections of science (caturdasavidya), comprising the four Vedas, six Vedangas, the Puranas, the Mimansa, Nyaya and Dharma or Law. There are also references to the Vyakarana (Astadhyayi) of Salaturiya (Panini) and the Satasahasri-samhita or the Mahabharata.
3. In addition to these, instruction must have been imparted in the large mass of secular literature.
4. The catholicity of the age may further be judged from the fact that Nalanda, the great centre of Buddhist learning, was founded about the middle of the fifth century A.D. by Sakraditya, probably Kumaragupta I, who endowed a monastery there. Additional grants to the establishment were made by Budhagupta, Tathagatagupta, Baladitya, and other Gupta monarchs. Nalanda followed a very comprehensive curriculum of studies, and in due course it rose to such eminence that stu all parts of India, and even from beyond its frontiers, flocked here in order to satisfy their mental and spiritual thirst.

TRENDS IN RELIGION

PART–I

1. The Gupta period witnessed the crystallization of Hindunism- the old Brahmanical cult lost into oblivion, rituals gave way to personal devotion, sacrifies shrouded into obscurity and was superseded by worship, dominant role of the priests as a link between man and god lost ground.
2. Evolution of monotheistic concept, the concept of one great God. Vishnu and Shiva emerged as two manifestations of this great God. They came to be worshipped in various forms and attracted great following.
3. Development of the concept of Bhakti. Personal devotion became the core of the worship. This concept established relation between man and god where the devotee worshipped the Master in his own right and the latter bestow grace on the former.
4. Emergence of images as centre of workship an altogether novel aspect in religious sphere. This was manifestation of devotional elements.
5. A significant development in Hinduism was the concept of Awataras. This was the concept of incarnation of the great god Vishnu, who took various forms, animal, human etc in order to save the universe and mankind from disaster (A situation which occurred on account of degeneration of moral values.)
6. The deities worshipped at different geographical regions were recognised as identical and were worshipped as manifestation of one Supreme deity.

PART–II

1. The worship of Kartikeya, the God of War is mentioned in several inscriptions.
2. The Bilsad inscription of the time of Kumaragupta I refers to a temple for the worship of Svami Mahasena also named god Brahmanya in honour of whose worship the temple was equipped by a devotee with a gateway, rest house, aims house and a lofty pillar.

PART–III

1. The worship of the Sun was popular in the Gupta period. A guild of silk-weavers constructed a temple of the Sun at Dasapura. It also carried out repairs of the temple. In the time of Skanda Gupta, a temple of god Savita was founded by two Kshatriya merchants. an inscription records the grant made by Maharaja Sarvanatha of Uchchakalpa for the repairs of a shrine for the worship of god Aditya Bhattaraka.
2. A temple of the sun God is mentioned in the Gwalior inscription of Mihirakula. It is stated there that a temple of the Sun was built by one Matriceta on the mountain called Gopa. There was a temple at Asramaka in Baghelkhand. The images of the Sun God have also been found in Bengal. Inscriptions tell us that the Sun was specially invoked for curing diseases.

PART–IV

1. The worship of Nagas and Yakshas was fairly common among the lower classes of the population.
2. There was a Yaksha temple at Padmavati near Gwalior and a Maninaga shrine at Rajgir.

PART–V

1. Worship in public temples became fairly common during the Gupta period. Temples became centres of Hindu religion and culture. Their construction and decorations encouraged the sculptors, architects and painters.
2. Their service at the public worship required the musician and dancer. In that way temples were contributing to the cause of culture and religion. Those temples must have been richly endowed. Temple authorities spent a part of their income in poor relief.

PART–VI

1. Emergence of tantricism-faint beginning of tantric cults took place during the Gupta period. It brought to fore esoteric rituals & sexo-yogic practices. Female deities came to occupy respectable position and magical powers, its acquisition and manipulation became the hall-mark of tantricism.
2. Development of Shaktism led to attribution of female counterparts to gods. These female goddesses represented "shakti", the force and came to be worshipped in their own right. The popularity held view of the time was that the male gods could be activated by the female deities, the symbols of "shakti" and that they are complete with the merger of "shakti".

PART–VII

1. The Gupta period may be said to be a landmark in the development of philosophical ideas. The continuing philosophical debate now veered round the six schools of thoughts (shaddarshana), which became the chief, feature of Indian philosophy.
2. The six systems were: Nyaya (analysis). Vaisheshika (individual characteristics), Sankhya (enumeration), Yoga (application), Mimansa (inquiry), Vedanta (end of vedas).

PART–VIII

1. Buddhism had already split into, two major sects, Hinayana and Mahayana, each with number of sub sects. Through the emphasis on Bhakti and image workship and its enlarged pantheon with male and female deities, Mahayanism came closer to the Brahmanical religion.
2. From the fifth century onwards Mahaynism increasingly came under the influence of Tantric religion leading in the later centuries to the birth of Vajrayana (Thundervolt Vehicle), the Buddhism with emphasis on various magical rites.

PART–IX

1. Jainism largely remained conservative: but by the Gupta period it seems to have developed icons. The Jaina economical texts were standardised and were later committed to writing at another council commenced in AD 453 at Valabhi. The extent of Jaina influence perhaps diminished.
2. In certain areas of the Deccan and South India Jainism received support from the local ruling houses, though much of this patronage stopped in the later period.

PART–X

Christianity, which first appeared on Indian soil in pre Gupta times, remained mainly restricted to Malabar, where Syrian Church seems to have existed, Kalyana near Bombay is said to have received a bishop from Persia.

TRENDS IN LITERATURE

PART–I

The Gupta period witnessed an efflorescence in the field of literature. Sanskrit language and literature, after centuries of evolution, through lavish royal patronage reached what has been described as a level of classical excellence. The Puranas were originally composed by bards; in almost all of them the Suta Lomaharshana or his son Ugrahands shrava appears as the narrator. But by now they fell into the hands of the brahmanical priests who compiled the major Puranas, often writing new gods into them and making substantial interpolations. The Mahabharata, traditionally attributed to Vyasa, was also redacted; it was inflated from the original 24,000 verses to 1,000,000 verses. The various versions of the Panchatantra fables were elaborated in prose interspersed with gomic verses.

PART–II

Among the known Sanskrit poets of the period, the greatest name is that of Kalidasa, who lived in the court of Chandragupta II. The Meghaduta his lyrical poem of little over 100 graceful stanzas, contains the message from the love-lorn Yaksha to his wife pining across the northern mountains in Alaka. The Raghucamsha speaks of the all-round victories of Rama, and may indirectly refer to some Gupta conquests. The Kumarsambhava deals with the courtship of Shiva and Parvati and the birth of their son Skanda. The Rituasamhara describes the six seasons in relation to Shringara. The poems of Kalidasa remain unequalled in their metrical and verbal perfection. His most famous work, the play Abhijanara-shakuntalam, has for its theme the union of king Dushyanta with Shakuntala; it remains the supreme achievement of early Indian literature and stagecraft.

PART–III

Several other dramatists are said to have flourished during the supremacy of the Guptas. Shudraka, often supposed to be of royal lineage, wrote the Mrichchhakatika. Its plot centres round the love of a poor brahmana Charudatta for the wealthy, beautiful, accomplished and cultured courtesan Vasantasena. Vishakhadatta is the author of the Mudrarakshasa, which deals with the schemes of the shrewd Chankaya. The Devichandraguptam an another drama written by him has survived only in fragments.

PART–IV

The best poets and playwrights often found their richest pasture in man's passionate physical love for woman; literary descriptions of feminine beauty often tally with the voluptuous female figures represented in Ajanta murals. The life of the royal court was amply reflected in the plays; the only possible exception was the Mrichchhakatika. Sanskrit literature, like art was mainly enjoyed by the court, upper classes and the aristocracy. The uneducated masses could have hardly understood and much less appreciated the ornate court literature. Not surprisingly therefore the leading male characters of high social status in the contemporary plays speak polished Sanskrit and those of low status and all women speak Prakrit.

PART–V

Some important astronomical works were written, Aryabhata, the author of the Aryabhatiyam flourished in the fifth century. Contrary to the established Indian notion, he suggested that the earth revolves round the sun and rotates on its axis, though this did not affect later Indian astronomical practice. Through his efforts astronomy branched off as a separate discipline from mathematics. He was the first to use the decimal place-value system; but its invention is not attributed to him. Varahamihira, who lived towards the end of the fifth century, wrote several treaties on astronomy and horoscopy. His Panchsiddhantika deals with five astronomical system (siddhanta); two of these assume a close knowledge of Greek astronomy. The Laughu and Brihaj-Jataka, both written by him are works on horoscopy.

TRENDS OF ECONOMY / ECONOMIC PATTERN

PART–I - NATURE

1. The autonomy provided to economic organisations like guilds have been regarded as one of the basic features of the economy of the Gupta age.
2. Another basic feature of the economic life was that feudal system emerged partially during this age. The main interest of the economic history of the Gupta Age lies not so much in its foreign trade and money economy as in the partial feudalization of the land system and the rise of local units of production.
3. However it is not refuted that agricultural production had increased during the Gupta age. Thus, it is accepted that the system which the Gupta rulers evolved certainly brought increased prosperity to the people and strengthened the economic resources of the state.

4. It is only during the later Gupta period that we observe signs of a weak economy. Yet, it is difficult to deny that while the common people had a share in the increased property of the age, the largest share of it was grabbed by the mercantile community.

PART–II - AGRICULTURE

1. The period was marked by advancement in agriculture. Forest lands were cleared and brought under cultivation. Land was of three kinds-fallow or wasteland, crownland and privately owned land. The wasteland was generally donated in lieu of salary. The crownland was owned by the state. Though it could also be donated, it was not usually done. The reason was that it was already under plough and yielding income. The last category of land was held by private owners.
2. Amarakosa describes many types of soil and their relative fertility, Land prices depended on the fertility of the land. Thus the price of arable-land was higher than the price of the waste-land. There seems to be no change in the agricultural implements and the lines of agricultural operations in the this period. Brihat-samhita speaks of two principal harvests for the summer and for the autumn crops.
3. Amarakosa refers to several kinds of rice, which was one of the main crops cultivated. The other crops were wheat, barley, peas, oilseeds, ginger, spices, pepper, sugarcane, fruits and vegetables.
4. Irrigational facilities were improved. The Sudarsana lake repaired once before by Rudradaman was repaired again when it breached during the Gupta period. Water wheels were used for irrigation of land. Provincial governments were assigned the responsibility to build canals, dams, wells etc.

PART–III - CRAFT

1. There was considerable amount of industrial activity under the Guptas. The textile industry was one of the important industries during the period. There was not only a vast domestic market for the textiles, but there was also a great demand for them outside India. All kinds of textiles were made- silk, muslin, calico, linen, wool and cotton. We have a reference io the members of a guild of silk weavers in Western India giving up the manufacture of silk and taking up other occupations. It is likely that silk production had declined in the Gupta period. This might have been due to import of silk in large quantity from China consequent on the increasing use of the central Asian route and the sea route to China or it might have been due to the decline inn trade with Rome. Or it is likely that this decline was only in Western India and not in the other parts of the country.
2. Metal work was another important industry especially copper, iron, lead and bronze. The Meherauli Iron Pillar with an inscription of Chandra is considered a marvel of metallurgic skill. More than seven metres tall and weighing over 6000 kg it has not corroded or rusted. Iron of high quality was also exported. The art of jewellery was well-developed. Gold and silver were mainly used for making jewels.
3. The cutting and polishing of precious stones like jasper, agate, etc., reached high development. Ivory work was in a flourishing state. As sculpture was very much in favour during this period, stone-cutting and carving prospered. As pearls were in great demand in foreign countries, pearl-fishery flourished in western India.
4. Another important industry was pottery. Instead of elegant black polished ware an ordinary red ware with brownish slip was manufactured in large quantities. Sometimes mica was added to give metallic finish to the pottery.

PART–IV - GUILDS

1. The organisation of trade and industry in guilds was a feature of Indian economic life since early times, and it continued to be so during the Gupta age as well. Trade and industry, both high and low, were organised in guilds. There were guilds not only of the traders and bankers but also those of manual workers like weavers and stone-cutters.

2. As against the Mauryas who kept trade and industry under state control, the Gupta rulers emphasised the autonomy and independence of economic and administrative units and organisation. Therefore, these guilds enjoyed sufficient autonomy to manage their own affairs and participated effectively in the economic life of the people.
3. These guilds had their own property and trusts, worked as bankers, settled disputes of their members and issued their hundis and probably even coins. Probably this was one reason why the Gupta rulers did not issue copper coins.
4. Guilds continued to play a major role in the manufacture of good as well as in commerce. They were practically independent in their internal organisation. They had their own laws which the government respected. These laws were prepared by the corporation of guilds. Each guild was member of this corporation. Some of the industrial guilds like the silk weavers guilds had their own separate corporation. Such corporations were responsible for large-scale projects like endowments for building a temple. The corporation of guilds had its own functionaries, the chief among them being the elected advisers.
5. The guilds had their own seals and military arrangements for protecting their merchandise. At Basarh (ancient Vaisali) numerous sealing have been found. They belonged to a joining guild of bankers, traders and transport merchants having branches in various parts of north India. All their articles and letters were sent under a seal for preventing fraud. In an emergency, the guild could raise a militia from among its own members and employees for the protection of its merchandise and other property.

PART–V - TRADE

1. Both internal and foreign trade flourished during this period. It was carried on both by sea and land. All important cities and port like Broach, Ujjayini, Vidisa, Prayaga, Banaras, Gaya, Pataliaputra, Vaisali, Tamralipti, Kausambi, Mathura, Peshawar, etc. were well connected by public highways and the state arranged all facility and security for the travellers and traders. Trade was carried on even through rivers like the Ganges, the Brahmaputra, the Narmada, the Godavari, the Krishna and the Kaveri, Kalyan, Chaul, Broach and Cambay were the principal ports of the Deccan and Gujarat. Besides, brisk trade was carried on with countries of South-East Asia and China from the ports of South India. India carried on huge profitable trade with the Roman empire in the West. It became so unfavourable to the Romans that their government had to put restrictions on trade with India.
2. The campaigns of Samudra Gupta improved the means of communication. As a result, goods moved to all parts of India quite easily. Pack animals and ox-drawn carts were used for transportation by roads. The Ganges, the Jumna, the Narmada, the Godavari, the Krishna and the Kaveri served as the chief waterways. The conquest of western India by Chandra Gupta II brought the Gangetic provinces into direct communication with the western ports, especially those of Gujarat and through Gujarat with Alexandria and Europe. At the same time the land route through Persia continued to be used for purposes of trade. The literature of the period speaks about the sea voyages undertaken by the Hindus in pursuit of gain.
3. The chief articles of export were spices, pepper, sandalwood, pearls, precious stones, perfumes, indigo and medicinal herbs. The chief imports were China-silk, horses from Arabia, Iran and Bactria and ivory from Ethiopia. The increasing trade led to the development of Indian shipping. Ships which could carry 500 men were used for the purpose of trading with foreign lands.

PART–VI - COINAGE

1. Most of the Gupta rulers issued only gold coins. Chandragupta II issued silver coins for the first time while copper coins were first issued by Kumaragupta. Circulation of coins gave impetus to economic activities. The period witnessed considerable degree of monetisation.
2. Towards the end, financial crisis and growing importance of land adversely affected level of monetisation. Debasement of gold coins towards the end reflect this decline.

PART–VII - GROWTH OF CITIES

1. One of the indications of the economic prosperity under the Guptas was the rapid growth of cities. The testimony of Fahien is confirmed by inscriptions of the Gupta period that Magadha was a prosperous country with rich towns possessing large population. Pataliputra was the Imperial capital and it must have been the centre of all economic activities. Though Pataliputra remained the official capital of the Gupta Empire, Ayodhya also rose to great prominence and was perhaps regarded as the second capital of the Empire. Ujjain was the capital of Malwa. It was the headquarters of the Kshatrapas but it was conquered by Chandragupta II and added to the Gupta empire. Chandragupta II made it a practice to treat Ujjain as his capital and he lived there for some months in a year. Ujjain became the centre of all cultural activities sponsored by the Gupta emperor. Gargaratatapura was a city situated on the bank of the river Gogra in Saran District. It is written in an inscription that this city was adorned with wells, tanks, temples, worship halls. pleasure gardens etc.
2. Dasapura in Western Malwa was a flourishing town where a guild of silk weavers migrated from the Lata province as it was attracted by the virtues of the sovereign. Airikina is described as Svabhoganagara or pleasure resort of Samudra Gupta. Vaisali was situated to the North of Pataliputra, in modern Muzaffarpur district. It seems to have been an important industrial and administrative centre. The other cities mentioned in the Gupta inscriptions are Indrapura, Manapura and Ginnagara. These cities must have been characterised by great architectural beauty. As regards important sea ports, Tamralipti was on the Eastern coast and Bhrigukaccha on the Western coast. These sea ports served as the main spring-boards for Indian merchantmen and played an important part in the economic life of the country.

PART–VIII - OTHER TRENDS

1. Along with the traditional domestic system, capitalistic methods of production and distribution seem to have been prevalent in the Gupta period. Hired labour was used for agriculture, rearing of animals, industry, trade and domestic service, lending money and collecting interest for the money lent were prevalent.
2. The Buddhist Sangha in certain area, acted as a banker and advanced loans on interest, besiders renting land in areas where land gifts had been made to the Sangha. The rate of interest varied according to the purpose for which money was needed.
3. One interesting feature seen in this period was that the average rate of interest charged on loans required for foreign trade was not so high as it was under the Mauryas. This was probably due to the increased confidence in overseas trade.

PART–IX - FA-HIEN'S PORTRAYAL

1. Fa-hien's portrayal is an excellent commentary on the economic condition of the Gupta empire and the role of private initiative in the foundation of institutions for the alleviation of the sufferings of the people.
2. This (Magadha) has the largest cities and towns. Its people are rich and thriving and emulate one another in practising charity of heart and duty to one's neighbour. The elders and gentry of these countries have instituted in their capitals free hospitals and hither come all poor and helpless patients, orphans, widowers and cripples. They are well taken care of, a doctor attends them, food and medicine being supplied according to their needs. They are all more quite comfortable and when they are cured they go away. Extensive foreign trade and vigorous industrial life at home contributed to this general prosperity.

GUPTA COINAGE

1. Allan published in 1914 Catalogue of the Coins of the Gupta Dynasties. This work contains a systematic study of the Gupta coins.
2. The early gold coins of the Guptas closely resembles the coins of the later Kushanas. The obverse of the Kushana proto-type, the king standing and offering incense at the altar is very common in the earlier stages of the Gupta coins. The reverse was also a copy of the Kushana type which had Ardoksho seated on a high-backed throne.

3. However, later on the coins were completely Indianised. The Greek legend was replaced by the Brahmi legend. The peacock Kushana cap was never put on the head of a Gupta emperor. Ardoksho was replaced by goddess Laxmi seated on a lotus. The Kushana method of the king offering incense at the altar lingered on for a few decades.
4. The Guptas introduced along with it new artistic types, e.g., archer type, battle-axe type, tiger-slayer type, lion-slayer type, Chhatra type, horseman type, elephant type etc. Most of these new coins are original in conception and do not show any sign of foreign influence. Their execution is very fine. The best coins may be seen in the Asvamedha coins of Samudragupta and the lion-slaver type of Chandragupta II. However, the art began to decline from the time of Kumargupta I.
5. The legends on the coins are materical and possesses considerable poetic merit. The legend Vijitavanira Vanipatin Kumaragupta Divam Jayati, was introduced by Kumargupta I and it was copied not only by Skandagupta and Buddhagupta but also by Tormana, Isanavarman, Avanivarman and Harsha.
6. The view of Allan was that the coins bearing the figures of Chandragupta I and his queen Kumaradevi are commemorative medals struck by his son Samudragupta. However, this view is not accepted by Dr. A. S. Altekar.
7. There are many coins of Samudragupta - (a) Tiger type of coins, (b) Lyrist type of coins, (c) Asvamedha type of coins, (d) Archer type of coins, (e) We have a large number of coins of Chandragupta II, (f) Archer Type, (g) Couch type of coins, (h) Chhattra type of coins, (i) Lion Slayer type coins, (j) Horseman type of coins.
8. Silver coins were started by Chandragupta II after his conquest of the Western Kshatrapas. The size, weight and fabric of those coins are closely similar to those of the Kshatrapa ones. Originally, they were intended to be circulated only in those provinces which were included in Kshatrapa kingdom. Those coins bear the Kshatrapa bust on the observe and meaningless traces of a Greek-legend. The year of issue is given in the Gupta era and the Garuda is substituted for the three-arched hit on the reverse.
9. We have a very large number of coins of Kumargupta I. Those are of various varieties, viz., archer type, Asvamedha type, horseman type, lion slayer type, tiger slayer type, elephant rider type, etc. Most of the coins were like the coins issued by his predecessors however, the elephant rider type was introduced by Kumargupta I.
10. Chandragupta II had issued silver coins only for the provinces which were previously under the Western Satraps. In the time of Kumargupta I, silver coins were issued for the home provinces of the Gupta empire. In these coins, the meaningless traces of Greek letters were discarded and the Kshatrap bust was discontinued. The Garuda on the reverse was replaced by the peacock. Skandagupta and Buddhagupta also continued the silver coinage of the peacock variety.
11. The archer type of coins of Skandagupta are mainly of gold the king is seen with a bow and a Garuda Dhvaja. Some coins have the legend Kramaditya which is the title of Skandagupta. Some coins of Skandagupta have garuda, bull and altar. The altar is found on the silver coins of Skandagupta.

GUPTA INSCRIPTIONS

PART–I

Inscriptions are also helpful in writing the history of the Gupta period. Dr. Fleet rendered a great service by publishing in 1888 the third volume of Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum or Inscriptions of the Early Gupta Kings and their successors. Dr. Fleet brought together not only the inscriptions of the early Guptas but also of the later Guptas. The first 16 inscriptions in the above-mentioned Corpus refer to the early Guptas. Their dates range from 360 AD to 466 AD. The direct line of the early Gupta dynasty is taken to end with Skandagupta, Buddhagupta and Bhanugupta with their respective dates AD 484 and 510 are mentioned in Nos. 19 and 20 of the Corpus.

PART–II

The Allahabad Pillar Inscription of Samudragupta gives us a detailed account of the conquests of the Indian Napoleon.

PART–III

The Eran Stone No. 2 Inscription of Samudragupta's period contains a record of the power and achievements of Samudragupta.

PART–IV

The Udayagiri Cave Inscription, the Mathura Stone Inscription, the Sanchi Stone Inscription and the Gadhawa Stone Inscription of the time of Chandragupta II give us a lot of information regarding the attitude of the State towards religion.

PART–V

The Gadhwa Stone Inscription, the Bilsad Stone Pillar Inscription and the Mankuwar Stone Image Inscription refer to Kumargupta I.

PART–VI

The Bihar Stone Pillar Inscription in two parts, the Bhitari Stone Pillar Inscription, the Junagadh Rock Inscription, the Kahaum Stone Pillar Inscription and the Indore Copper Plate Inscription refer to Skandagupta.

PART–VII

The Bhitari Pillar Inscriptionof Skandagupta tells us about his fight with the Pushyamitras and probably also with the Huns during the reign of his father Kumargupta I. We learn from this inscription about the achievements of Skandagupta. He was still the Crown prince. He is mentioned as having inflicted a crushing defeat on the invader or invaders and marched triumphantly back to the capital. On his return, his father seems to have abdicated in his favour.

PART–VIII

The Meharuli Iron pillar Inscription refers to one King Chandra. This pillar was brought to Mehrauli near Delhi from its original place on a hill near the Bias by a ruler of Delhi. It is stated in that Inscription that King Chandra conquered the Vanga countries after fighting against a confederacy of enemies united against him. He also conquered the Vahlikas in a running fight across the seven mouths of the river Sindhu. He spread his fame as a conqueror up to the Southern Seas. He achieved sole Supreme authority in the world by the prowess of his army.

HISTORICITY OF RAMA GUPTA

PART–I - THE ISSUE

For a long time, it was unanimously held on the basis of epigraphic records that Samudragupta was succeeded by Chandragupta II. However, certain new material has been found on whose basis it is contended that Samudragupta was not succeeded by Chandragupta II but by Rama gupta.

PART–II - EVIDENCE

1. The Natyadarpan by Ramchandra Gunachandra tells us that Rama Gupta was the sone and successor of Samudragupta. This book contains the fragment of a famous historical drama Mudrarakshasa written by Vishakhadutta. It is stated therein that Samudragupta was succeeded by Rama Gupta who married Dhruvadevi or Dhruvaswamini. This lady was later on

married to Chandragupta II and she became the mother of Kumargupta I and Prince Govind Gupta.

2. There are certain extracts from a historical drama known as Devichandraguptam in the Shrinagararupakam by king Bhoja of Dhara. It is stated there that Rama Gupta sustained a humilitating defeat at the hands of the Sakas, in order to secure the safety of his people, he agreed to surreder his queen to the Saka king. There was a long dialogue between Rama Gupta and his queen, Dhruvadevi. Rama Gupta maintained that he was doing so for the sake of his subjects. The queen resented the action of her husband and complained of his heartlessness and cowardice. Rama Gupta's younger brother, Chandragupta, protested against this act of dishonour and offered himself to go to the camp of the enemy in disguise of queen Dhruvadevi in order to kill the Saka king. Chandragupta actually disguised himself as a woman and killed the Saka king in his camp. By doing so, he not only saved the empire but also the honour of the queen and dynasty. This incident raised Chandragupta in the eyes of Dhruvadevi and the people. The conduct of Rama Gupta was condemned. There was an estrangement between Rama Gupta and Chandragupta. Chandragupta pretended madness and ultimately succeeded in killing Rama Gupta. He not only placed himself on the throne but also married the widow of his brother.
3. It is stated in the Harscharita of Bana that Chandragupta in the guise of female, killed the Saka king possessed of lust for another's wife at the very city of the enemy.
4. In the Sanjan plates of the Rashtrakuta king, Amoghavarsha I of 817 AD., it is stated thus : That donor in the Kali age, who was of the Gupta lineage, having killed his brother, we are told, seized his kingdom and queen. The Cambay and Sang Plates of the Rashtrakuta king Govinda IV of the years 930 and 933 AD respectively refer to one Sahasanka who killed his elder brother and married his widow.
5. Chandragupta Vikramaditya has been the subject of a good deal of folkore. The story as given in Devichandraguptam is to be found in an Arabic work translated into Persian by Abdul Hussan Ali in 1226 AD. It is stated there that when King Rawal was faced with an invasion of his kingdom, he agreed to surrender his queen to the invader. His brother, barkamaris, put on the dress of the queen and killed the invader. Later on, barkamaris killed Rawal and married the widowed queen.
6. On the basis of the above mentioned facts, Dr. A.S. Atekar has come to the conclusion that Samudragupta was succeeded by his son Rama Gupta and not by Chandragupta II. Rama Gupta was an utterly weak and incapable ruler. The result was that the Saka King compelled him to agree to surrender his queen Dhruvadevi to him Chandragupta, the younger brother of Rama Gupta saved the situation by killing the Saka king while disguised as Dhruvadevi. After that Rama Gupta was killed either by Chandragupta himself or by somebody else at his instigation. Chandragupta married Dhruvadevi and made her the Chief Queen. A large number of scholars have put forward their theories to support fully or partially the contention of Dr. Altekar.
7. A large number of articles have appeared in the various volumes of the journal of the Numismatic Society of India and other Journals. Recently, Dr. C.C. Dasgupta has made an attempt to give a new interpretation to the information found in the Devichandraguptam.

PART–III - CRITICISM

1. There has been a lot of criticism of the view that Rama Gupta was a historical person and he intervened between Samudragupta and Chandragupta II. According to Dr. Raychaudhuri, The tradition that a Gupta king killed his brother and took his wife and crown dates only from the ninth century. The literary evidence on this point is discrepant and hardly conclusive. The version given by Bana and his commentator differs in important aspects from the story of the Kavyamimansa. The simple story narrated in the Harshcharita was doubtless embellished by later poets and dramatists. The Devichandraguptam and similar works are as much unsuited to form basis of the chronicles of Chandragupta II as the Mudrarakshasa and the Asokavadana are in regard to the doing of the great Mauryas.
2. According to Dr. J.N. Banerjee, After appraising all the available data in question, he (Dr.

Altekar) has admitted the paucity of convincing evidence about the historicity of Rama Gupta episode, but yet he is inclined to accept its probability. The recent discovery of some copper coins with the partially legible name of Rama gupta on them does not seem to have any direct bearing on the problem, for their issuer was most probably a petty ruler of some locality in Central India. His arguments in support of their attribution to Rama Gupta of the story are not convincing. The author appears to have been in two minds about the problem and his tentative assignment of the reign of Rama Gupta to period between c. AD 370-75 is at least conjectural in character.

3. Critics point out that the whole story is unconvincing. It cannot be believed that the inheritor of the mighty empire of Samudragupta was so very weak that he could be defeated by a Saka king in such a way that he had to agree to surrender his wife. Such a thing could not be expected from a Gupta king. The code of honour in Gupta period was much more higher than in later days when the Hindus sacrificed their lives to avenge insult and women jumped into blazing fire.
4. It is also pointed out that Chandragupta II has been described as Tatparigrihita in inscriptions. That term implies that he was selected by his father for the throne. Under the circumstances, the question of Rama Gupta intervening between Chandragupta II and Samudragupta does not arise. It cannot be contended that Rama Gupta captured the throne by force while Chandragupta has been described as a very strong person, Rama Gupta has been described as a weakling and an imbecile, There was no chance of Rama Gupta succeeding against Chandragupta II.
5. It is also pointed out that the details of the incident as given in the Harshcharita of Bana, the Kavyamimansa of Rajasekhara and the Rashtrakuta inscriptions differ from one another regarding the place of the incident, the identification of the other's wife and also the victim of the strategy of Chandragupta II. It is merely stated in the Harshcharita that the Saka king was possessed of lust for the wife of another person and Chandragupta killed him in the guise of a woman. The other details were added later on. It was then stated there that the other man was Rama or Sena Gupta. It was laster on added that Dhruvadevi who is described as the Chief Queen of Chandragupta II in the inscriptions, was originally the wife of Rama Gupta. It was also added later on that Chandragupta killed Rama Gupta and married his widow.
6. Critics also point out that although we have a large number of inscriptions and coins of the Gupta period, there is not a single reference to king Rama Gupta.
7. When the copper coins of one Ram Gupta were discovered at Besnagar, Dr. Altekar contended that these coins tend to support the historicity of the literary episode. These coins were found at Besnagar in Malwa in 1951. They have the name of Rama Gupta in the obverse. It is contended that the legend on the coins reads as Rama Gupta in the Gupta script. Critics point out that Rama Gupta of these coins was a local ruler of Malwa.
8. It is suggested that Rama Gupta was a local ruler who was subjected to a humiliating condition by the Saka king of Ujjain. That saka king was killed by Chandragupta II. There is nothing to show that Rama Gupta was the elder brother of Chandragupta II or Dhruvadevi was his queen and she later on became the wife of Chandragupta II. It is rightly pointed out that while the story of Rama Gupta cannot be dismissed as a figment of imagination we cannot also accept it as a historical fact.

THE NALANDA UNIVERSITY

PART–I

It was founded in the 5th century AD by one of the later Gupta emperors (according to a view, by Kumargupta I). It was endowed by monarchs and rich men from all parts of India and the Hindu colonies overseas. In course of time it became a truly international centre of learning.

PART–II

1. The University of Nalanda had imposing buildings. There were at least 8 colleges built by different patrons including one by Balaputradeva king of Srivijaya or Sumatra. The colleges were built in rows. The stone inscription of Yasovarmadeya from Nalanda praises the grandeur of the buildings. Hiuen Tsang tells us that the whole of the university area was enclosed by a brick wall. One gate opens into the great college from which are separated eight other halls standing in the middle. The richly adorned towers and fairy like turrets like the pointed hill tops are congregated together. All the outside courts in which are the priests chambers are of four stages. The stages have dragon projections and coloured caves, pearl-red pillars carved and ornamented richly adorned balustrades and roofs covered with titles that reflect the light in a thousand shades.
2. The Nalanda University had not only a magnificent building, but all other kinds of facilities were also provided to students for their studies. We are told that there were three great libraries called Ratnasagar (sea of Gems), Ratnadadhi (Ocean of Gems) and Ratnaranjak (Collection of Gems).

PART–III

There were more than 10,000 students including teachers of all kinds. They came from Korea, Mongolia, Japan, China, Tibet, Ceylon, Greater India and various parts of India. As a matter of fact they came from all parts oi the Buddhist world. We know the names of many Korean scholars, viz., Huih-Nieh and Aryavarman. The presence of Huih-Nieh is attested to by the fact that Itsing discovered on a manuscript the statement : While dwelling under the tooth-brush tree, the Korean priest Huih Nieh wrote this record.

PART–IV

Not only persons came to Nalanda from outside, the Nalanda scholars went to various parts of the world and were responsible for the spread of Buddhism. Those Nalanda scholars who worked in Tibet were Santarakshita, Padmasambhava, Kamalasila, Sthiramati and Buddhakriti. The names of those who worked in China were Kumarajiva, Paramartha Subhakara Simha and Dharmadeva.

PART–V

The Nalanda University was primarily a Buddhist Vihara. It was established with a view to propagate the teachings of Buddha. In that capacity, it helped thousands of Buddhist monks to study Buddhism day and night. To those persons Nalanda was the temple of God. However, the Nalanda University outgrew the limits of a mere Vihar of Buddhist learning. In course of time, subjects in addition to Buddhism also came to be taught. We are told that the subjects of study at Nalanda University were all the four Vedas, Hetu Vidya or logic, Sabd Vidya or grammar, Chikitsa Vidya or medicine, Samkhya, Yoga, Nyaya and the Buddhist works of the different schools. The names of some of the most famous teachers of the Nalanda University were Nagarjuna, Archadeva, Anga, Silabhadra, Vasubandhu, Dinnaga, Dharmapala, Chandrapala, Prabhamitra Jinamitra, Jnanachandra etc. We are told that in addition to the above, there were some thousands of brethren all men of great ability and learning, several hundreds being highly esteemed and famous.

PART–VI

Nalanda University was not an ordinary university. It was a post-graduate institution to which admission was very difficult. Before admission, an examination was held in which hardly 20% students passed and the rest of 80% were rejected. Only the most brilliant were admitted to the University. Hiuen Tsang tells us that people came to this University to perfect their knowledge. After acquiring that knowledge they went to the various parts of the world. To quote Hiuen Tsang, Learned men from different cities who desire quickly to acquire a renown indiscussion come here in multitudes.

PART–VII

A lot of property was donated to the Nalanda University for its maintenance. The University had its own paddy fields and agricultural and dairy farms for the supply of rice and milk. The Nalanda University functioned as a corporate body and the same was the case with the affiliated colleges or Viharas. We have come across many seals from Nalanda which has the following inscription on them : Sri-Nalanda-Mahavihara-Arya-Bhikshu-Sanghasya (of the Governing Body of the august University of Nalanda). Most of the seals have the figure of Dharmachakra.

PART–VIII

The Nalanda University stood for the ideal of freedom in learning. It welcomed knowledge from all quarters, from all sects and creeds. It was a genuine university and not a mere sectarian and denominational school.

PART–IX

The University of Nalanda continued to flourish for five centuries even after the visit of Itsing. The history of the end of the Nalanda University is in a way the history of the extinction of Buddhism from India.

FAHIEN (399-411 AD) ACCOUNT OF INDIA

PART–I - INTRODUCTION

1. Fahien, the Chinese traveller visited India during the reign of Chandragupta II. He came to India by the land route and went back by the sea route. On his journey, he passed through about 30 countries. He spent six years in travel alone and another six years on study in India.
2. We are told that he had to spend three years in writing and speaking Sanskrit and copying out the disciplines. His main object in coming to India was to get the Buddhist Books of Discipline which had become practically unknown in China. Four other persons joined him in his mission but unlike Fahien, they have not let behind any account of what they saw and did.

PART–II - FAHIEN'S VISITS

1. Fahien visited Shan-shan where he saw 4,000 Buddhists of the Hinayana school. In the Tartar countries he saw many Buddhists studying Indian language and books. In Khotan, he saw thousands of Buddhist monks of the Mahayana school. At the Gomati monastery alone, there were more than 3,000 monks and there were 14 such monasteries in Khotan. There were 1,000 Buddhist monks in Kashgar whose king was also a Buddhist belonging to the Hinayana school. Fahien visited Gandhara, Taxila and Peshawar which were full of Buddhist monuments. In Afghanistan, Fahien found 3,000 Buddhist monks belonging to the Hinayana and Mahayana schools. He also visited Bannu which had many Buddhist monks.
2. In the Punjab, Fahien saw many Buddhist monasteries and he estimates the number of monks there at more than 10,000. At Mathura alone, Fahien found 20 monasteries with 3,000 Buddhist monks. He visited the country known as the Middle Kingdom. He visited Sravasti which was full of Buddhist monuments. He visited Buddhist places like Lumbini, Vaisali, Nalanda, Gaya, Bodhgaya and Rajgriha. He also visited Ceylon and stayed there for two years. From there he went to Java and from there back to China.
3. Fahien was so much absorbed in his mission that he did not bother to mention the name of Chandragupta II who was ruling at the time. However, he has given us a very pleasing picture of the country with some very intimate details.

PART–III - ABOUT POLITICAL SYSTEM

1. Fahien tells us that the region south of Mathura was called the middle Kingdom (Malwa). This region was the stronghold of Brahmanism. The Government was very much enlightened and

efficient. The people are numerous and happy; they have not to register their households, or attend to any magistrates and their rules; only those who cultivate the royal land have to pay a portion of the grain from it. I they want to go, they go : if they want to stay on, they stay. The king governs without decapitation or other corporal punishments. Criminals are simply fined, lightly or heavily, according to the circumstances of each case. Even in cases of repeated attempts at wicked rebellion, they only have their right hands cut off. The King's bodyguards and attendants all have salaries.

2. It was the custom of the kings, elders and gentry to build shrines, give lands, houses, gardens with men and bullocks for cultivation binding title-deeds were written out, which subsequent kings did not dare disregard.
3. The revenue of the Government was mainly derived from the rents of the Crown lands. The royal officers were paid fixed salaries and there was no occasion for them to live on the people.

PART–IV - ABOUT SOCIAL LIFE

1. Throughout the whole country the people do not kill any living creature, nor drink intoxicating liquor, nor eat onions or garlic. The only exception is that of the Chandalas. In buying and selling commodities they used cowries.
2. Fahien tells us that the Chandalas lived separately front the other people. When they entered a city or a bazar, they were required to strike a piece of wood as warning of their approach so that the other people may not be polluted by their contact with them. They were the only offenders against the laws of piety.
3. Charitable institutions were numerous. People built alongside or out of the way roads, homes of charity where shelter with bed and food and drink is offered to travellers and wandering monks passing to and from; but the time allowed for remaining is different in each case.
4. Fahien tells that the rich people have instituted in their capitals free hospitals and hither come all poor or helpless patients, orphans, widows and cripples. They are well taken care of a doctor attends them, food and medicine being supplied according to their needs. They are all made quite comfortable and when they are cured, they go away.

PART–V - ABOUT RELIGION & RELIGIOUS LIFE

1. Rooms with beds and mattresses, food and clothes are provided for resident and travelling monks without fail and this is the same in all places. Pagodas are built in honour of Sariputta, Moggalan and Ananda and also in honour of the Abhidhamma, the Vinaya and the Suttas.
2. Pious families organised subscriptions to make offerings to monks of various articles of clothing, the things they need after the annual Retreat. Down from the time of the Lord Buddha's Nirvana, the kings, chiefmen and householders have raised viharas for the monks, and have provided for their support by endowing them with fields, houses, gardens, servants and cattle. These church-lands are guaranteed to them by copper plate grants, which are handed down from reign to reign and no one has had the temerity to cancel them.
3. All the resident priests who are allotted cells in the viharas have beds mats, food and drink supplied to them; they pass their time in performing acts of mercy in reciting the scriptures or in meditation. When a stranger arrives at the monastery, the senior priests escort him to the guest-house, carrying his robes and his alms-bowl for him. They offer him water to wash his feet and oil for anointing and prepare a special meal for him. After he has rested a while, they ask him his rank in the priesthood and according to his rank they assign him a chamber and bedding.
4. During the months after the rain-rest, the pious collect a united offering for the priesthood; and the priests in their turn hold a great assembly and preach the Law. When the priests have received their dues, the householders and Brahmanas present them with all sorts of robes and other necessaries; and the priests also make one another offerings. And so ever since the Lord Buddha passed away from the earth, the rules of conduct of the priesthood have been handed down without intermission.

PART–VI - ABOUT TOWNS & CITIES

1. Fahien was very much impressed by the city of Pataliputra and also the palace of Asoka. According to him to the palace with its various halls was built by spirits who piled up stones, constructed walls and gates, carved designs, engraved and inlaid after no human fashion. Asoka's palace was still in existence at the time of Fahien's visit. Near a Stupa built by Asoka.
2. Fahien saw two monasteries, one of which was occupied by the followers of the Mahayana school and the other by the Hinayana school. The total number of monks living in both the monasteries was six or seven hundred. However, they were so famous for their learning that their lectures were attended by students and inquirers from all quarters. Fahien himself spent three years there studying Sanskrit. He was happy to get certain books on monastic discipline.
3. Fahien admired the splendid procession of images carried on about 20 huge cars richly decorated. These processions were taken out every year and paraded through the city on the 8th day of the second month. Those were attended by singers and musicians. Similar processions were common in other parts of the country.
4. Fahien tells us that the city of Gaya was empty and desolate. The holy places of Bodhgaya were surrounded by jungle. An extensive tract of the country near the foot of the mountains which was thickly populated in the 5th century BC was now sparsely inhabited.
5. There were only 200 families in the city of Sravasti. The holy places of Kapilavastu and Kusinagara were waste and deserted. There were only a few monks and lay attendants who clung to the places on account of their sanctity and devotion and lived on the aims offered to them.

SKANDA GUPTA (455-467 AD) AND THE HUNAS

1. Most of the information about Skanda Gupta and the Huna wars is to be found in the Bhitari pillar inscription. The Bhitari village is about 5 miles to the north-east of Saiyadpur, in the Ghazipur district. There is a red sandstone pillar outside the village and it has a long inscription in 19 lines. It is from this inscription that we learn that Skandagupta spent a whole night on the bare ground during the Huna wars in the lifetime of his father in his efforts to restore the fallen fortunes of his family.
2. The Bhitari pillar inscription also gives the following account with regard to the Huna war; who when (his) father had attained the skies, conquered (his) enemies by the strength of (his) arm, and established again the ruined fortunes of (his) lineage and then crying, The victory has been achieved, betook himself to (his) mother, whose eyes were full of tears from joy, just as Krishna, when he had slain (his) enemies, betook himself to (his mother) Devaki.
3. It is stated in the Junagadh rock inscription that when Skanda Gupta's father had died, he by his own prowess, humbled his enemies and made subject to himself the earth bounded by the four oceans and flourishing countries. He also destroyed at its roots the pride of his enemies in the Mlechchha countries and made them announce that victory had been achieved by him. The memory of the victory over the Mlechchhas is preserved in the story of King Vikramaditya in Somadeva's Katha-Sarit-Sagar.
4. In the Kahaum pillar inscription, Skanda Gupta's achievements are mentioned in these words: The heads of hundred kings fell at his feet as they tendered their homage to him at his Darbar Hall (Upasthana), the King who was the Lord of Hundred Kings, the equal of Indra who installed peace in his empire.

THE HUNAS

1. The Hunas were a band of nomad savages. They originally lived in the neighbourhood of China. They advanced towards the West and divided themselves into two parts. One part of them went towards the Volga and the other to the Oxus. Those Hunas who went to Europe

were called the Black Hunas and their greatest leader was Attila. Those Hunas who came and settled in Persia and India came to be known as the White Hunas or Ephthalites. They became powerful in the Oxus valley towards the middle of the 5th century. In 484 AD their king Akhschounwar defeated and killed Feroz, the Sassanian ruler of Persia. This victory added to the prestige of Hunas and by the end of the 6th century AD, they ruled over a vast empire with their principal capital at Balkh.

2. The Hunas attacked India in the time of Skanda Gupta but they were beaten back. The defeat must have been so crushing that they did not dare to attack India again for a long time.
3. We do not possess much reliable information with regarded to the activities of the Hunas in India. The names of two kings, Toramana and Mihirkula are known from coins and inscriptions.
4. A great conqueror, Toramana was a shrewd statesman who had revived the lost fortune of the Hunas, built up a vast empire from Central Asia to Pataliputra through his prowess, foresight, cool mindedness, diplomacy and conciliatory attitude. He made no change in the existing administrative pattern and disturbed none unnecessarily. He enticed officers like Dhanyavisnu and left intact not only the old system of provincial administration but also the ancient official families and feudal hierarchy. This foresight on his part naturally facilitated his smooth run in his newly conquered territories without causing bitterness among the ruling families. His conquest of a considerable portion of Northern India within such a short time was rather phenomenal.
5. Toramana was succeeded by his son Mihirkula about 515 AD. According to Hiuen Tsang, Sakala was the capital of Mihirkula. He has also stated that Mihirkula established his authority in this town and ruled over India. he subdued all the neighbouring provinces without exception. At first he took some interest in Buddhism but later on he issued an edict to destroy all the priests through the five Indies, to overthrow the law of Buddha and leave nothing remaining.
6. The Rajatarangini refers to Mihirkula as a powerful king who ruled over Gandhara and Kashmir and conquered Southern India and Ceylon. Mihirkula is described as a man of violent disposition. Stories of his cruelty are told at great length.
7. It appears that Mihirkula was a powerful king who overran a large part of Northern India. An inscription of the year 530 AD shows that his sovereignty extended at least up to Gwalior. Probably, his authority was acknowledged even beyond that. Cosmas describes the Huna chief as the lord of India. However, Mihirkula was defeated soon. In the Mandasor inscription, Yasodharman claims that respect was paid to his feet by even that (famous) king Mihirkula whose head had never (previously) been brought to the humility of obeisance to any other.
8. In a record there is a reference to the proudly stepping array of mighty elephants, belonging to the Maukharis, which had thrown aloft in battle the troops of the Hunas. It is possible that this victory over the Hunas was won by Isanvarman, the Maukhari king. The Maukharis also issued coins in imitation of the Huna kings. They also ruled over territories formerly in he possession of the Hunas.
9. The defeat of Mihirkula appears to have finally crushed the political supremacy of the Hunas in India. After that, they did not remain a great power or even a disturbing element in Indian history. The crushing blow given to their central authority on the Oxus by the Turks and the Persians between 563 and 567 AD also ruined their prestige in India. Petty Huna chiefs continued to rule in the Punjab and North-Western India. In course of time the Hunas were absorbed in Indian society.
10. Hunas ruled in India for a short time but they certainly affected the country in many ways politically, the Huna invasions were partly responsible for the decline and fall of the Gupta empire. The resources of the empire were exhausted. The political unity was destroyed and the country was divided into many small states. The invasion brought chaos and confusion and the people suffered.
11. From the cultural point of view, the Huna invasions proved to be a great curse. The Hunas destroyed the great monuments of art. They demolished and burnt monasteries and temples. They not only destroyed the best specimens of Gupta art but also burnt valuable records of history.