

# NCERT Solutions Class 7 Social Science

## (Exploring Society India and Beyond)

### Chapter 7 The Gupta Era An Age of Tireless Creativity

#### The Big Questions? (Page 145)

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

**Answer:** The Guptas were a powerful dynasty that ruled a large part of northern India from the early 4th century to the late 6th century CE. The dynasty was founded by Sri Gupta, but it gained prominence under Chandragupta I, and reached its height during the reigns of Samudragupta and Chandragupta II (Vikramaditya).

The Gupta period is often called the Classical Age of Indian history because of the remarkable achievements made in art, architecture, literature, science, and mathematics during this time.

1. Sanskrit literature flourished with writers like Kalidasa.
2. Scientific advancements were made by scholars like Aryabhata and Varahamihira.
3. Magnificent temples and cave paintings, such as those at Ajanta, were created.

This period is also considered a golden age because of its cultural richness and intellectual achievements.

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

**Answer:** While the Guptas controlled much of northern India, the rest of the subcontinent had its own regional powers:

1. In Southern India, dynasties like the Pallavas and Chalukyas were rising. The Pallavas were great patrons of art and architecture and built many stone temples.
2. In the Deccan region, earlier dynasties like the Satavahanas had ruled before the rise of the Guptas.
3. In the eastern regions, local kingdoms and tribal communities held power.
4. Trade with countries like China, Southeast Asia, and the Roman Empire flourished, and Indian culture began to spread beyond the subcontinent.

Thus, while the Gupta Empire brought unity and cultural growth in the north, other regions were also developing independently, contributing to India's rich diversity.



### Question 3.

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

**Answer:** Some notable figures of the Gupta period include:

1. **Samudragupta** – Known for his military conquests, he expanded the empire significantly and was called the Napoleon of India. His court poet composed the Prayag Prashasti, which gives insights into his reign.
2. **Chandragupta II (Vikramaditya)** – A wise and powerful ruler under whose reign art and literature flourished.
3. **Kalidasa** – One of the greatest Sanskrit poets and playwrights; his works such as Abhijnanasakuntalam are still read and performed today.
4. **Aryabhata** – A mathematician and astronomer who introduced the concept of zero and explained that the Earth rotates on its axis.
5. **Varahamihira** – A scholar known for his writings on astronomy and astrology.

Their stories matter today because they showcase the intellectual and cultural achievements of ancient India. They inspire pride in Indian heritage and show how deeply rooted India's contributions to science, literature, and the arts truly are.

## II. Let's Explore

**Question 1. Why do you think kings chose to proclaim their achievements in the form of inscriptions? (Page 150)**



**Answer:** Kings chose to proclaim their achievements in the form of inscriptions for several important reasons:

1. Inscriptions carved on stone or metal were long-lasting and could not be easily erased or changed. They served as permanent records of a king's achievements for future generations.
2. By placing inscriptions in temples, pillars, and public places, kings could publicly display their strength, victories, and generosity. This helped gain respect and loyalty from their subjects.
3. Inscriptions were used to justify their rule, explain their divine right to kingship, and promote their image as righteous and powerful rulers.
4. Since inscriptions were often placed in different regions, they helped communicate royal orders, victories, and donations to people across the empire, even in distant provinces.



5. Inscriptions also recorded donations to temples, educational institutions, and religious causes. This helped promote the image of the king as a patron of religion and culture, earning him goodwill among people and priests.

### III. Think About it

**Question 1.** 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? (Page 151)

**Answer:**

1. Metal coins: Gold coins showing King Chan-dragupta I and his wife on one side and goddess Lakshmi on the other, Samudragupta portrayed as playing veena on one of the coins minted by him.
2. Pillar inscriptions: Iron pillar in Delhi having inscriptions in praise of Chandragupta I, Prayag Prashasti at Prayagraj praising the achievements of Samudragupta
3. Literary sources: Vishnu Purana about the extent of Gupta dynasty.

**Question 2.** Take a political map of India and locate the present day states and Union territories where the Guptas ruled (see below map). 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! (Page 151)

**Answer:**



### Question 3.

**Read the excerpt from Faxian 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! (Page 153)**

The people are numerous and happy [... ] they have no need to register households or attend to officials. [ ... ] Those who farm royal land pay a portion of their grain. [... ] The king's guards and attendants have salaries [ . .. ] The cities are the greatest in the Middle Kingdom [i.e. the Gangetic plains ], and the inhabitants are rich, prosperous, and practice kindness and righteousness. Heads of Vaishya families [i.e. merchants or traders] establish houses for charity and medicines [ ... ] the poor, orphans and the sick are cared for [ ... ] doctors provide treatment, and the needy receive food and medicines. [... ] The city has many wealthy Vaishya elders and foreign merchants, with beautiful homes [... ] The lanes are kept in good order. -A Record of Buddhistic Kingdoms (AD 399-414) (Translated by J.Legge)

**Answer:**

**Sample answer:**

1. People are described as happy, suggesting a peaceful and content society.
2. There is no need to register households or attend to officials, indicating less government interference in daily life and possibly more personal freedom.
3. Farmers pay a portion of their grain to the state if they work on royal land, showing an agrarian economy with a sharecropping or tax-in-kind system.
4. The king's guards and attendants receive salaries, suggesting a structured administration and organized military.
5. Cities in the Gangetic plains are described as great, rich, and well-organized, indicating urban development and wealth.
6. Vaishya families (merchants/traders) set up charitable houses and medical centers. This shows: a sense of social responsibility and existence of organized health care and relief systems for the poor, orphans, and sick.
7. Doctors provide treatment and the needy receive food and medicines, pointing to advanced healthcare practices for that time.
8. Lanes are well-kept, indicating good civic management and cleanliness in cities.
9. Presence of foreign merchants and beautiful homes shows international trade connections and wealthy cosmopolitan society.

The Gupta society, as described by Faxian, was peaceful, prosperous, well-organized, with minimal state interference, a flourishing urban economy, strong values of charity, and well-maintained public infrastructure.



**Question 4. Prabhavati Gupta sitting in her court. 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. (Page 155)**



**Answer:**

**(i) Her Attire:** Prabhavati Gupta is shown wearing rich, elegant clothing and elaborate jewelry, including a crown or headpiece. This suggests she was a royal figure, enjoying high status and wealth. Her dress reflects the Gupta era fashion—fine fabrics, ornaments, and possibly influence of art and culture during the time.

**(ii) Her Posture:** She is sitting confidently and with authority, possibly on a throne or elevated seat, indicating power and respect. Her calm and composed expression shows her wisdom and leadership qualities.

**(iii) People Around Her:** The attendants or ministers are shown in respectful positions, possibly standing or sitting lower. This shows Prabhavati Gupta was a respected ruler or regent, and others in court acknowledged her authority. The people around her also show hierarchy and roles within the court.

**(iv) The Court Setting:** The background is likely shown with pillars, decorations, or royal elements, reflecting the architectural style and grandeur of the Gupta period. It also hints at a well-organized court system, where rulers held discussions, judgments, and administrative duties.

These elements tell us that Prabhavati Gupta was not just a queen, but a woman of political significance, possibly ruling as a regent after her husband's death. She lived in a time when royal women could hold power, especially in the absence of a male heir. The painting reflects a rich cultural and political life, showing the importance of women in governance during certain periods of ancient Indian history. It also highlights the glory of the Gupta era, often called the Golden Age of India, marked by prosperity, arts, and a strong administration.



The painting of Prabhavati Gupta shows her as a powerful, respected, and graceful leader in a rich and organized royal setting, reflecting her significant role in Gupta-era politics and the cultural richness of the time.

**Question 5. 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. (Page 159)**

**Answer: Group A – Interview with Aryabhata (Famous Mathematician and Astronomer)**

**(i) Aryabhata ji, what inspired you to study the stars and planets?**

**Answer:** I was always fascinated by the movement of celestial bodies. Observing the sky led me to study astronomy deeply and connect it with mathematics.

**(ii) You mentioned the Earth rotates on its axis. How did you figure that out?**

**Answer:** I studied the movement of stars and planets and realized that the apparent movement of the stars is due to Earth's own rotation. It was a radical idea then!

**(iii) Can you tell us about your famous book, the Aryabhatiya?**

**Answer:** Certainly! The Aryabhatiya includes important ideas on arithmetic, algebra, trigonometry, and astronomy. I even gave an approximation of pi ( $\pi$ ) as 3.1416.

**(iv) Did you use zero in your mathematics?**

**Answer:** I used a place-value system, which made the use of zero possible, even if not the same symbol as today. This helped in simplifying large calculations.

**(v) What message would you give to young learners of today?**

**Answer:** Be curious! Question everything around you and observe nature—knowledge is everywhere if you have the patience and passion to seek it.

**Group B – Interview with Varahamihira (Great Astronomer, Astrologer, and Polymath)**

**(i) Varahamihira ji, you were a scientist and astrologer. How did you combine both?**

**Answer:** I believed that science and astrology could work together. My knowledge of astronomy helped improve astrological predictions based on the movement of planets.

**(ii) Can you tell us about your famous book, the Brihat Samhita?**

**Answer:** Of course! The Brihat Samhita is an encyclopedia. It includes information on astronomy, astrology, architecture, weather, dreams, and even perfumes!

**(iii) How did you predict rainfall and weather?**

**Answer:** I studied cloud movements, wind patterns, and astronomical observations to forecast rainfall. It was an early form of meteorology.



**(iv) What do you think about the future of science?**

**Answer:** I believe science is eternal. New generations must observe, record, and build on past knowledge just as I built on the work of earlier scholars.

**(v) What message would you like to give us?**

**Answer:** Always be open to knowledge from all fields. A true scholar respects logic, observation, and the wisdom of nature.

**Question 6. Take a close look at the samples of Gupta sculptures shown below. By looking at the attributes, can you guess which deities are depicted here? Write your observations and share your thoughts during the class discussion! (Page 160)**



**Answer:**

1. Ekmukhi Shivalingam, also known as Mukhalinga, is a type of Shivalingam on which the face of Lord Shiva is engraved.
2. Lord Vishnu in Mathura Art, 5th century, Gupta period

### **Question Answer (Exercise)**

**Question 1. Imagine you receive a letter from someone living in the Gupta Empire. The letter starts like this: "Greetings from Pataliputra! Life here is vibrant and full of excitement. Just yesterday, I witnessed..." Complete the letter with a short paragraph (250-300 words) describing life in the Gupta Empire.**

**Answer:** "...a grand procession to celebrate the harvest festival. The streets were lined with flowers, and the sounds of music filled the air. People from all walks of life, including traders, farmers, and scholars, gathered in the city center to offer prayers and celebrate. The king, Chandragupta II, himself rode in a magnificent chariot, waving to the crowds as he passed by. The wealth and prosperity of the Gupta Empire were visible everywhere, with merchants selling silk, spices, and exquisite jewelry. In the evening, scholars gathered in the royal court to discuss philosophy, science, and literature, while dancers performed traditional dances. Pataliputra, the capital, is a city of learning and culture, with renowned



scholars like Aryabhata and Kalidasa contributing to the flourishing of arts and sciences. People live in harmony, and the peaceful environment supports the development of knowledge. It is truly a time of growth, prosperity, and artistic brilliance in our empire.”

**Question 2. Which Gupta ruler was also known as the ‘Vikramaditya’?**

**Answer:** The Gupta ruler who was known as ‘Vikramaditya’ was Chandragupta II. He is remembered for his valour, his support of the arts, and for establishing a golden age in the Gupta Empire, often referred to as the “Vikramaditya era.”

**Question 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.**

**Answer:** The Gupta Empire (approximately 320-550 CE) was characterized by periods of political stability and peace, which greatly contributed to the flourishing of various aspects of life. During this time, the Gupta rulers, especially Chandragupta I, Samudragupta, and Chandragupta II, emphasized the promotion of knowledge, arts, and sciences.

**Socio-cultural Life:** The Gupta Empire saw the rise of Hindu culture, with an emphasis on religious freedom, social harmony, and the development of educational institutions. The period also witnessed the composition of great works of literature, including the famous works of Kalidasa, such as “Shakuntala,” and the “Puranas,” which documented the history and culture of India.

**Literature:** This was the golden age of Sanskrit literature. Writers like Kalidasa, Aryabhata, and Varahamihira contributed significantly to the growth of literature, poetry, and scientific texts. Aryabhata, for example, made groundbreaking contributions in mathematics and astronomy during this period.

**Science and Technology:** Peace and prosperity allowed scholars to engage in scientific studies. Aryabhata’s work on mathematics, including the concept of zero and the approximation of pi, laid the foundation for modern mathematics. The period also saw advancements in medicine, astronomy, and metallurgy.

In conclusion, the peaceful environment fostered by Gupta rulers allowed for intellectual growth, artistic achievements, and technological advancements, making the Gupta Empire one of the most culturally rich periods in Indian history.

**Question 4. Recreate a scene from a Gupta ruler’s court. Write a short script, assign roles like the king, ministers, and scholars, and enact a role play to bring the Gupta era to life!**

**Answer:** (Scene: The grand court of King Chandragupta II. The king sits on a throne, surrounded by ministers and scholars.)





**King Chandragupta II:** (In a regal voice) Welcome, my esteemed scholars and ministers. Today, we gather to discuss matters of the realm and share knowledge that will guide our empire towards greater prosperity.

**Minister 1:** Your Majesty, the people of our empire are thriving. The economy is flourishing, and trade routes from the west bring us fine silk and precious gems. However, we must focus on advancing our scientific knowledge and arts to ensure the empire remains prosperous.

**Scholar 1:** (Stepping forward) Your Majesty, I have been working on refining our understanding of the stars. I believe we can predict eclipses and planetary movements with more precision, which will aid our farmers and merchants.

**King Chandragupta II:** (Nods thoughtfully) Continue your work, Scholar. The advancement of knowledge is vital for the progress of our kingdom.

**Minister 2:** (Speaking excitedly) Your Majesty, we must not forget the arts. The people of our empire are artists and poets of great talent. The theater and dance are flourishing. Kalidasa's works are already well-known, and we have much to be proud of in our cultural contributions.

**Scholar 2:** (With humility) We are truly blessed to live in an era where both the arts and sciences grow in harmony. I have recently completed a treatise on mathematics and am eager to share it with the court.

**King Chandragupta II:** (Smiling) Such knowledge will ensure that we, the children of the Gupta Empire, continue to shine brightly for generations to come. (The scene ends with an applause as the king gestures for the scholars and ministers to continue their discussions.)

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, especially Vishnu.



3. Udayagir	(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.

**Answer:**

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. Udayagir	(b) Famous for rock-cut caves featuring intricate carvings of Hindu deities, especially Vishnu.
4. Ajanta	(a) Known for vibrant cave paintings that depict the Jataka tales.
5. Pataliputra	(c) Capital of the Guptas.

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

**Answer:** The Pallavas were a South Indian dynasty that ruled from the 4th to the 9th century CE. They were primarily based in the region of present-day Tamil Nadu, with their capital at Kanchipuram. The Pallavas were known for their contributions to art, architecture, and literature, and they played a significant role in the development of early Dravidian temple architecture. They were also patrons of Buddhism and Hinduism, and under their rule, Kanchipuram became an important cultural and religious center.

**Question 7. Organise an exploration trip with your teachers to a nearby historical site, museum, or heritage building. After the trip, write a detailed report describing your experience. Include key observations about the site's historical significance, the architecture, artefacts, and any interesting facts you learned during the visit. Reflect on how the trip enhanced your understanding of history.**

**Answer:** Do it yourself.

