

BHIC-132: HISTORY OF INDIA (From C. 300 to 1206)

All important questions for December 2024 exam

Final Revision class 1

IN ENGLISH

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1. Describe the administration under the Gupta rule.

The Gupta administration was highly organized and centralized. The king was at the top, holding supreme authority over the entire empire. Below him, a system of officials helped manage various aspects of governance.

- King's Role:** The Gupta kings were considered to be "Chakravartin" (universal rulers). They had absolute power over military, law, and administration. Famous Gupta rulers like **Chandragupta I**, **Samudragupta**, and **Chandragupta II** were known for their strong leadership and territorial expansion.
- Provincial Administration:** The empire was divided into several provinces, each governed by a **kumara** or prince, often the king's son. These provinces were further divided into districts and villages. For example, **Samudragupta** divided his empire into smaller regions for effective control.
- Local Administration:** At the local level, villages played an important role. Village councils or **grama sabhas** were responsible for local governance, such as tax collection, maintaining order, and solving disputes. The administration in rural areas was well-organized with the involvement of local elites and landowners.
- Revenue System:** The Gupta kings collected taxes, mainly from agriculture. Land revenue was the main source of income. The tax system was efficient, and the Gupta kings maintained detailed records of landholdings. For example, **Chandragupta I** is known to have established a system for assessing and collecting taxes from farmers.
- Military Administration:** The Gupta empire had a strong military to protect its borders and expand its territory. The emperor controlled the military, with a standing army, including elephants, cavalry, and infantry. Samudragupta, for instance, is famous for his military campaigns, which expanded the Gupta empire significantly.
- Justice and Law:** The Gupta kings ensured law and order through a well-organized system of courts. The king, as the final authority, could pass judgments on serious

cases. Legal matters, especially those concerning trade and property, were handled by officials known as **Dharmadhikaris**.

Throw light on the extent of Harsha's empire on the basis of his military campaigns.

Harsha's empire, also known as the **Harsha-Vardhana Empire**, was one of the largest in India during the 7th century. His military campaigns played a key role in expanding and consolidating his empire. Here's a brief look at the extent of his empire based on his campaigns:

1. **Initial Territory:** Harsha became the ruler of **Thanesar** (in present-day Haryana) after the death of his father and brother. His empire initially covered northern India, including parts of present-day **Punjab, Haryana, and western Uttar Pradesh**.
2. **Expansion in North India:** Harsha's early military campaigns were focused on extending his control over neighboring regions. He defeated the **Shahi kings of Kabul** in the northwest, bringing much of **modern-day Afghanistan** under his control. He also expanded his empire into the **Gangetic Plains**, including areas of **Bihar and Uttar Pradesh**.
3. **Campaigns in the Deccan and South:** One of Harsha's most significant military achievements was his **campaigns in the Deccan**. He tried to extend his control over the south by waging wars against the **Chalukyas of Deccan**. While he had some successes, he was eventually stopped by the **Chalukya ruler, Pulakeshin II**, who defeated him in a battle near the **Narmada River**.
4. **Consolidation in the North:** After his military successes, Harsha controlled a vast empire stretching from **the Punjab** in the west to **Bengal** in the east, and from **the Himalayas** in the north to the **Vindhya Mountains** in the south. He was known to have a well-organized and efficient administration that helped him maintain control over this vast territory.
5. **Relations with Neighboring States:** Harsha also maintained diplomatic relations with other kingdoms. His court was visited by **Chinese traveler Xuanzang**, who documented his rule and described Harsha as a powerful and just ruler. Despite his military efforts, Harsha's empire was not fully unified, and after his death, it quickly fragmented into smaller regional kingdoms.

In conclusion, Harsha's empire was vast, encompassing much of northern and central India, but it faced challenges from powerful southern kingdoms and rival states. His military campaigns were significant in shaping the political landscape of 7th-century India.

Analyse the importance of Bhakti movement in studying the history of Indian religion.

The **Bhakti movement** was a significant religious reform movement in India that played a crucial role in shaping the history of Indian religion. It emerged around the 7th century CE

and continued to influence religious practices and philosophies for centuries. Here's an analysis of its importance:

1. **Emphasis on Personal Devotion:** The Bhakti movement focused on **personal devotion** to a god, rather than ritualistic practices or the caste system. This shift brought a more **individualistic approach** to religion, where followers could establish a personal connection with the deity. It made religious practices more accessible to common people, especially those outside the rigid caste structure.
2. **Challenging the Caste System:** The Bhakti saints rejected the traditional caste-based hierarchy, which had been a significant part of Hindu religious practices. They emphasized that **devotion to God was open to everyone**, regardless of caste, gender, or social status. For example, **Sant Tukaram** and **Kabir** were from lower castes but became highly respected due to their devotion and teachings.
3. **Integration of Various Deities:** While earlier Hinduism was centered on rituals and the worship of many gods, the Bhakti movement encouraged devotion to a **single god** (like Vishnu, Shiva, or Devi) but also allowed the worship of multiple deities. This encouraged religious diversity and tolerance, leading to the **rise of regional deities** and the flourishing of local cults.
4. **Spread of Vernacular Literature:** Bhakti saints wrote their hymns and poetry in **regional languages** such as Tamil, Marathi, Hindi, and Bengali. This made religious teachings accessible to a wider population, including those who did not understand Sanskrit. For instance, **Tulsidas** wrote the **Ramcharitmanas** in Hindi, which popularized the story of **Ram** among common people.
5. **Impact on Hinduism and Other Religions:** The Bhakti movement not only impacted **Hinduism** but also influenced other religious traditions like **Islam** and **Sikhism**. **Guru Nanak**, the founder of Sikhism, integrated elements of Bhakti philosophy in his teachings, emphasizing devotion to one God and rejecting rituals. Similarly, many **Sufi saints** in Islam shared similar ideas of devotion and love for God.
6. **Social Reforms:** The Bhakti saints were often social reformers. They advocated for **equality, non-violence, and compassion**. Figures like **Ramanuja, Kabir, and Mirabai** challenged societal norms and spread the message of **universal love** and the importance of inner spirituality.

In conclusion, the Bhakti movement was crucial in reshaping the religious landscape of India. It democratized spirituality, broke social barriers, and helped in the creation of a more inclusive religious atmosphere. Its impact continues to be seen in modern-day religious practices and cultural traditions across India.

SHORT NOTES :

(a) Pallava architecture (b) Gurjara-Pratiharas (c) Land-grants in post-Gupta period (d) Ajanta paintings

(a) Pallava Architecture:

Pallava architecture, flourishing between the 6th and 8th centuries under the Pallava dynasty in South India, is known for its distinctive style, especially in rock-cut temples and monolithic structures. The Pallavas built some of the most famous rock-cut temples at **Mahabalipuram**, including the **Rath Temples** and the **Shore Temple**. They also carved intricate sculptures into cliffs, with notable examples being the **Arjuna's Penance** and **Pancha Rathas**. Pallava architecture is marked by the use of **granite** and the development of the **Dravidian style** of temple architecture, characterized by towering spires (Shikharas) and elaborate carvings.

(b) Gurjara-Pratiharas:

The **Gurjara-Pratihara** dynasty (8th to 11th century) was one of the major powers in northern India, with its kingdom stretching over **Rajasthan, Gujarat**, and parts of **Madhya Pradesh**. The dynasty is most famous for resisting **Arab invasions** and maintaining a stronghold in the north-western part of India. The ruler **Nagabhata I** is credited with defeating the Arabs at the Battle of **Rajasthan**, while **Raja Bhoja** and **Mahendrapala I** are noted for promoting cultural and administrative advancements. The Gurjara-Pratiharas were also patrons of art, architecture, and literature, contributing to the development of Hindu temple architecture in the region.

(c) Land-grants in Post-Gupta Period:

In the post-Gupta period (circa 6th to 12th centuries), land grants became an important feature of Indian administration and economy. Kings, nobles, and religious institutions granted land to **Brahmins, temples**, and **military officers** in exchange for services or religious merit. These land grants helped in the expansion of agriculture and were vital for the sustenance of the growing feudal system. The practice of **tax-free land grants** for temples and **Brahmins** is well documented in inscriptions of the period. However, this also led to a gradual erosion of the royal authority over land and the rise of **local powers**.

(d) Ajanta Paintings:

The **Ajanta paintings** are a series of **Buddhist wall paintings** found in the Ajanta Caves in Maharashtra, dating from the 2nd century BCE to the 6th century CE. These paintings depict various **Jataka tales** (stories of the Buddha's previous lives) and the **life of the Buddha**. They are renowned for their **vivid colors, intricate details**, and the portrayal of both religious themes and everyday life in ancient India. The paintings also showcase early forms of **Indian perspective**, and their naturalistic style had a significant influence on later Indian

art. These paintings provide valuable insight into the religious and cultural life of India during the Gupta period and are considered masterpieces of Indian art.

Scholarly Minds