

SYLLABUS

HISDSC102T

HISTORY OF INDIA: FROM MAURYAN ASCENDANCY TO HARSHA ERA

Unit I: The Maurya Empire:

- i) Sources: Kautilya's Arthashastra, Indica of Megasthenes
- ii) Chandragupta Maurya: Conquests & Achievements
- iii) Ashoka's Dhamma.
- iv) Mauryan administration,
- v) The decline of the Mauryan Empire.

Unit II: Post Mauryan Empire:

- i) Shungas : Pushyamitra Shunga
- ii) Kanishka-conquests & achievements,
- iii) Kalinga ruler: Kharavela
- iv) The Satavahanas: Political achievements of Gautamiputra Satakarni, Administration.

Unit III: Imperial Guptas

- i) Imperial Guptas: Samudragupta & Chandragupta II: conquests and achievements.
- ii) Gupta Administration
- iii) Gupta Age -Golden Age
- iv) The Decline of the Gupta Power

Unit IV: India in the post-Gupta period

- i) Huna Invasion and its Effects
- ii) Maukharis: Political achievements.
- iii) Maitrakas: Political Achievements
- iv) Vakatas: Political Achievements

Unit V: Harsha Era:

- i) Harsha's Conquests & Administration.
- ii) Cultural Contribution of Harsha
- iii) Gauda under Sashanka
- iv) Account of Hiuen Tsang.



CAREER STUDY
The Learning App

UNIT – 1

ONE MARK

1. **Who wrote the *Arthashastra*?**

Answer: Kautilya, also known as Chanakya or Vishnugupta, wrote the *Arthashastra*.

2. **Who was the author of *Indica*?**

Answer: Megasthenes was the author of *Indica*.

3. **Who was Megasthenes?**

Answer: Megasthenes was a Greek ambassador who visited the court of Chandragupta Maurya.

4. **Who founded the Mauryan Empire?**

Answer: Chandragupta Maurya founded the Mauryan Empire.

5. **Who was the political mentor of Chandragupta Maurya?**

Answer: Kautilya, also known as Chanakya, was the political mentor of Chandragupta Maurya.

6. **Who was the last ruler of the Nanda dynasty?**

Answer: Dhana Nanda was the last ruler of the Nanda dynasty.

7. **Who succeeded Chandragupta Maurya?**

Answer: Bindusara succeeded Chandragupta Maurya.

8. **Who was the famous grandson of Chandragupta Maurya?**

Answer: Ashoka was the famous grandson of Chandragupta Maurya.

9. **Which war had a profound influence on Ashoka?**

Answer: The Kalinga War had a profound influence on Ashoka.

10. **In which edict did Ashoka describe the Kalinga War?**

Answer: Ashoka described the Kalinga War in his **Thirteenth Rock Edict**.

11. **What is meant by Ashoka's Dhamma?**

Answer: Ashoka's Dhamma was a moral and ethical code based

on non-violence, compassion, tolerance, respect and righteous conduct.

12. **What was the main principle of Ashoka's Dhamma?**

Answer: The main principle was **Dhamma-vijaya**, or victory through righteousness and moral conduct, rather than war.

13. **What title did Ashoka use in his inscriptions?**

Answer: Ashoka used the title **Devanampiya Piyadasi**, meaning "Beloved of the Gods, He Who Looks with Affection."

14. **What was the capital of the Mauryan Empire?**

Answer: **Pataliputra** was the capital of the Mauryan Empire.

15. **Name the highest official mentioned in Mauryan administration.**

Answer: The **Mahamatras** were among the important high officials of the Mauryan administration.

16. **What was the main source of revenue of the Mauryan state?**

Answer: **Land revenue** was the main source of income of the Mauryan state.

17. **What was the name of the Mauryan spy system?**

Answer: The Mauryan state maintained an extensive **spy system**, with spies known as **Gudhapurushas**.

18. **Who was the last ruler of the Mauryan dynasty?**

Answer: **Brihadratha** was the last ruler of the Mauryan dynasty.

19. **Who killed Brihadratha and established the Shunga dynasty?**

Answer: **Pushyamitra Shunga**, a Mauryan general, killed Brihadratha and established the Shunga dynasty.

20. **Mention one important cause of the decline of the Mauryan Empire.**

Answer: Weak successors after Ashoka were one of the important causes of the decline of the Mauryan Empire.

TWO MARK:

1. What is the importance of Kautilya's Arthashastra as a source of Mauryan history?

Answer: Kautilya's Arthashastra is an important source for understanding Mauryan administration, economy, taxation, military organization and political ideas. It provides detailed information about the duties of the king, officials, spies and various departments of the state.

2. What information does Megasthenes' Indica provide about the Mauryan Empire?

Answer: Megasthenes' Indica provides valuable information about Mauryan society, administration, economy, cities and military organization. As a Greek ambassador at the court of Chandragupta Maurya, Megasthenes personally observed several aspects of Mauryan political and social life.

3. How did Chandragupta Maurya establish the Mauryan Empire?

Answer: Chandragupta Maurya, with the guidance of Kautilya, overthrew the Nanda dynasty and established the Mauryan Empire around 322 BCE. He gradually expanded his territory and created a powerful centralized state with Pataliputra as its capital.

4. Mention two important achievements of Chandragupta Maurya.

Answer: Chandragupta Maurya established the first large empire in ancient India and created a strong centralized administration. He defeated the Nandas and later concluded a treaty with Seleucus I Nicator, gaining territories in the north-west and strengthening the Mauryan Empire.

5. Who was Seleucus I Nicator and what was his relation with Chandragupta Maurya?

Answer: Seleucus I Nicator was a successor of Alexander the Great in the eastern territories. He came into conflict with Chandragupta Maurya but eventually concluded a treaty with him. Chandragupta obtained territories, while Seleucus received 500 war elephants.

6. What was Ashoka's Dhamma?

Answer: Ashoka's Dhamma was a moral code intended to promote peaceful and ethical living. It emphasized non-violence, compassion, respect for parents and elders, tolerance towards different religions, kindness to living beings and proper conduct among people.

7. Why did Ashoka adopt the policy of Dhamma?

Answer: Ashoka adopted the policy of Dhamma after the devastating Kalinga War. The large-scale destruction and suffering caused by the war deeply affected him. He therefore emphasized non-violence, compassion, tolerance and moral conduct as principles for maintaining peace.

8. What was the significance of the Kalinga War in Ashoka's life?

Answer: The Kalinga War was a major turning point in Ashoka's life. The destruction and loss of life deeply disturbed him. After the war, he rejected aggressive warfare and promoted Dhamma, peace, non-violence and welfare of his subjects.

9. Describe the nature of Mauryan administration.

Answer: The Mauryan administration was highly centralized and organized. The king was the supreme authority and was assisted by ministers and officials. The empire was divided into provinces and smaller administrative units. A strong bureaucracy, army, taxation system and spy network supported the administration.

10. What was the role of the king in Mauryan administration?

Answer: The king was the supreme authority in the Mauryan administrative system. He supervised administration, justice, taxation, military affairs and foreign relations. The king was assisted by ministers and officials but maintained considerable control over important matters of the empire.

11. What was the importance of taxation in the Mauryan Empire?

Answer: Taxation was an important source of revenue for the Mauryan state. Land revenue was particularly significant. Taxes were collected from agriculture, trade, forests, mines and various economic activities. The revenue helped maintain the army, administration and public welfare activities.

12. What was the role of spies in the Mauryan administration?

Answer: Spies played an important role in maintaining the security and efficiency of the Mauryan state. They collected information about officials, enemies and public activities. The spy system helped the king monitor administration, detect conspiracies and maintain political control throughout the empire.

13. Mention two causes of the decline of the Mauryan Empire.

Answer: The decline of the Mauryan Empire was caused by several factors, including weak successors after Ashoka, administrative difficulties, provincial revolts and the weakening of central authority. The vast size of the empire also made effective control increasingly difficult.

14. Who was Brihadratha?

Answer: Brihadratha was the last ruler of the Mauryan dynasty. He ruled during a period when the Mauryan Empire had become weak. In approximately 185 BCE, he was killed by his military commander Pushyamitra Shunga, who established the Shunga dynasty.

15. How did the Mauryan Empire come to an end?

Answer: After Ashoka's death, the Mauryan Empire gradually weakened due to ineffective successors, administrative problems and the decline of central authority. The last Mauryan ruler, Brihadratha, was killed by Pushyamitra Shunga around 185 BCE, marking the end of the Mauryan dynasty.

BROAD ANSWER;

1. Discuss the conquests and achievements of Chandragupta Maurya.

Answer:

Chandragupta Maurya was the founder of the Mauryan Empire and one of the most important rulers of ancient India. He established a powerful empire in the late fourth century BCE and laid the foundation for the first large-scale political empire in much of the Indian subcontinent. His success was closely associated with the guidance of Kautilya, also known as Chanakya.

Chandragupta began his political career by challenging the Nanda dynasty of Magadha. The Nandas possessed considerable military and economic resources, but Chandragupta, with the strategic guidance of Kautilya, succeeded in overthrowing the last Nanda ruler, Dhana Nanda. He established Mauryan rule at Pataliputra and gradually expanded his authority over neighbouring territories.

One of Chandragupta's major achievements was the expansion and consolidation of his empire. He brought large parts of northern and central India under Mauryan control. His empire extended over a vast area, creating a strong political structure that connected different regions under a single imperial authority. His conquests helped establish political unity on a scale that had rarely been achieved before.

Another important achievement was his conflict with Seleucus I Nicator, one of the successors of Alexander the Great. Seleucus

attempted to recover territories in the north-western part of the Indian subcontinent, but Chandragupta successfully resisted him. The conflict ended through a treaty. Chandragupta obtained territories in the north-west, while Seleucus received 500 war elephants. The relationship subsequently became diplomatic, and Megasthenes was sent as an ambassador to Chandragupta's court.

Chandragupta also strengthened the administrative system of the Mauryan Empire. He maintained a powerful central government headed by the king and supported by ministers and officials. A well-organised army helped him protect and expand the empire. The state also maintained systems of taxation, intelligence and provincial administration.

The Mauryan Empire under Chandragupta became economically and politically powerful. Agriculture, trade, crafts, forests and mines contributed to state revenue. The administration ensured the collection of taxes and maintenance of law and order.

Chandragupta's achievements therefore extended beyond military conquest. He created a strong imperial structure, expanded Mauryan territory, established diplomatic relations with foreign powers and laid the administrative foundation upon which later Mauryan rulers, particularly Ashoka, could build.

Thus, Chandragupta Maurya occupies a significant position in Indian history as the founder of the Mauryan Empire and one of the earliest rulers to establish extensive political unity in the Indian subcontinent.

2. Explain Ashoka's Dhamma and discuss its major principles and significance.

Answer:

Ashoka's Dhamma was one of the most important features of his reign. After becoming the ruler of the Mauryan Empire, Ashoka initially followed the traditional policy of imperial expansion.

However, the Kalinga War brought a major change in his outlook. The large-scale suffering and loss of life caused by the war deeply affected him. His remorse is particularly expressed in the Thirteenth Major Rock Edict. After this experience, Ashoka increasingly promoted Dhamma as a moral and social policy.

Ashoka's Dhamma was not simply a religious doctrine or another name for Buddhism. Although Ashoka personally supported Buddhism, his Dhamma was designed as a broad ethical code that could be followed by people belonging to different religious and social groups. Its primary objective was to promote peaceful and responsible behaviour among individuals and communities.

One important principle of Dhamma was **non-violence**. Ashoka discouraged unnecessary killing and cruelty towards living beings. He also encouraged kindness and compassion. However, his policy should not be understood as complete abolition of the state's military or judicial functions.

Respect for parents, elders, teachers and other members of society was another important part of Dhamma. Ashoka encouraged children to respect their parents and people to behave properly towards elders. He also emphasised good relations between relatives, friends, servants and dependants.

Religious tolerance was another major principle. Ashoka advised people to respect other religious traditions. He believed that one should not unnecessarily criticise other sects. Instead, understanding and mutual respect would strengthen social harmony.

Ashoka also promoted truthfulness, generosity, self-control, compassion and moderation. He wanted people to avoid unnecessary ceremonies and concentrate on moral conduct. According to his inscriptions, proper behaviour was more valuable than merely performing religious rituals.

Ashoka took several administrative measures to spread Dhamma. He appointed **Dhamma Mahamatras**, special officials associated with

the promotion of moral and social welfare. He communicated his ideas through inscriptions engraved on rocks and pillars in different parts of his empire. These inscriptions made his moral instructions accessible to ordinary people.

Dhamma also influenced Ashoka's welfare activities. He supported measures relating to public welfare, including arrangements for travellers, medical care and the welfare of people and animals. His policy of Dhamma therefore had both moral and practical dimensions.

The significance of Dhamma lies in its attempt to create social harmony within a large and culturally diverse empire. It provided a common ethical framework without requiring people to abandon their own religious traditions. It also reflected Ashoka's transformation from an expansionist ruler into a king who emphasised moral responsibility and public welfare.

Thus, Ashoka's Dhamma was an important experiment in ethical governance. It represented his effort to maintain peace, tolerance, compassion and social responsibility throughout the Mauryan Empire.

3. Describe the main features of Mauryan administration.

Answer:

The Mauryan Empire developed one of the most organised administrative systems of ancient India. Its administration was designed to govern a vast territory under a strong central authority. The sources for understanding Mauryan administration include Kautilya's *Arthashastra*, the accounts of Megasthenes and Ashokan inscriptions. Although these sources belong to different contexts, together they provide valuable information about the political and administrative structure of the Mauryan state.

The Mauryan administration was based on a strong monarchy. The king occupied the highest position and was responsible for maintaining law and order, protecting the empire, supervising officials

and ensuring the welfare of the people. The king was assisted by ministers and other high-ranking officials. A council of advisers helped the ruler in important matters of administration.

The empire was divided into different administrative units to make governance easier. Important provinces were placed under governors, often members of the royal family or trusted officials. Provincial administration connected the central government with local areas. Below the provincial level, smaller administrative divisions and local authorities helped in the collection of revenue and maintenance of order.

Officials played an important role in the Mauryan system. Various officers were responsible for taxation, trade, agriculture, justice, public works and other administrative activities. Under Ashoka, officials known as **Mahamatras** were particularly important. Ashoka also appointed **Dhamma Mahamatras** to promote his policy of Dhamma and social welfare.

Revenue administration was another important feature. Agriculture was the principal source of state income, and land revenue formed a major part of government resources. The state also obtained income from trade, forests, mines and other economic activities. Efficient collection of revenue was necessary to maintain the army, administration and public works.

The Mauryan state also maintained a large and well-organised army. Infantry, cavalry, elephants and chariots formed important components of the military system. A strong army was essential for defending the empire and maintaining political control over distant territories.

The spy system was another notable feature. Intelligence officials helped the government gather information about officials, local conditions and possible disturbances. Such information strengthened the central authority of the king.

Urban administration was also important. Large cities such as Pataliputra required arrangements for trade, sanitation, markets, security and other civic matters. Megasthenes provides useful information about the administration of Pataliputra.

Justice and law were also supervised by the state. Officials were responsible for maintaining order and dealing with disputes and offences. At the same time, Ashoka encouraged humane treatment and moral conduct.

Overall, Mauryan administration combined strong central authority with provincial and local administration. Its organised taxation, officials, military system, intelligence network and urban management enabled the rulers to control a vast empire. The administrative foundations established during the Mauryan period became an important landmark in the political history of ancient India.

4. Examine the importance of the Arthashastra and Indica as sources for Mauryan history.

Answer:

The Mauryan period is one of the best-documented phases of ancient Indian history, although the available sources have certain limitations. Among the most important literary sources are Kautilya's *Arthashastra* and Megasthenes' *Indica*. Both provide valuable information about political institutions, administration, society and economic life. However, historians use them carefully because they were produced in different contexts and *Indica* survives only in fragments.

The *Arthashastra* is traditionally attributed to Kautilya, also known as Chanakya or Vishnugupta. It is a major work dealing with statecraft, administration, economy, diplomacy, warfare, law and political organisation. It provides a detailed picture of how an idealised ancient Indian state could function.

The *Arthashastra* discusses the duties of the king, the organisation of government, taxation, agriculture, trade, espionage, military affairs and relations with neighbouring states. It therefore helps historians understand the administrative and economic ideas associated with the Mauryan period. It also describes various officials and institutions that demonstrate the importance of organised state control.

However, the *Arthashastra* should not be treated as a simple day-to-day record of Mauryan administration. Its date and layers of composition have been debated by scholars. Therefore, historians compare its information with inscriptions and other evidence before drawing conclusions about the Mauryan state.

Another important source is *Indica*, written by Megasthenes. Megasthenes was a Greek ambassador who visited the court of Chandragupta Maurya. His original work has not survived in complete form. Information from it is preserved through quotations and references in later Greek and Roman writers.

Megasthenes provides valuable information about Mauryan society, administration, cities and geographical conditions. His description of Pataliputra is particularly significant. He also provides information about the organisation of the Mauryan army and various aspects of Indian social life.

At the same time, *Indica* has limitations. Megasthenes was a foreign visitor and some of his observations may have been based on limited information or misunderstanding. Some statements attributed to him also appear exaggerated or difficult to verify. Therefore, his account needs to be compared with other sources.

The importance of both works becomes greater when they are studied together. The *Arthashastra* provides an internal perspective on political and administrative ideas, while *Indica* provides an external observer's account of Mauryan India. Ashokan inscriptions further help historians verify and supplement information from these literary sources.

Thus, the *Arthashastra* and *Indica* are essential sources for reconstructing Mauryan history. They provide information that is not available from inscriptions alone. However, their evidence must be critically examined rather than accepted without question. When used alongside archaeological evidence and inscriptions, they provide a much clearer understanding of Mauryan political, administrative and social life.

5. Analyse the causes of the decline and fall of the Mauryan Empire.

Answer:

The Mauryan Empire, established by Chandragupta Maurya and expanded by his successors, was one of the largest political empires of ancient India. However, after the death of Ashoka, the empire gradually weakened and finally came to an end around 185 BCE. The decline was not caused by a single factor. A combination of political, administrative, economic and regional problems contributed to the gradual disintegration of Mauryan power.

One major factor was the weakness of the successors of Ashoka. Ashoka was a powerful ruler who exercised strong control over a vast empire. After his death, the empire was divided and several rulers succeeded him within a relatively short period. Most of these rulers did not possess the same political authority or administrative ability. As central power weakened, distant provinces became increasingly difficult to control.

The enormous size of the Mauryan Empire also created administrative difficulties. The empire extended over a very large geographical area with different peoples, languages and local conditions. Maintaining effective communication and control over distant territories required a strong administrative and military structure. When central authority weakened, provincial officials and local powers gained greater independence.

Another factor was the rise of regional forces. As Mauryan authority declined, local rulers and provincial groups became more powerful. The weakening of the imperial centre created opportunities for different regional powers to establish independent political authority. This gradually reduced the territorial unity created by the Mauryas.

Administrative and financial pressures may also have contributed to the decline. A large empire required considerable resources to maintain officials, the army, communication systems and other institutions. If revenue collection became less effective while administrative expenses remained high, the state could face serious financial difficulties. Such pressures could weaken the ability of the central government to maintain control.

The weakening of political and military authority was another important factor. A large empire depended upon an effective army and loyal officials. As the central government lost influence, maintaining military control over distant regions became increasingly difficult. This encouraged provincial independence and political instability.

It is also important to avoid explaining the decline simply by saying that Ashoka's policy of non-violence destroyed the Mauryan army. There is insufficient basis for treating this as the sole or decisive cause. The decline was a complex historical process involving several factors.

Finally, the Mauryan political structure depended heavily on strong central leadership. When capable rulers were replaced by weaker successors, the administrative system could not maintain the same degree of unity. The empire gradually fragmented until the last Mauryan ruler, Brihadratha, was overthrown by Pushyamitra Shunga.

Thus, the decline of the Mauryan Empire resulted from the combined effects of weak successors, administrative difficulties, provincial autonomy, financial pressures, regional political developments and weakening central authority. The fall of the empire marked the end of Mauryan imperial rule but did not erase its lasting influence on the political history of ancient India.

UNIT – II

ONE MARK:

1. Who founded the Shunga dynasty?

Answer: Pushyamitra Shunga founded the Shunga dynasty.

2. Who was Pushyamitra Shunga?

Answer: Pushyamitra Shunga was the founder and first ruler of the Shunga dynasty.

3. Who was the last Mauryan ruler?

Answer: Brihadratha was the last Mauryan ruler.

4. Who killed Brihadratha?

Answer: Pushyamitra Shunga killed Brihadratha and established the Shunga dynasty.

5. What was the capital of the Shunga dynasty?

Answer: Pataliputra was the main capital of the Shunga dynasty.

6. Who was Kanishka?

Answer: Kanishka was a powerful ruler of the Kushana dynasty.

7. Which dynasty did Kanishka belong to?

Answer: Kanishka belonged to the Kushana dynasty.

8. What was the capital of Kanishka?

Answer: Purushapura, identified with modern Peshawar, was an important capital of Kanishka.

9. Which religion was strongly supported by Kanishka?

Answer: Kanishka strongly supported Buddhism, particularly Mahayana Buddhism.

10. Which Buddhist Council is traditionally associated with Kanishka?

Answer: The Fourth Buddhist Council is traditionally associated with Kanishka.

11. Where was the Fourth Buddhist Council held?

Answer: It was traditionally held at Kundalavana in Kashmir.

12. Who was Kharavela?

Answer: Kharavela was a powerful ruler of Kalinga belonging to the Mahameghavahana/Chedi dynasty.

13. Which inscription is the main source of information about Kharavela?

Answer: The Hathigumpha Inscription is the main source of information about Kharavela.

14. Where is the Hathigumpha Inscription located?

Answer: The Hathigumpha Inscription is located at Udayagiri near Bhubaneswar in Odisha.

15. Which religion did Kharavela patronize?

Answer: Kharavela was a patron of Jainism.

16. Who was Gautamiputra Satakarni?

Answer: Gautamiputra Satakarni was one of the greatest rulers of the Satavahana dynasty.

17. Which dynasty did Gautamiputra Satakarni belong to?

Answer: Gautamiputra Satakarni belonged to the Satavahana dynasty.

18. Who was the mother of Gautamiputra Satakarni?

Answer: His mother was Gautami Balashri.

19. Which inscription provides important information about Gautamiputra Satakarni?

Answer: The Nasik Inscription of Gautami Balashri provides important information about him.

20. What was the main feature of Satavahana administration?

Answer: The Satavahana administration combined central royal authority with local administrative institutions.

TWO MARK:

1. Who was Pushyamitra Shunga? Mention his importance.

Answer:

Pushyamitra Shunga was the founder of the Shunga dynasty. He overthrew the last Mauryan ruler, Brihadratha, around 185 BCE. He established Shunga rule in northern India and is known for strengthening the political authority of the dynasty.

2. How did the Shunga dynasty come to power?

Answer:

The Shunga dynasty came to power after Pushyamitra Shunga killed the last Mauryan ruler, Brihadratha, around 185 BCE. Pushyamitra, who was a military commander, established his own dynasty and brought the Mauryan Empire to an end.

3. Mention two important achievements of Pushyamitra Shunga.

Answer:

Pushyamitra Shunga consolidated Shunga power after the fall of the Mauryas and defended his kingdom against external threats. He also performed important Vedic sacrifices, including the Ashvamedha, which reflected the revival of Brahmanical traditions during his reign.

4. Who was Kanishka? Why is he important in Indian history?

Answer:

Kanishka was a powerful ruler of the Kushana dynasty. He is important for his extensive conquests, promotion of trade and culture, and strong patronage of Buddhism. His reign contributed significantly to the development and spread of Mahayana Buddhism.

5. What were the major achievements of Kanishka?

Answer:

Kanishka expanded the Kushana Empire over large parts of north-western India and Central Asia. He promoted Buddhism, supported the Fourth Buddhist Council according to tradition, and encouraged art, literature and international trade, making his reign an important period of cultural development.

6. What was the contribution of Kanishka to Buddhism?**Answer:**

Kanishka strongly supported Buddhism, particularly Mahayana Buddhism. He is traditionally associated with the Fourth Buddhist Council in Kashmir. His patronage helped Buddhist teachings spread towards Central Asia and further into regions connected with the Silk Road.

7. Who was Kharavela?**Answer:**

Kharavela was a prominent ruler of ancient Kalinga belonging to the Mahameghavahana or Chedi dynasty. He is mainly known through the Hathigumpha Inscription, which records his military activities, public works and support for Jainism.

8. What is the Hathigumpha Inscription?**Answer:**

The Hathigumpha Inscription is an important historical record of Kharavela's reign. It is located at Udayagiri near Bhubaneswar in Odisha. The inscription provides information about his conquests, administration, public works and religious activities.

9. Mention two achievements of Kharavela.**Answer:**

Kharavela expanded the political influence of Kalinga through military campaigns and strengthened his kingdom. He also undertook public works and patronised Jainism. His achievements are mainly known from the Hathigumpha Inscription.

10. Who were the Satavahanas?

Answer:

The Satavahanas were an important post-Mauryan dynasty that ruled large parts of the Deccan and central India. They played a significant role in regional political development, trade and cultural activities during the period following the decline of Mauryan authority.

11. Who was Gautamiputra Satakarni?

Answer:

Gautamiputra Satakarni was one of the greatest rulers of the Satavahana dynasty. He strengthened Satavahana power, defeated several rival groups and expanded his political influence across parts of the Deccan and western India.

12. Mention two political achievements of Gautamiputra Satakarni.

Answer:

Gautamiputra Satakarni restored the declining power of the Satavahanas and defeated important rivals, including the Western Kshatrapas. He expanded Satavahana authority over extensive territories and established himself as one of the strongest rulers of the Deccan.

13. What is the importance of the Nasik Inscription of Gautami Balashri?

Answer:

The Nasik Inscription of Gautami Balashri provides important information about Gautamiputra Satakarni's achievements. It describes his military victories, territorial expansion and qualities as a ruler, making it a significant source for understanding Satavahana political history.

14. Mention two features of Satavahana administration.

Answer:

Satavahana administration was headed by the king, who exercised

supreme authority. The kingdom was divided into administrative units and local officials played an important role in governance. The system combined central royal authority with considerable importance given to local administration.

15. What was the role of Gautami Balashri in Satavahana history?

Answer:

Gautami Balashri was the mother of Gautamiputra Satakarni and an important figure in Satavahana history. Her Nasik inscription records her son's achievements and military victories, providing valuable evidence about his reign and the political strength of the Satavahana dynasty.

BROAD ANSWER:

1. Discuss the rise of the Shunga dynasty with special reference to Pushyamitra Shunga.

Answer:

The Shunga dynasty emerged in northern India after the decline of the Mauryan Empire. The foundation of the Shunga dynasty is closely associated with Pushyamitra Shunga, who played an important role in the political transition from Mauryan rule to the post-Mauryan period. The Shungas ruled mainly over parts of northern and central India and maintained the political traditions of the earlier imperial period while giving greater importance to Brahmanical traditions.

Pushyamitra Shunga was originally a military commander under the Mauryan ruler Brihadratha. Around 185 BCE, during a military parade, Pushyamitra killed Brihadratha and assumed political power. This event brought the Mauryan dynasty to an end and marked the beginning of Shunga rule. Pushyamitra established himself as the ruler and founded a new dynasty.

After becoming king, Pushyamitra faced the difficult task of consolidating his authority. The Mauryan Empire had already weakened considerably, and several regions had become politically independent or semi-independent. Therefore, one of his major objectives was to strengthen the territories that remained under his control. The Shunga kingdom was centred in the Gangetic region, with Pataliputra continuing to be an important political centre.

Pushyamitra also had to deal with external threats. Traditional literary sources mention conflicts between the Shungas and the Indo-Greeks. These conflicts indicate that the north-western frontier remained politically unstable during this period. Pushyamitra's military activities helped protect and consolidate Shunga territories.

One important feature of Pushyamitra's reign was the revival and patronage of Brahmanical traditions. He is traditionally associated with the performance of the Ashvamedha sacrifice. The performance of such Vedic rituals demonstrated royal authority and reflected the importance of Brahmanical practices in the political culture of the period.

The religious policy of Pushyamitra has been debated by historians. Some Buddhist literary traditions, particularly later accounts, portray him as hostile towards Buddhism and associate him with the destruction of Buddhist monasteries. However, these accounts need to be treated cautiously because archaeological evidence does not support a simple picture of systematic persecution throughout his kingdom. Buddhist establishments, including those at Bharhut, continued to develop during the broader Shunga period.

Pushyamitra's importance therefore lies mainly in his role in establishing a new political order after the Mauryas. He successfully established Shunga authority, defended his kingdom and supported Brahmanical traditions. His reign represents an important phase of political reorganisation in northern India after the decline of the Mauryan Empire.

The Shunga dynasty continued after Pushyamitra under rulers such as Agnimitra and others. Although it did not control an empire as extensive as that of the Mauryas, it played an important role in maintaining political continuity in northern India.

Thus, Pushyamitra Shunga was a significant post-Mauryan ruler. His accession marked the end of Mauryan political supremacy and the beginning of Shunga rule, while his military activities and patronage of Brahmanical traditions made him an important figure in the history of early post-Mauryan India.

2. Discuss the conquests and achievements of Kanishka.

Answer:

Kanishka was one of the greatest rulers of the Kushana dynasty and an important political figure of the post-Mauryan period. His reign is generally regarded as a major phase in the expansion of Kushana power and the development of cultural and commercial connections between India, Central Asia and the wider world. He is particularly remembered for his military achievements, patronage of Buddhism and encouragement of art and culture.

Kanishka inherited an important political position and expanded the Kushana Empire considerably. His territories included large parts of north-western India and extended into Central Asia. Important centres such as Purushapura, identified with modern Peshawar, and Mathura were associated with Kushana power. His control over territories connecting India with Central Asia gave the empire considerable strategic and commercial importance.

One of Kanishka's important achievements was the expansion of Kushana authority towards Central Asia. His empire controlled important routes connected with long-distance trade. These routes linked the Indian subcontinent with Central Asia and regions farther west. As a result, the Kushana period witnessed considerable

movement of merchants, goods, ideas and cultural influences across political boundaries.

Kanishka is also famous for his patronage of Buddhism. He is traditionally associated with the Fourth Buddhist Council, which is said to have been held in Kashmir. The council is particularly associated with the development and consolidation of Mahayana Buddhism. Under his patronage, Buddhist scholars and monks received support, and Buddhist ideas travelled beyond the Indian subcontinent.

The spread of Buddhism towards Central Asia was one of the important cultural developments connected with the Kushana period. Buddhist missionaries and merchants travelled along trade routes, helping Buddhist ideas reach regions such as present-day Afghanistan and Central Asia and eventually further east.

Kanishka's reign was also significant for art and literature. The **Gandhara School of Art** developed strongly during the Kushana period. Gandhara art combined Indian Buddhist themes with influences from Greek, Roman and Central Asian artistic traditions. The **Mathura School of Art** also flourished during this period. These artistic traditions made important contributions to the development of Buddhist sculpture.

Kanishka's period also witnessed cultural interaction among different communities. His empire included people belonging to different linguistic, religious and cultural traditions. The coins issued during the Kushana period display a variety of religious figures and demonstrate the multicultural character of the empire.

The Kushana Empire also played an important role in international commerce. Its geographical position enabled it to participate in trade between India, Central Asia and the Roman world. Trade contributed to the prosperity of important urban centres and encouraged cultural exchanges.

Kanishka's achievements therefore extended beyond military conquest. He created a powerful empire, strengthened connections between India and Central Asia, encouraged trade, supported Buddhism and promoted artistic and cultural development.

Thus, Kanishka occupies a significant position in post-Mauryan history. His reign represents a period of political expansion, economic activity and cultural interaction, making the Kushana Empire an important link between India and the wider Eurasian world.

3. Examine the achievements of Kharavela as a ruler of Kalinga.

Answer:

Kharavela was one of the most important rulers of ancient Kalinga during the post-Mauryan period. He belonged to the Mahameghavahana or Chedi-Mahameghavahana tradition and ruled Kalinga after the decline of Mauryan authority. Much of the information about his reign comes from the **Hathigumpha Inscription**, located at Udayagiri near present-day Bhubaneswar in Odisha.

The Hathigumpha Inscription is the most important source for studying Kharavela. It records various activities of the king, including his military campaigns, public works, religious activities and administrative achievements. Although the inscription presents Kharavela in a highly favourable manner, it remains an important source for understanding the political history of ancient Kalinga.

Kharavela's first major achievement was the strengthening of Kalinga. Kalinga had experienced Mauryan conquest under Ashoka, particularly during the famous Kalinga War. After the decline of Mauryan authority, Kalinga regained its political independence. Kharavela played an important role in establishing Kalinga as a significant regional power.

The Hathigumpha Inscription describes several military campaigns undertaken by Kharavela. These campaigns were aimed at expanding his influence and demonstrating the military strength of Kalinga. The inscription refers to his activities in different directions and mentions conflicts with neighbouring powers. His military successes helped increase the prestige and political influence of his kingdom.

Kharavela also paid attention to public welfare and infrastructure. The inscription mentions the repair and construction of various public facilities. He is associated with the improvement of irrigation works and the development of civic facilities. Such activities indicate that his responsibilities as a ruler were not limited to warfare but also included economic and public welfare measures.

Kharavela was a patron of Jainism. His religious association is reflected in the Hathigumpha Inscription and in the development of religious establishments in the Udayagiri-Khandagiri region. At the same time, his reign should be understood within the broader religious diversity of ancient India. Jainism, Buddhism and Brahmanical traditions continued to exist during the post-Mauryan period.

Kharavela also supported cultural and recreational activities. The inscription refers to celebrations, performances and other forms of public entertainment. This suggests that the court and society of Kalinga during his reign had a vibrant cultural environment.

Another important aspect of Kharavela's reign was his assertion of Kalinga's political identity. By strengthening the kingdom and conducting military campaigns, he helped establish Kalinga as an independent regional power after the decline of Mauryan supremacy.

However, the information about Kharavela must be used carefully because the Hathigumpha Inscription is a royal record and naturally emphasises the achievements of the ruler. Some of its statements are difficult to verify independently.

In conclusion, Kharavela was an energetic ruler who strengthened Kalinga, undertook military campaigns, supported Jainism and

promoted public works and cultural activities. His reign represents the emergence of strong regional kingdoms in India after the decline of the Mauryan Empire.

4. Discuss the political achievements of Gautamiputra Satakarni.

Answer:

Gautamiputra Satakarni was one of the most powerful and celebrated rulers of the Satavahana dynasty. He ruled during a period when the Satavahana kingdom faced political challenges from several regional powers, particularly the Western Kshatrapas. His reign marked an important phase in the revival and expansion of Satavahana authority in the Deccan and western India.

The main source of information about Gautamiputra Satakarni is the **Nasik Inscription** of his mother, Gautami Balashri. The inscription praises his achievements and describes him as a powerful ruler. It provides valuable information about his military victories, territorial expansion and royal qualities.

When Gautamiputra came to power, Satavahana authority had faced considerable challenges. The Western Kshatrapas had established control over important regions in western India. Gautamiputra successfully challenged their influence and restored Satavahana political power. His conflicts with the Western Kshatrapas were among his most significant military achievements.

Gautamiputra defeated the Western Kshatrapa ruler Nahapana and recovered territories that had previously come under Kshatrapa control. The discovery of coins associated with Nahapana that were restruck by Gautamiputra is considered important evidence of his victory and political assertion. His success strengthened Satavahana authority in western India.

His empire extended across substantial parts of the Deccan and western India. The Nasik inscription associates him with territories in

the Deccan, Maharashtra and surrounding regions. Although the exact extent of his empire remains a subject of historical discussion, there is no doubt that he significantly expanded Satavahana influence.

Gautamiputra also strengthened the political position of the Satavahana dynasty. His military victories helped restore the prestige of the dynasty after a period of difficulty. He presented himself as a powerful monarch capable of defeating rival rulers and protecting his kingdom.

His political achievements were not limited to warfare. He also maintained administrative control over the territories brought under Satavahana authority. The Satavahana state relied upon kingship, provincial officials, local authorities and subordinate rulers to manage its extensive territory. Gautamiputra's success in maintaining authority over different regions indicates the effectiveness of this political structure during his reign.

The inscriptions also portray Gautamiputra as a ruler who upheld social and religious values. He is associated with the patronage of Brahmanical traditions, while the broader Satavahana period also witnessed the continued development of Buddhist establishments. This reflects the religious diversity of the Deccan.

Gautamiputra's importance is therefore closely connected with the revival of Satavahana power. His defeat of Nahapana and the Western Kshatrapas restored territories and increased the prestige of the dynasty. His reign also helped create political stability in important parts of the Deccan.

Thus, Gautamiputra Satakarni was one of the greatest Satavahana rulers. Through military success, territorial expansion and effective political consolidation, he transformed the Satavahana kingdom into a major regional power and left a lasting mark on the history of ancient India.

5. Explain the main features of Satavahana administration.

Answer:

The Satavahanas established a powerful kingdom in the Deccan during the post-Mauryan period. Their administration developed in response to the geographical and political conditions of the Deccan. The Satavahana state combined royal authority with provincial and local institutions. Inscriptions, coins and other archaeological evidence provide important information about their administrative system.

The king was the highest authority in the Satavahana administration. He was responsible for maintaining political stability, protecting the kingdom, supervising officials and conducting military campaigns. The title and status of the ruler were important elements of the political structure. Powerful rulers such as Gautamiputra Satakarni strengthened royal authority and expanded the kingdom.

The Satavahana territory was divided into administrative units for effective governance. The exact structure and terminology varied, but inscriptions mention territorial divisions and officials who helped administer different areas. Local authorities also played an important role, particularly because the Satavahana kingdom covered extensive and geographically diverse regions.

One important feature was the role of officials. Administrative officers were responsible for collecting revenue, maintaining order and implementing royal authority. The Satavahana rulers also maintained relationships with subordinate chiefs and local political groups. This helped the central authority govern distant territories without requiring complete direct control over every locality.

Revenue was an essential part of administration. Agriculture was an important economic activity, and land and agricultural production contributed significantly to state income. Taxes and other forms of revenue supported the functioning of the government and military. Trade also played an important role in the economy of the Satavahana kingdom, particularly because the Deccan was connected with major inland and maritime trade routes.

The Satavahanas maintained a military organisation to protect their territories and conduct campaigns. Military strength was especially important because the dynasty frequently competed with other regional powers, including the Western Kshatrapas. Rulers such as Gautamiputra Satakarni used military power to expand and defend Satavahana territory.

Local institutions were also significant. Guilds and urban groups played important economic roles, particularly in trade and crafts. Merchant and artisan organisations could possess considerable economic influence and participated in donations to religious establishments. Such institutions formed an important part of the social and economic environment in which Satavahana administration functioned.

Land grants and religious donations also appear in inscriptions from the Satavahana period. Buddhist monasteries and other religious institutions received donations from rulers, officials, merchants and ordinary people. These records provide valuable evidence about the relationship between political authority, economy and religion.

The Satavahana administrative system was therefore not completely centralised in the manner of the Mauryan state. It depended on the cooperation of local rulers, officials, chiefs and economic institutions. This flexible arrangement allowed the Satavahanas to govern a large and diverse territory.

In conclusion, Satavahana administration was based on royal authority supported by officials, territorial divisions, local institutions, revenue collection and military organisation. Its combination of central kingship and regional participation enabled the Satavahanas to maintain political control over large parts of the Deccan for several centuries.

UNIT – III

ONE MARK:

1. Who founded the Gupta dynasty?

Answer: Sri Gupta is generally regarded as the founder of the Gupta dynasty.

2. Who was Samudragupta?

Answer: Samudragupta was one of the greatest rulers of the Gupta dynasty and is known for his extensive conquests and military achievements.

3. Which inscription provides information about Samudragupta's conquests?

Answer: The Allahabad Pillar Inscription, also known as the Prayaga Prashasti, provides important information about Samudragupta's conquests.

4. Who composed the Allahabad Pillar Inscription of Samudragupta?

Answer: Harishena composed the Allahabad Pillar Inscription of Samudragupta.

5. What title is associated with Samudragupta?

Answer: Samudragupta is often described as the “Napoleon of India” because of his extensive military conquests.

6. Who was Chandragupta II?

Answer: Chandragupta II was a powerful Gupta ruler, also known as Vikramaditya.

7. Which Gupta ruler is known as Vikramaditya?

Answer: Chandragupta II is traditionally known as Vikramaditya.

8. Which foreign traveller visited India during the reign of Chandragupta II?

Answer: Fa-Hien (Faxian), the Chinese Buddhist pilgrim, visited India during the reign of Chandragupta II.

9. Which dynasty was defeated by Chandragupta II?

Answer: Chandragupta II defeated the Western Kshatrapas, also known as Shakas.

10. What was the capital of the Gupta Empire?

Answer: Pataliputra was an important capital of the Gupta Empire.

11. What was the main feature of Gupta administration?

Answer: Gupta administration was based on monarchical rule, supported by provincial, district and local administrative institutions.

12. What was the main source of revenue during the Gupta period?

Answer: Land revenue was one of the principal sources of income of the Gupta state.

13. Who was Harishena?

Answer: Harishena was a court poet and minister of Samudragupta who composed the Allahabad Pillar Inscription.

14. Why is the Gupta period called the Golden Age?

Answer: The Gupta period is often called the Golden Age because of significant achievements in literature, science, mathematics, art, architecture and culture.

15. Who wrote the *Aryabhatiya*?

Answer: Aryabhata wrote the *Aryabhatiya*.

16. Who was Kalidasa?

Answer: Kalidasa was a renowned Sanskrit poet and dramatist associated with the Gupta period.

17. Name one important achievement of Gupta art.

Answer: The development of refined sculpture and temple architecture was an important achievement of Gupta art.

18. Mention one cause of the decline of Gupta power.

Answer: The invasions of the Hunas weakened the Gupta Empire and contributed significantly to its decline.

19. Who were the Hunas?

Answer: The Hunas were foreign groups that invaded north-western and northern parts of the Indian subcontinent and posed a major threat to the Gupta Empire.

20. Who was the last important Gupta ruler?

Answer: Skandagupta was the last major Gupta ruler who successfully defended the empire against serious external threats.

TWO MARK:

1. Who was Samudragupta? Mention his importance.

Answer:

Samudragupta was one of the greatest rulers of the Gupta dynasty. He greatly expanded the Gupta Empire through military campaigns in northern and southern India. His achievements are mainly described in the Allahabad Pillar Inscription composed by his court poet Harishena.

2. What is the Allahabad Pillar Inscription?

Answer:

The Allahabad Pillar Inscription, also known as the Prayaga Prashasti, is an important source for the reign of Samudragupta. Composed by Harishena, it describes his conquests, political achievements, relations with neighbouring rulers and qualities as a monarch.

3. Why is Samudragupta called the “Napoleon of India”?

Answer:

Samudragupta is called the “Napoleon of India” because of his extensive military campaigns and remarkable conquests. He defeated several rulers in northern India and conducted successful expeditions towards southern India, greatly expanding Gupta political influence.

4. Mention two achievements of Samudragupta.**Answer:**

Samudragupta expanded Gupta power through successful military campaigns and established his authority over several northern Indian kingdoms. He also maintained diplomatic relations with frontier rulers and supported art, literature and religion, contributing to the cultural development of the Gupta period.

5. Who was Chandragupta II? Mention one of his achievements.**Answer:**

Chandragupta II was one of the most powerful Gupta rulers and was popularly known as Vikramaditya. One of his major achievements was the defeat of the Western Kshatrapas, which expanded Gupta influence over western India and strengthened its trade connections.

6. Who was Fa-Hien? When did he visit India?**Answer:**

Fa-Hien was a Chinese Buddhist pilgrim who travelled to India during the reign of Chandragupta II. He visited India mainly to study Buddhism and collect Buddhist texts. His account provides valuable information about Indian society, religion and administration.

7. What was the importance of Chandragupta II's conquest of the Western Kshatrapas?**Answer:**

Chandragupta II's conquest of the Western Kshatrapas extended Gupta authority into western India. It gave the Guptas access to important trade routes and prosperous regions, strengthened their

economic position and increased their political influence in the western part of the subcontinent.

8. Mention two features of Gupta administration.

Answer:

Gupta administration was based on monarchical rule, with the king as the supreme authority. The empire was divided into provinces, districts and smaller administrative units. Local officials, feudatories and village authorities also played important roles in managing different parts of the kingdom.

9. What was the main source of revenue during the Gupta period?

Answer:

Land revenue was one of the principal sources of state income during the Gupta period. The state also received revenue from various taxes, trade and other economic activities. Revenue was used to maintain administration, military forces and other state functions.

10. Why is the Gupta period called the “Golden Age” of ancient India?

Answer:

The Gupta period is called the “Golden Age” because of remarkable developments in literature, science, mathematics, art, architecture and education. Scholars such as Kalidasa and Aryabhata made important contributions, while sculpture and temple architecture also achieved considerable advancement.

11. Mention two achievements of Gupta literature.

Answer:

Sanskrit literature flourished greatly during the Gupta period. Kalidasa produced celebrated works such as *Abhijnanasakuntalam* and *Meghaduta*. The period also witnessed the development of Sanskrit poetry, drama and other literary works supported by royal and elite patronage.

12. What were the contributions of Aryabhata?

Answer:

Aryabhata was a renowned mathematician and astronomer associated with the Gupta period. In his *Aryabhatiya*, he discussed mathematical calculations, astronomy and the rotation of the Earth. His work made significant contributions to the development of Indian mathematics and astronomy.

13. Mention two causes of the decline of Gupta power.**Answer:**

The decline of Gupta power was caused by weak successors and the increasing independence of provincial rulers. The invasions of the Hunas also severely weakened the empire. These political and external pressures gradually reduced Gupta control over its territories.

14. How did the Hunas contribute to the decline of the Gupta Empire?**Answer:**

The Hunas invaded north-western and northern India and created serious military pressure on the Gupta Empire. Although Skandagupta successfully resisted them initially, continued Huna attacks weakened Gupta military and financial resources and contributed to the eventual fragmentation of Gupta authority.

15. Who was Skandagupta? Mention his importance.**Answer:**

Skandagupta was one of the last major Gupta rulers. He successfully defended the empire against the Hunas and other threats. His reign represented the final strong phase of Gupta imperial power, although the empire weakened considerably after his death.

BROAD ANSWER:**1. Discuss the conquests and achievements of Samudragupta.****Answer:**

Samudragupta was one of the greatest rulers of the Gupta dynasty and played a major role in transforming the Gupta kingdom into a powerful empire. He succeeded Chandragupta I and ruled during the fourth century CE. His reign is mainly known for extensive military campaigns, political expansion and cultural achievements. The most important source of information about his reign is the Allahabad Pillar Inscription, also known as the Prayaga Prashasti, composed by his court poet and minister Harishena.

Samudragupta's military achievements were extensive. In northern India, he defeated several rulers and incorporated many territories directly into the Gupta Empire. His northern campaigns helped establish Gupta supremacy over the Gangetic region. These victories provided the foundation for the expansion and consolidation of the Gupta Empire.

Samudragupta also undertook a famous southern campaign. According to the Allahabad Pillar Inscription, he defeated several rulers of southern India. However, instead of permanently annexing all these territories, he generally followed a policy of defeating the rulers and then restoring them to their kingdoms after accepting Gupta supremacy. This approach allowed him to extend his political influence without creating the administrative difficulties that could have resulted from direct control over distant southern territories.

Apart from conquered kingdoms, Samudragupta established relationships with frontier states and tribal or forest regions. Some rulers accepted his authority and paid tribute or acknowledged his supremacy. Thus, his empire was not based entirely on direct territorial administration; it also included different forms of political relationships.

Samudragupta's diplomatic influence extended beyond the immediate boundaries of his empire. The inscription refers to rulers from distant regions who sought his favour or recognised his prestige. This demonstrates the wide political reputation that he had acquired through his military successes.

Samudragupta was not only a successful conqueror but also a patron of art and culture. His coins provide evidence of his cultural interests. One famous coin type depicts him playing the veena, showing his association with music. He also supported Brahmanical traditions and is associated with the performance of the Ashvamedha sacrifice, which symbolised imperial authority.

His reign contributed significantly to the rise of Gupta political power. Through military victories, diplomacy and political arrangements, Samudragupta created an extensive sphere of Gupta influence. His policies were practical because he did not attempt to administer every conquered territory directly.

Thus, Samudragupta's reign represents a major stage in the growth of the Gupta Empire. His northern conquests, southern expedition, diplomatic relations and cultural achievements established him as one of the most important rulers of ancient India. His political success provided a strong foundation for the later achievements of Chandragupta II.

2. Discuss the conquests and achievements of Chandragupta II.

Answer:

Chandragupta II was one of the most important rulers of the Gupta dynasty. He succeeded Samudragupta and further strengthened the Gupta Empire. He is traditionally known by the title **Vikramaditya**. His reign is remembered for territorial expansion, the defeat of the Western Kshatrapas, economic prosperity, cultural development and diplomatic relations. His period is often considered one of the high points of Gupta imperial power.

One of Chandragupta II's greatest political achievements was his expansion towards western India. The Western Kshatrapas, also known as Shakas, controlled important territories in western India. Chandragupta II successfully defeated them and incorporated their territories into the Gupta Empire. This victory was politically and

economically important because it brought prosperous regions and important trade routes under Gupta control.

The conquest of western India also improved the economic position of the Gupta Empire. The western coastal regions were connected with important inland and overseas trade networks. Control over these areas allowed the Guptas to benefit from commercial activities and strengthened their position in western India.

Chandragupta II also followed a successful diplomatic policy. His marriage alliances helped strengthen Gupta political influence. His marriage with the Lichchhavi princess Kumaradevi's lineage had already been important in the earlier Gupta period, while Chandragupta II himself strengthened relations with powerful families through matrimonial alliances. His daughter Prabhavatigupta was married to the Vakataka ruler Rudrasena II. This alliance helped the Guptas establish political influence in the Deccan and provided strategic advantages.

The reign of Chandragupta II was also important for cultural development. Sanskrit literature flourished during this period, and Kalidasa is traditionally associated with his court. Although the exact details of court life are debated, the Gupta period witnessed remarkable achievements in Sanskrit literature, art and learning.

The Chinese Buddhist pilgrim **Fa-Hien** visited India during Chandragupta II's reign. His account provides valuable information about Indian society, religion and political conditions. He described several regions of India and gave observations about the Buddhist establishments and social life of the period.

Chandragupta II also issued various types of coins, reflecting the prosperity and artistic quality of Gupta coinage. Gold coins in particular demonstrate the economic strength and high level of craftsmanship of the period.

His reign therefore combined military expansion with diplomacy and economic development. The defeat of the Western Kshatrapas

extended Gupta power into western India, while matrimonial alliances strengthened political relations with other ruling houses. Cultural achievements further enhanced the prestige of the Gupta Empire.

In conclusion, Chandragupta II was a highly successful Gupta ruler. His military victories, especially against the Western Kshatrapas, diplomatic policies, economic expansion and cultural patronage helped make the Gupta Empire one of the most powerful states of ancient India.

3. Explain the main features of Gupta administration.

Answer:

The Gupta Empire developed an important administrative system that combined strong monarchical authority with considerable importance given to provincial and local administration. Compared with the highly centralised Mauryan system, Gupta administration showed greater participation of local authorities and subordinate rulers. The administrative structure helped the Guptas govern a large territory while allowing considerable autonomy to regional and local institutions.

The king was the supreme authority of the Gupta state. He was responsible for maintaining law and order, protecting the kingdom, conducting military campaigns and supervising the administration. Gupta rulers adopted grand titles that reflected their imperial position. However, the king did not manage every aspect of administration personally. Ministers, military officers and provincial officials assisted him.

The empire was divided into different administrative units. Provinces were generally known as **Bhuktis** and were placed under governors or high officials. Below the provinces were smaller divisions such as **Vishayas**, which were administered by officials responsible for local governance. Villages formed the basic units of administration and were managed with the participation of local authorities.

An important feature of Gupta administration was the increasing role of local institutions. In towns and villages, local bodies and influential groups participated in administrative affairs. Guilds of merchants and artisans also had considerable importance in urban economic life. This indicates that Gupta administration was not entirely dependent upon direct central control.

Revenue administration was essential for maintaining the state. Land revenue formed a major source of income. Taxes and other payments were collected from agricultural production and economic activities. The state also received revenue from trade, professions and other sources. Land grants to religious institutions and officials became increasingly common during the Gupta period. Such grants sometimes transferred revenue rights and administrative privileges over particular areas.

The Gupta state maintained a military organisation consisting of different branches of armed forces. The army was necessary for defending the empire, conducting conquests and maintaining political authority. Feudatory rulers and subordinate chiefs could also provide military support to the Gupta rulers.

Judicial administration was another important aspect. The king was regarded as the highest authority in matters of justice, while local officials and institutions dealt with ordinary disputes. Legal practices were influenced by established social and religious traditions.

Gupta administration also witnessed the growth of **feudatory relationships**. Powerful local rulers and chiefs often acknowledged Gupta supremacy while retaining considerable authority in their own territories. This system helped the Guptas maintain control over a large empire without establishing a completely centralised bureaucracy in every region.

Thus, Gupta administration combined monarchy, provincial government, local institutions and subordinate political authorities. Its flexible nature enabled the rulers to manage a large and diverse empire. However, increasing local autonomy and the growing power

of feudatories later became important factors contributing to the weakening of Gupta central authority.

4. Why is the Gupta Age called the “Golden Age” of ancient India?

Answer:

The Gupta period is often described as the “**Golden Age**” of ancient **India** because of the remarkable achievements made in literature, science, mathematics, art, architecture, religion and education. The period witnessed considerable cultural development and intellectual activity. However, the term “Golden Age” should be understood mainly in relation to cultural and intellectual achievements rather than as a period of equal prosperity for every section of society.

Sanskrit literature reached a high level of development during the Gupta period. **Kalidasa**, one of the greatest Sanskrit poets and dramatists, is traditionally associated with this period. His famous works include *Abhijnanasakuntalam*, *Meghaduta* and *Raghuvamsha*. Sanskrit became an important language of royal culture and intellectual expression.

The Gupta period also witnessed major achievements in mathematics and astronomy. **Aryabhata**, the celebrated mathematician and astronomer, composed the *Aryabhatiya*. He made important contributions to mathematical calculations and astronomy and discussed the rotation of the Earth. His work represents the advanced scientific knowledge that developed in this period and its intellectual environment.

Gupta art and architecture also achieved remarkable development. Sculpture became highly refined, particularly in Buddhist and Hindu religious art. Gupta sculptures are known for their balanced proportions, calm expressions and spiritual character. Temple architecture also developed significantly, with structural temples becoming increasingly important.

The period witnessed important developments in religious architecture and iconography. Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism continued to exist, and different religious traditions received patronage from rulers, officials and private donors. The coexistence of different traditions contributed to the richness of the cultural environment.

Education and learning also flourished. Centres of learning attracted scholars and students from different regions. The Chinese pilgrim Fa-Hien, who visited India during the reign of Chandragupta II, provided observations about society and religion. His account is an important source for understanding the conditions of the period.

Gupta coinage is another important achievement. Gupta rulers issued high-quality gold coins displaying the king in different roles and presenting artistic and cultural themes. These coins indicate the importance of political symbolism, craftsmanship and economic activity.

The Gupta period also witnessed progress in metallurgy. The famous Iron Pillar at Delhi demonstrates the advanced metallurgical knowledge of ancient Indian craftsmen. Its resistance to corrosion over a long period is often cited as evidence of technological skill.

Despite these achievements, the term “Golden Age” has limitations. Social inequalities existed, and prosperity was not equally distributed among all groups. Therefore, historians today often use the term carefully.

In conclusion, the Gupta Age is called a Golden Age mainly because of its outstanding contributions to literature, science, mathematics, art, architecture and learning. The achievements of scholars such as Kalidasa and Aryabhata and the excellence of Gupta art and coinage make this period one of the most significant cultural phases in ancient Indian history.

5. Analyse the causes of the decline of Gupta power.

Answer:

The Gupta Empire, which reached a high level of political power under rulers such as Samudragupta and Chandragupta II, gradually declined after the fifth century CE. The decline was not the result of a single event or one ruler. It developed through a combination of political, military, administrative and economic factors. The invasions of the Hunas, the weakness of later rulers and the growing independence of regional powers were particularly important.

One major cause was the weakness of the later Gupta rulers. Samudragupta and Chandragupta II possessed strong military and political abilities and were able to maintain imperial authority over extensive territories. After their reigns, however, the Gupta Empire faced increasing difficulties. Some later rulers were unable to exercise the same degree of control over distant provinces and subordinate chiefs.

The **Huna invasions** were another major factor. The Hunas entered north-western India and gradually created serious pressure on the Gupta Empire. Skandagupta, one of the last powerful Gupta rulers, successfully resisted the Hunas during his reign. However, military campaigns required considerable resources, and repeated external pressure weakened the empire's political and financial strength.

The growing power of provincial rulers and feudatories also contributed to the decline. The Gupta administrative system allowed considerable autonomy to local rulers and subordinate chiefs. As the central government became weaker, these regional authorities increasingly asserted their independence. This gradually reduced the territory directly controlled by the Gupta rulers.

The increasing practice of land grants may also have affected the political and economic structure of the empire. Land grants sometimes transferred revenue rights and administrative privileges to religious institutions and officials. Over time, the expansion of such local rights could reduce the resources and direct control available to the central authority.

Economic difficulties may have further weakened the empire. Maintaining a large administrative system and defending extensive territories required substantial resources. Military conflicts, particularly with the Hunas, placed additional pressure on the state. Reduced control over important regions and trade routes may also have affected imperial revenues.

Another factor was the fragmentation of political authority. As Gupta control weakened, several regional kingdoms emerged or became stronger. The political unity created under the earlier Gupta rulers gradually disappeared. Local dynasties gained greater independence, reducing the Gupta Empire to smaller territories.

The decline was therefore a gradual process rather than an immediate collapse. Gupta authority continued in some regions even after the empire lost much of its earlier power. The sixth century CE witnessed increasing political fragmentation in northern India.

In conclusion, the decline of Gupta power resulted from the combined effects of weak successors, Huna invasions, growing provincial autonomy, economic pressures, land grants and the rise of regional political powers. Although the Gupta Empire declined as a major political force, its cultural achievements in literature, science, mathematics, art and architecture continued to influence Indian history for centuries.

UNIT – 4

ONE MARK:

1. Who were the Hunas?

Answer: The Hunas were foreign groups who invaded north-western and northern India during the later Gupta period.

2. Name one important Huna ruler.

Answer: Mihirakula was one of the most prominent Huna rulers in India.

3. Which Gupta ruler successfully resisted the Hunas?

Answer: Skandagupta successfully resisted the Hunas during his reign.

4. Who was Mihirakula?

Answer: Mihirakula was a powerful Huna ruler who established his authority over parts of northern India.

5. Mention one major effect of the Huna invasion.

Answer: The Huna invasions weakened the political and military strength of the Gupta Empire.

6. Who were the Maukharis?

Answer: The Maukharis were an important ruling dynasty that emerged in northern India during the post-Gupta period.

7. What was the capital of the Maukharis?

Answer: Kannauj was the principal capital of the Maukharis.

8. Who was the most powerful Maukhari ruler?

Answer: Ishanavarman was one of the most powerful rulers of the Maukhari dynasty.

9. Who was Harshavardhana's Maukhari predecessor?

Answer: Grahavarman was the Maukhari ruler who was connected with Harshavardhana through his marriage to Rajyashri.

10. Who were the Maitrakas?

Answer: The Maitrakas were a ruling dynasty that established an independent kingdom in western India after the decline of Gupta authority.

11. What was the capital of the Maitrakas?

Answer: Valabhi was the capital of the Maitraka dynasty.

12. Who founded the Maitraka dynasty?

Answer: Bhatarka, a military commander under the Guptas, founded the Maitraka dynasty.

13. Name one important Maitraka ruler.

Answer: Dhruvasena II was one of the important rulers of the Maitraka dynasty.

14. Who were the Vakatakas?

Answer: The Vakatakas were an important ruling dynasty that controlled parts of the Deccan and central India during the post-Gupta period.

15. Who founded the Vakataka dynasty?

Answer: Vindhyashakti is generally regarded as the founder of the Vakataka dynasty.

16. Name one important Vakataka ruler.

Answer: Pravarasena I was one of the most powerful rulers of the Vakataka dynasty.

17. Which Vakataka ruler was married to Prabhavatigupta?

Answer: Rudrasena II was married to Prabhavatigupta, the daughter of Gupta ruler Chandragupta II.

18. Who was Prabhavatigupta?

Answer: Prabhavatigupta was the daughter of Chandragupta II and a queen of the Vakataka ruler Rudrasena II.

19. Which dynasty was associated with the development of Ajanta paintings?

Answer: The Vakatakas were associated with the patronage of the Ajanta caves and their paintings.

20. What was the main political feature of the post-Gupta period?

Answer: The main political feature of the post-Gupta period was the rise of several regional kingdoms following the decline of Gupta imperial authority.

TWO MARK:

1. Who were the Hunas? Mention their impact on India.

Answer:

The Hunas were foreign groups who invaded north-western and northern India during the later Gupta period. Their repeated invasions weakened Gupta political and military power and contributed to political instability and the emergence of several regional kingdoms.

2. Who was Mihirakula?

Answer:

Mihirakula was one of the most prominent Huna rulers in India. He established control over large parts of northern India and is mentioned in various historical sources. His rule represented the high point of Huna political power in the subcontinent.

3. How did Skandagupta resist the Huna invasion?

Answer:

Skandagupta successfully resisted the early Huna invasions and protected the Gupta Empire from immediate external danger. His military success temporarily strengthened Gupta authority, although

continued external pressures later contributed to the weakening of the empire.

4. Mention two effects of the Huna invasions.

Answer:

The Huna invasions weakened the military and financial resources of the Gupta Empire. They also disturbed political stability in northern India and encouraged the rise of regional powers, contributing to the fragmentation of Gupta imperial authority.

5. Who were the Maukharis?

Answer:

The Maukharis were an important dynasty that rose to prominence in northern India after the decline of Gupta power. They established their political centre at Kannauj and became a significant regional power under rulers such as Ishanavarman.

6. Mention two political achievements of Ishanavarman.

Answer:

Ishanavarman strengthened Maukhari authority in northern India and expanded its influence over neighbouring territories. He successfully established the Maukharis as an important regional power and adopted the title Maharajadhiraja, reflecting his political status.

7. Why was Kannauj important to the Maukharis?

Answer:

Kannauj became the principal political centre of the Maukharis and occupied an important strategic position in northern India. Its location in the Gangetic plain helped the dynasty control important territories and trade routes and increased its political importance.

8. Who were the Maitrakas?

Answer:

The Maitrakas were a powerful dynasty that established an independent kingdom in western India after the decline of Gupta

authority. Their capital was Valabhi, which developed into an important political, commercial and educational centre.

9. Who founded the Maitraka dynasty?

Answer:

Bhatarka, originally a military commander under the Guptas, founded the Maitraka dynasty in western India. He established his authority in the region of Saurashtra and laid the foundation for the later Maitraka kingdom centred at Valabhi.

10. Mention two political achievements of the Maitrakas.

Answer:

The Maitrakas established an independent kingdom in western India and consolidated their control over Saurashtra and neighbouring areas. They maintained political stability for several generations and developed Valabhi into an important centre of regional power.

11. Who were the Vakatakas?

Answer:

The Vakatakas were an important dynasty that ruled parts of the Deccan and central India during the post-Gupta period. They became politically influential through territorial expansion and matrimonial alliances, particularly their connection with the Gupta dynasty.

12. Who founded the Vakataka dynasty?

Answer:

Vindhyashakti is generally regarded as the founder of the Vakataka dynasty. He established Vakataka authority in the Deccan, after which the dynasty expanded under rulers such as Pravarasena I.

13. Mention two achievements of Pravarasena I.

Answer:

Pravarasena I greatly expanded Vakataka territory and became one of the most powerful rulers of the dynasty. He assumed the imperial title and performed important Vedic sacrifices, strengthening the political and religious prestige of the Vakataka kingdom.

14. What was the importance of the Gupta-Vakataka matrimonial alliance?

Answer:

The marriage of Prabhavatigupta, daughter of Chandragupta II, with Vakataka ruler Rudrasena II strengthened political relations between the two dynasties. This alliance increased Gupta influence in the Deccan and provided important political and strategic advantages to both kingdoms.

15. What was the political significance of the post-Gupta period?

Answer:

The post-Gupta period witnessed the decline of imperial authority and the emergence of several regional kingdoms. The Maukharis, Maitrakas and Vakatakas became important political powers, creating a fragmented but politically dynamic landscape across northern, western and central India.

BROAD ANSWER:

1. Discuss the Huna Invasion of India and its effects on Indian political life.

Answer:

The Huna invasions were an important development in the history of India during the later Gupta period. The Hunas were groups of Central Asian origin who entered north-western India and gradually extended their influence into northern parts of the subcontinent. Their invasions weakened the political stability of northern India and contributed to the decline of Gupta authority. However, the fall of the Gupta Empire cannot be attributed only to the Huna invasions, as internal political and economic problems also played an important role.

The first major Huna attacks on the Gupta Empire took place during the reign of **Skandagupta**. He successfully resisted the early Huna advance and protected the Gupta territories. His victory temporarily

prevented the Hunas from establishing permanent control over northern India. However, after the death of Skandagupta, the Gupta Empire became weaker because of succession problems, financial difficulties and the growing independence of provincial rulers.

Later, Huna rulers such as **Toramana** succeeded in establishing their authority over considerable areas of north-western and northern India. Toramana was followed by **Mihirakula**, who became one of the most prominent Huna rulers in Indian history. Mihirakula established his power over parts of northern India and is mentioned in several historical traditions. His power was eventually challenged by Indian rulers, and Huna political control declined.

The Huna invasions had several important political effects. First, they placed considerable military pressure on the Gupta Empire. The continuous defence of the frontier required substantial resources and weakened the financial position of the state. Second, the invasions disturbed political stability in northern India. As Gupta authority declined, several regional rulers and dynasties became increasingly independent.

Third, the Huna invasions contributed to the fragmentation of the Gupta political system. After the decline of central Gupta authority, regional powers such as the Maukharis and Maitrakas emerged in different parts of India. Other local ruling families also strengthened their positions. Thus, the political structure of northern India gradually changed from imperial unity to regional kingdoms.

The invasions also affected trade, settlements and economic life in some regions. Military conflicts disturbed communication and the movement of goods, although the effects were not uniform throughout India. The Hunas were eventually absorbed into the political and social structure of India in different regions.

In conclusion, the Huna invasions were a major factor in the weakening of Gupta power and the transformation of northern Indian politics. Skandagupta's successful resistance delayed Huna expansion, but later rulers were unable to maintain the same level of imperial

strength. The decline of Huna power did not restore the Gupta Empire; instead, northern India witnessed the rise of several regional states. Therefore, the Huna invasions played an important role in the transition from the Gupta imperial system to the politically fragmented post-Gupta period.

2. Explain the rise and political achievements of the Maukharis.

Answer:

The Maukharis were one of the important regional dynasties that emerged in northern India during the decline of Gupta political authority. Their rise reflects the process of political regionalisation that took place after the weakening of the Gupta Empire. The Maukharis established their principal centre at **Kannauj**, which later became one of the most important political centres of northern India.

In the beginning, the Maukharis were subordinate to greater political powers, but they gradually increased their independence. The weakening of Gupta authority provided them with an opportunity to expand their influence. Among the early important Maukhari rulers, **Ishanavarman** played a significant role in establishing the political strength of the dynasty.

Ishanavarman adopted the title **Maharajadhiraja**, indicating his ambition and relatively independent political position. He expanded Maukhari influence in northern India and strengthened the kingdom through military activities. His reign is important because it marked the transformation of the Maukharis into a significant regional power. The dynasty competed with other contemporary powers for political influence in the Gangetic region.

The geographical position of Kannauj greatly contributed to Maukhari power. Kannauj was located in the fertile Ganga-Yamuna region and was connected with important routes of communication and trade. Control over this region provided economic resources and strategic

advantages. The Maukharis were therefore able to develop a strong political base.

Another important Maukhari ruler was **Grahavarman**. He strengthened the dynasty through matrimonial alliances. He married **Rajyashri**, the daughter of Prabhakaravardhana of the Pushyabhuti dynasty of Thanesar. This marriage created an important political relationship between the Maukharis and the Pushyabhutis.

The political situation changed dramatically after the death of Grahavarman. He was killed by the ruler of Malwa, according to traditional accounts, and Rajyashri was placed in a difficult political situation. These events brought the Maukhari kingdom into the wider political struggles of northern India. The subsequent involvement of **Harshavardhana**, Rajyashri's brother, eventually contributed to the rise of Harsha as a major ruler of northern India.

The Maukharis played an important role in resisting the political domination of other powers and maintaining an independent kingdom in northern India. Their rise also demonstrates how regional dynasties filled the political space created by the decline of Gupta authority.

The importance of the Maukharis therefore lies not only in their territorial achievements but also in their contribution to the political development of northern India. They established Kannauj as an important political centre and participated actively in the power struggles of the sixth century.

In conclusion, the Maukharis were a significant regional power of the post-Gupta period. Ishanavarman strengthened their political position, while Grahavarman's marriage with Rajyashri connected the dynasty with the Pushyabhutis. Although Maukhari power was eventually overshadowed by Harsha, their political activities played an important role in the transformation of northern Indian politics after the decline of the Gupta Empire.

3. Discuss the rise and political achievements of the Maitrakas.

Answer:

The Maitrakas were an important regional dynasty that ruled in western India during the period following the weakening of Gupta political authority. They established their power mainly in **Saurashtra and Gujarat**, with their capital at **Valabhi**. The rise of the Maitrakas is an important example of the emergence of independent regional kingdoms after the decline of imperial Gupta control.

The founder of the Maitraka dynasty was **Bhatarka**. He had originally served as a military commander under the Gupta political system. As Gupta authority weakened in western India, Bhatarka established his own political power in the region. His successors gradually transformed this military base into an independent kingdom.

The capital **Valabhi** was strategically and economically important. It was situated in a region connected with trade routes and coastal commerce. The Maitraka rulers benefited from the economic resources of western India and were able to maintain a stable political administration. Valabhi later became an important centre of education and culture as well.

The early Maitraka rulers concentrated on consolidating their authority in Saurashtra. They strengthened their political position by controlling important territories and maintaining relations with neighbouring powers. The dynasty continued to rule for several generations, demonstrating considerable political stability compared with many smaller kingdoms of the period.

Among the important Maitraka rulers were **Dharasena** and **Dhruvasena II**. Dhruvasena II was particularly significant because of his political relations with other contemporary rulers. He is associated with the wider political environment of northern and western India during the age of Harsha. The Maitrakas maintained their regional independence while dealing with powerful neighbouring states.

The Maitrakas also played an important role in the political development of western India. Their kingdom became a major centre of power after the decline of Gupta influence. Their control over Saurashtra allowed them to participate in regional trade and maintain economic resources necessary for administration and military activities.

Their political importance was not limited to territorial control. The Maitraka kingdom survived for a considerable period and developed its own administrative institutions. The rulers issued land grants and inscriptions that provide information about their government, officials and territorial organisation. Their ability to maintain authority over a large region demonstrates the strength of regional political institutions during this period.

The Maitrakas also maintained relations with different religious and cultural groups. Their kingdom became known for its intellectual and educational environment, particularly at Valabhi. Although political achievements are the main focus, the cultural importance of the kingdom helped strengthen its wider regional influence.

In conclusion, the Maitrakas emerged from the political weakening of the Gupta Empire and established an independent kingdom in western India. Founded by Bhatarka, the dynasty made **Valabhi** its political centre and gradually consolidated control over Saurashtra and surrounding areas. Rulers such as Dharasena and Dhruvasena II contributed to the continuation of Maitraka power. The Maitrakas therefore represent an important stage in the growth of regional kingdoms in post-Gupta India.

4. Explain the rise and political achievements of the Vakatakas.

Answer:

The Vakatakas were one of the most important political powers of the Deccan and central India during the later centuries of ancient Indian history. Their rise took place broadly during the period of Gupta

expansion, and they played an important role in the political affairs of the Deccan. Their history is particularly significant because of their territorial expansion, political alliances and relationship with the imperial Guptas.

The founder of the Vakataka dynasty was **Vindhyaashakti**. He established the foundation of Vakataka power in the Deccan. The dynasty became much stronger under **Pravarasena I**, who was one of its greatest early rulers. Pravarasena I greatly expanded Vakataka territory and transformed the dynasty into a major regional power.

Pravarasena I adopted the title of an imperial ruler and performed important Vedic sacrifices, including the **Ashvamedha**. His reign represents the expansion and consolidation of Vakataka authority in central India and the Deccan. His political activities helped establish the Vakatakas as a major power capable of interacting with other contemporary kingdoms.

After Pravarasena I, the Vakataka kingdom was divided among different branches of the ruling family. Despite this division, important branches continued to exercise political influence in the Deccan. The **Nandivardhana-Pravarapura branch** became particularly important in the northern Deccan.

A major political development in Vakataka history was the matrimonial alliance between **Rudrasena II** and **Prabhavatigupta**, the daughter of Gupta emperor Chandragupta II. This marriage strengthened relations between the Guptas and Vakatakas. It was an important example of how marriage alliances were used as instruments of diplomacy in ancient India.

After the early death of Rudrasena II, Prabhavatigupta acted as regent for her sons. Her inscriptions provide valuable evidence regarding the political relationship between the two dynasties. Through this alliance, the Guptas gained an important connection with the Deccan, while the Vakatakas strengthened their position through association with the powerful Gupta dynasty.

The Vakatakas also played a significant role in controlling territories and political routes in central India and the Deccan. Their position allowed them to act as an important link between northern and southern political regions. They maintained relations with several neighbouring powers and participated in the changing balance of power in the Deccan.

The later Vakataka ruler **Harishena** was also an important figure in the political history of the dynasty. During his reign, Vakataka influence extended over substantial parts of the Deccan and central India. His period is also associated with important cultural developments, including patronage connected with Ajanta.

The political significance of the Vakatakas lies in their ability to establish a strong regional kingdom and maintain their influence over several generations. Their relations with the Guptas show that ancient Indian politics involved not only warfare but also diplomacy and matrimonial alliances.

In conclusion, the Vakatakas were a major power of the Deccan and central India. Vindhyashakti founded the dynasty, while Pravarasena I greatly expanded its power. The marriage of Rudrasena II with Prabhavatigupta strengthened Gupta-Vakataka relations and created an important political alliance. Through territorial expansion, diplomacy and regional administration, the Vakatakas played a major role in the political history of ancient India.

5. Examine the political developments of India after the decline of Gupta power with special reference to the Maukharis, Maitrakas and Vakatakas.

Answer:

The decline of Gupta power brought a major transformation in the political history of India. The Gupta Empire had provided a broad political framework over large parts of northern India, but after the weakening of central authority, many regional rulers became

independent. Instead of one dominant empire, several regional kingdoms emerged in different parts of the subcontinent. Among these, the **Maukharis, Maitrakas and Vakatakas** were important political powers.

The Maukharis emerged as a major power in northern India. Their principal centre was **Kannauj**, a strategically important city in the Ganga-Yamuna region. The weakening of Gupta authority enabled the Maukharis to expand their political influence. **Ishanavarman** was an important ruler who strengthened the dynasty and adopted the title Maharajadhiraja. Later, **Grahavarman** strengthened Maukhari relations with the Pushyabhuti family through his marriage with Rajyashri. The political crisis following Grahavarman's death eventually contributed to the rise of Harshavardhana.

In western India, the **Maitrakas** established an independent kingdom in Saurashtra and Gujarat. The dynasty was founded by **Bhatarka**, who had earlier served as a military commander under the Guptas. Their capital at **Valabhi** became an important political and economic centre. The Maitrakas successfully maintained their regional authority for several generations. Rulers such as Dharasena and Dhruvasena II strengthened the kingdom and maintained relations with other contemporary powers.

The **Vakatakas** represented another important regional power, particularly in the Deccan and central India. Their political development began with **Vindhyashakti**, while **Pravarasena I** greatly expanded the kingdom. The Vakatakas became powerful enough to maintain relations with the Gupta Empire on relatively important political terms. The marriage of Rudrasena II with **Prabhavatigupta**, daughter of Chandragupta II, created a strong matrimonial alliance between the two dynasties.

The emergence of these regional powers demonstrates an important change in the nature of Indian politics. Political authority became more decentralised and regional rulers gained greater importance. Local chiefs, feudatories and landed groups also became increasingly

influential. Different regions developed their own political centres and administrative traditions.

This period was not simply an age of political decline. It was also a period of political reorganisation. Regional kingdoms developed their own institutions, maintained armies, collected revenue and established diplomatic relationships. Important cities such as Kannauj and Valabhi grew in political importance. The rise of these kingdoms also prepared the ground for the emergence of new large political powers, particularly the kingdom of Harshavardhana in northern India.

The post-Gupta political situation therefore represents a transition from imperial domination to regional political structures. The Maukharis dominated an important part of northern India, the Maitrakas became powerful in western India, and the Vakatakas exercised influence in the Deccan and central India.

In conclusion, the decline of Gupta power created a political vacuum that was gradually filled by regional dynasties. The Maukharis, Maitrakas and Vakatakas were among the most important powers of this transitional period. Their rise demonstrates the process of regionalisation and political restructuring that shaped India during the post-Gupta age.

UNIT – V

ONE MARK:

1. Who was Harshavardhana?

Answer: Harshavardhana was a powerful ruler of northern India who ruled during the 7th century CE.

2. Which dynasty did Harshavardhana belong to?

Answer: Harshavardhana belonged to the Pushyabhuti or Vardhana dynasty.

3. What was the main capital of Harsha?

Answer: Kannauj was the principal capital of Harsha.

4. Who was the father of Harshavardhana?

Answer: Prabhakaravardhana was the father of Harshavardhana.

5. Who was Harsha's elder brother?

Answer: Rajyavardhana was Harsha's elder brother.

6. Who was Harsha's sister?

Answer: Rajyashri was Harsha's sister.

7. Who was Sashanka?

Answer: Sashanka was the powerful ruler of Gauda in eastern India and a contemporary of Harsha.

8. What was the capital of Sashanka?

Answer: Karnasuvarna was the capital of Sashanka.

9. Who was Hiuen Tsang?

Answer: Hiuen Tsang was a Chinese Buddhist pilgrim who visited India during the reign of Harsha.

10. What was the original name of Hiuen Tsang?

Answer: His original name was Xuanzang.

11. During whose reign did Hiuen Tsang visit India?

Answer: Hiuen Tsang visited India during the reign of Harshavardhana.

12. What is the name of Hiuen Tsang's account of India?

Answer: His account is known as *Si-Yu-Ki* or *The Great Tang Records on the Western Regions*.

13. What was the main purpose of Hiuen Tsang's visit to India?

Answer: His main purpose was to study Buddhism and collect Buddhist scriptures.

14. Which famous university did Hiuen Tsang visit?

Answer: Hiuen Tsang visited Nalanda University.

15. Who wrote *Harshacharita*?

Answer: Banabhatta wrote *Harshacharita*.

16. Name one literary work written by Harsha.

Answer: *Nagananda* is a famous Sanskrit play written by Harsha.

17. Name another literary work written by Harsha.

Answer: *Ratnavali* is a Sanskrit play attributed to Harsha.

18. What was the main feature of Harsha's administration?

Answer: Harsha maintained a strong monarchy supported by ministers, officials and provincial administration.

19. Which region was ruled by Sashanka?

Answer: Sashanka ruled Gauda, a major political region of eastern India.

20. Which religious assembly was associated with Harsha?

Answer: Harsha organised a famous Buddhist religious assembly at Kannauj.

TWO MARK:

1. Who was Harshavardhana?

Answer:

Harshavardhana was a prominent ruler of northern India who belonged to the Pushyabhuti or Vardhana dynasty. He ascended the throne in the early 7th century CE and established a powerful kingdom with Kannauj as his principal political centre.

2. What were the major conquests of Harsha?

Answer:

Harsha expanded his authority over large parts of northern India. He brought several regions under his control through military campaigns and political alliances. However, his attempt to conquer the Deccan was checked by the Chalukya ruler **Pulakeshin II**.

3. Mention two important features of Harsha's administration.

Answer:

Harsha maintained a monarchical system supported by ministers and officials. His empire was divided into administrative units, and local authorities played an important role in administration. He personally supervised political affairs and maintained an army to protect and expand his kingdom.

4. What was Harsha's contribution to literature?

Answer:

Harsha was a patron of Sanskrit literature and was himself a writer. Three Sanskrit plays are traditionally attributed to him: **Ratnavali**, **Priyadarshika** and **Nagananda**. His court also patronised scholars such as **Banabhatta**, who wrote *Harshacharita*.

5. Who was Banabhatta?

Answer:

Banabhatta was a famous Sanskrit writer and court poet of Harshavardhana. He wrote **Harshacharita**, a biographical account of Harsha, and *Kadambari*. His writings are important literary sources

for understanding the political and cultural conditions of Harsha's period.

6. What was Harsha's contribution to religion?

Answer:

Harsha was initially influenced by Brahmanical traditions but later became a strong patron of Buddhism, particularly Mahayana Buddhism. He also respected other religions and supported Brahmanical and Buddhist institutions, reflecting a policy of religious tolerance.

7. Who was Sashanka?

Answer:

Sashanka was a powerful ruler of **Gauda** in eastern India during the early 7th century CE. He was one of Harshavardhana's important political rivals and played a significant role in the politics of Bengal and northern India.

8. What was the capital of Sashanka?

Answer:

Karnasuvarna was the capital of Sashanka. It was an important political centre of Gauda in ancient Bengal. Sashanka established Gauda as a strong regional power and played an important role in eastern Indian politics during the rise of Harsha.

9. What was the conflict between Harsha and Sashanka?

Answer:

Harsha and Sashanka were political rivals in northern and eastern India. The death of Harsha's brother Rajyavardhana was connected with the political conflict involving Sashanka. Harsha subsequently sought to extend his influence into Gauda and eastern India.

10. Who was Hiuen Tsang?

Answer:

Hiuen Tsang, also known as **Xuanzang**, was a Chinese Buddhist pilgrim who visited India during Harsha's reign. He spent several

years studying Buddhism and Indian society and later recorded his observations in his famous travel account.

11. What is the importance of Hiuen Tsang's account?

Answer:

Hiuen Tsang's account provides valuable information about 7th-century India. He described Harsha's administration, society, religion, education, cities and economic conditions. His observations are particularly useful for reconstructing the political and cultural history of Harsha's period.

12. What did Hiuen Tsang say about Harsha?

Answer:

Hiuen Tsang described Harsha as a powerful and energetic ruler who personally supervised his kingdom. He praised Harsha's generosity and religious activities. His account also provides information about Harsha's administration, court, army and charitable activities.

13. What was Nalanda's importance during Harsha's period?

Answer:

Nalanda was a major centre of higher learning and Buddhist studies during Harsha's period. Hiuen Tsang studied there and described its scholars, teachers and students. Harsha also supported educational and religious institutions associated with Buddhism.

14. What was the Kannauj Assembly of Harsha?

Answer:

The **Kannauj Assembly** was a major religious gathering organised by Harsha in honour of Mahayana Buddhism. Hiuen Tsang participated in it. The assembly demonstrated Harsha's interest in Buddhism and his policy of supporting religious and intellectual activities.

15. Why is the reign of Harsha historically important?

Answer:

Harsha's reign is important because he established a powerful kingdom in northern India after the decline of the Guptas. His period

witnessed political consolidation, literary development, religious activities and cultural growth. The account of Hiuen Tsang also provides valuable evidence about his age.

BROAD ANSWER:

1. Discuss the conquests and military achievements of Harshavardhana.

Answer:

Harshavardhana was one of the most important rulers of northern India in the 7th century CE. He belonged to the Pushyabhuti or Vardhana dynasty and succeeded his brother Rajyavardhana. At the time of Harsha's accession, northern India was politically divided among several regional powers. Harsha gradually expanded his authority and established a large kingdom, with **Kannauj** becoming his principal political centre.

Harsha's rise to power was closely connected with the political crisis faced by his family. His father, Prabhakaravardhana, had established the strength of the Pushyabhuti dynasty at Thanesar. After his death, Harsha's elder brother Rajyavardhana became ruler. Rajyavardhana was subsequently killed during the political conflict involving **Sashanka**, the ruler of Gauda. Harsha then assumed leadership and became involved in the affairs of northern India.

One of Harsha's first important objectives was to protect his family and recover his sister Rajyashri, who had been placed in a difficult political situation after the death of her husband, Grahavarman of the Maukhari dynasty. Harsha's intervention in these affairs helped him establish a strong political position in northern India.

Harsha gradually extended his influence over several regions. His authority became particularly strong in the Ganga-Yamuna region and other parts of northern India. He maintained relations with different rulers through both warfare and diplomacy. His political power also

benefited from his connection with the Maukhari kingdom of Kannauj.

Harsha also came into conflict with **Sashanka of Gauda**, who was one of the major powers in eastern India. Harsha attempted to expand his influence towards Bengal and eastern India, although Sashanka maintained his own political power for a considerable period. The struggle between Harsha and Sashanka was an important feature of the political history of the period.

Harsha's expansion was not unlimited. His most important military setback occurred in the Deccan. He attempted to extend his authority southward but was defeated by the **Chalukya ruler Pulakeshin II**. The Narmada region subsequently served as an important boundary between Harsha's northern sphere of influence and the Chalukya territories in the south.

Harsha's military strength was supported by a large army consisting of infantry, cavalry and war elephants. His campaigns helped establish his supremacy over much of northern India, although he did not create an empire covering the entire subcontinent.

The importance of Harsha's conquests lies in the political consolidation of northern India after the decline of Gupta power. He succeeded in bringing many regions under his influence and created a powerful kingdom. However, his authority was not equally direct in every region, and some rulers remained autonomous or accepted his supremacy without being fully incorporated into his administration.

In conclusion, Harsha was a successful military and political leader who consolidated a large part of northern India. His conflicts with Sashanka and Pulakeshin II demonstrate the complex political situation of the period. Although his expansion had geographical limits, his reign represented an important attempt to restore political unity in northern India after the decline of the Gupta Empire.

2. Describe the main features of Harshavardhana's administration.

Answer:

Harshavardhana established a strong political system in northern India during the 7th century CE. His administration combined the traditional features of monarchy with the participation of ministers, provincial officials and local authorities. Although Harsha exercised considerable personal authority, his large kingdom required an organised administrative structure to maintain political stability and collect revenue.

The king was the central authority of the administration. Harsha personally supervised important political and administrative matters. His active role in governance is also mentioned by **Hiuen Tsang**, who described Harsha as an energetic ruler who travelled through different parts of his kingdom and supervised administration.

The king was assisted by ministers and high officials. Important officers were responsible for different areas of government, including military affairs, revenue collection, judicial matters and diplomatic activities. The administration therefore depended upon a hierarchy of officials working under royal authority.

Harsha's kingdom was divided into administrative units. Although the exact structure varied from region to region, larger territorial divisions were further divided into smaller units for administrative convenience. Local officials were responsible for maintaining order, collecting revenue and carrying out the instructions of the central authority.

Revenue was an important foundation of the administration. **Land revenue** was one of the major sources of state income. Taxes and other forms of revenue were collected from agricultural production and other economic activities. The resources collected by the state were used to maintain the army, administration, charitable activities and religious institutions.

The military was another important component of Harsha's administration. Harsha maintained a large army consisting of infantry, cavalry and elephants. The army helped him expand his territories and maintain political control. Military power was particularly important because northern India was divided among several competing kingdoms.

Harsha also followed a policy of generosity and charity. According to Hiuen Tsang, he distributed wealth and resources during religious assemblies and public occasions. He supported monasteries, educational institutions and religious establishments. This indicates that administration during Harsha's period was not limited to military and revenue matters but also involved welfare and religious patronage.

The judicial system was also an important part of governance. Law and order were maintained through officials operating at different levels. Hiuen Tsang's account suggests that punishments could be severe for serious offences, although the exact functioning of the judicial system varied across regions.

Harsha's administration also reflected the growing importance of local and regional authorities. His kingdom was large and included territories with different political traditions. Therefore, direct central control was not always possible. Local rulers and officials could exercise considerable authority while recognising Harsha's supremacy.

The administration was supported by grants of land and privileges to religious and learned persons. Such grants became increasingly important during this period and contributed to the development of local centres of authority.

In conclusion, Harsha's administration was based on a strong monarchy supported by ministers, officials, military forces and local authorities. Land revenue provided an important financial foundation, while the army maintained political stability. Harsha's personal supervision, charitable activities and patronage of religion and

education were notable features of his rule. His administrative system helped him maintain a powerful kingdom in northern India during the 7th century CE.

3. Discuss the cultural contributions of Harshavardhana.

Answer:

Harshavardhana was not only a powerful political ruler but also an important patron of literature, education, religion and culture. His reign in the 7th century CE witnessed significant intellectual and cultural activities in northern India. Harsha himself had literary interests, and his court became associated with prominent scholars such as **Banabhatta**.

Harsha is traditionally credited with composing three Sanskrit plays: **Ratnavali, Priyadarshika and Nagananda**. These works demonstrate his interest in Sanskrit literature and drama. His literary activities show that the ruler himself participated in the intellectual culture of his time rather than merely providing patronage to scholars.

One of the most famous literary figures associated with Harsha's court was **Banabhatta**. He wrote *Harshacharita*, a biographical work describing the life and career of Harsha. Although the work contains elements of literary ornamentation and royal praise, it remains an important source for understanding the political and social environment of Harsha's period. Banabhatta also wrote *Kadambari*, one of the notable works of classical Sanskrit prose.

Harsha also contributed to the development of education. He supported centres of learning and religious institutions. **Nalanda** was an important centre of Buddhist learning during this period. Hiuen Tsang spent considerable time studying at Nalanda and praised its educational standards, scholars and intellectual environment.

Religion was another major field of Harsha's cultural contribution. Harsha was influenced by Buddhism, particularly Mahayana

Buddhism, especially during the later part of his reign. However, he did not completely abandon other religious traditions. He supported Brahmanical institutions as well and displayed a degree of religious tolerance.

Harsha organised major religious assemblies. The **Kannauj Assembly** was organised in connection with Mahayana Buddhism and was attended by Hiuen Tsang. He also held religious gatherings at Prayaga, where he distributed wealth and resources among religious persons, scholars and the needy. These activities demonstrate the importance of religion in the cultural life of his kingdom.

Harsha's cultural policy also encouraged intellectual exchange. His contact with Hiuen Tsang created a valuable connection between India and China. Hiuen Tsang studied Indian philosophy and Buddhism and later carried Buddhist texts and knowledge back to China. His observations also preserved important information about Indian society and culture.

The period witnessed continued development of Sanskrit literature, Buddhist learning and religious scholarship. Royal patronage provided scholars and religious institutions with resources to pursue education and intellectual activities.

Harsha's cultural contribution therefore extended beyond his own literary works. By supporting scholars, educational centres, religious institutions and assemblies, he helped create an environment favourable to intellectual development. His patronage also strengthened the position of Sanskrit as an important language of court and literary culture.

In conclusion, Harshavardhana occupies an important place in the cultural history of ancient India. His own literary works, patronage of Banabhatta, support for educational institutions, religious assemblies and association with Nalanda all demonstrate his contribution to culture. His policy of supporting different religious and intellectual traditions made his reign an important period in the cultural history of 7th-century India.

4. Discuss Gauda under Sashanka and his conflict with Harshavardhana.

Answer:

Sashanka was one of the most powerful rulers of eastern India during the early 7th century CE. He established the kingdom of **Gauda** as a major political power and played an important role in the political struggles of northern India. His rise coincided with the emergence of Harshavardhana, and the two rulers became important rivals.

Sashanka's kingdom was centred in the region of Gauda, broadly corresponding to parts of Bengal. His capital was **Karnasuvarna**, which became an important political centre. Under Sashanka, Gauda developed into an independent and powerful state capable of challenging the rulers of northern India.

Sashanka's rise took place during a period of political fragmentation following the decline of the Gupta Empire. Several regional dynasties were competing for territory and influence. The weakness of the Guptas created opportunities for rulers such as Sashanka to establish independent kingdoms.

Sashanka was particularly significant because of his involvement in the political affairs of Thanesar and Kannauj. The Pushyabhuti ruler **Prabhakaravardhana** had established a strong kingdom in Thanesar. After his death, his son Rajyavardhana became ruler. Rajyavardhana became involved in a conflict connected with the political situation in Malwa and Gauda. He was eventually killed, and Sashanka became associated with these events in later historical accounts.

Harsha, Rajyavardhana's younger brother, then became ruler. He also had the responsibility of protecting his sister Rajyashri, whose husband **Grahavarman**, the Maukhari ruler of Kannauj, had been killed. These circumstances brought Harsha into direct political conflict with Sashanka.

Harsha attempted to expand his authority towards eastern India. However, Sashanka maintained his independence in Gauda. The exact details of their military conflict are not completely clear because the available sources have different perspectives. Nevertheless, their rivalry represents the wider competition for control over northern and eastern India.

Sashanka was also an important ruler from the perspective of Bengal's political history. He is often regarded as one of the earliest rulers to establish a strong and relatively unified political authority in Gauda. His kingdom provided an important foundation for the later political development of Bengal.

Some literary and religious sources contain negative accounts of Sashanka, particularly regarding Buddhism and Buddhist institutions. However, these accounts must be treated carefully because many were written from perspectives hostile to him or associated with his political opponents. It is therefore necessary to distinguish historical evidence from later religious traditions.

Sashanka's reign demonstrates that Harsha did not exercise complete control over all of northern India. Powerful regional rulers continued to maintain independent kingdoms. Even though Harsha became the dominant ruler of much of northern India, Gauda under Sashanka remained an important political centre.

In conclusion, Sashanka was a powerful ruler who established Gauda as a major kingdom in eastern India. His capital at Karnasuvarna became an important political centre. His rivalry with Harsha was a significant feature of 7th-century politics and reflected the struggle among regional powers for control of northern and eastern India. Sashanka therefore occupies an important position in the political history of ancient Bengal and the Harsha era.

5. Give an account of Hiuen Tsang's visit to India and his observations about Harsha's reign.

Answer:

Hiuen Tsang, also known as Xuanzang, was a famous Chinese Buddhist monk, scholar and traveller who visited India during the reign of Harshavardhana in the 7th century CE. His journey was undertaken primarily for the study of Buddhism and the collection of Buddhist scriptures. His observations provide one of the most valuable foreign accounts of India during the period of Harsha.

Hiuen Tsang travelled to India through Central Asia and reached the Indian subcontinent during the early 7th century. He visited several regions and important centres of learning and religion. One of the most important places he visited was **Nalanda**, which was then a major centre of Buddhist education.

At Nalanda, Hiuen Tsang studied Buddhist philosophy and interacted with learned scholars. He was particularly interested in Buddhist doctrines and Sanskrit learning. His description of Nalanda provides valuable information about its organisation, teachers, students and intellectual activities.

Hiuen Tsang eventually came into contact with **Harshavardhana**. Harsha treated him with respect and showed considerable interest in his knowledge of Buddhism. Hiuen Tsang became an important guest at Harsha's court and participated in religious and intellectual activities organised by the ruler.

His account provides information about Harsha's administration. He described Harsha as an energetic ruler who personally supervised many aspects of government. According to his observations, Harsha travelled through different parts of his kingdom and maintained close supervision over administrative affairs.

Hiuen Tsang also described Harsha's religious policy. He observed that Harsha supported Buddhism, particularly Mahayana Buddhism, but also respected other religious traditions. His account mentions religious assemblies and charitable activities. Harsha distributed wealth and gifts to religious persons, scholars and the needy.

The traveller also provided information about Indian society. He described social customs, religious practices, educational institutions and economic activities. His observations are particularly useful because they provide an external perspective on 7th-century Indian civilisation.

Hiuen Tsang attended the famous **Kannauj Assembly**, which Harsha organised in honour of Mahayana Buddhism. The assembly brought together religious scholars and representatives of different traditions. Hiuen Tsang was given an important place in the proceedings. He also described Harsha's large religious gathering at Prayaga, where the ruler distributed his wealth in charity.

Hiuen Tsang's account also contains information about Harsha's army and political power. He noted the importance of elephants, cavalry and infantry in the military organisation of the kingdom. His descriptions help historians understand the military and administrative structure of northern India.

However, Hiuen Tsang's account should not be accepted without criticism. He was primarily interested in Buddhism and sometimes viewed Indian society through the perspective of a Buddhist pilgrim. His descriptions may also contain idealised elements, particularly regarding Harsha's generosity and religious activities. Therefore, his account is best used alongside inscriptions and other literary sources.

In conclusion, Hiuen Tsang's visit is extremely important for the study of Harsha's reign and 7th-century India. His observations provide information about Harsha's administration, religion, education, society, economy and cultural life. His descriptions of Nalanda, Kannauj and Harsha's religious assemblies make his account one of the most important sources for understanding the Harsha era.