

## UPSC Civil Services Examination

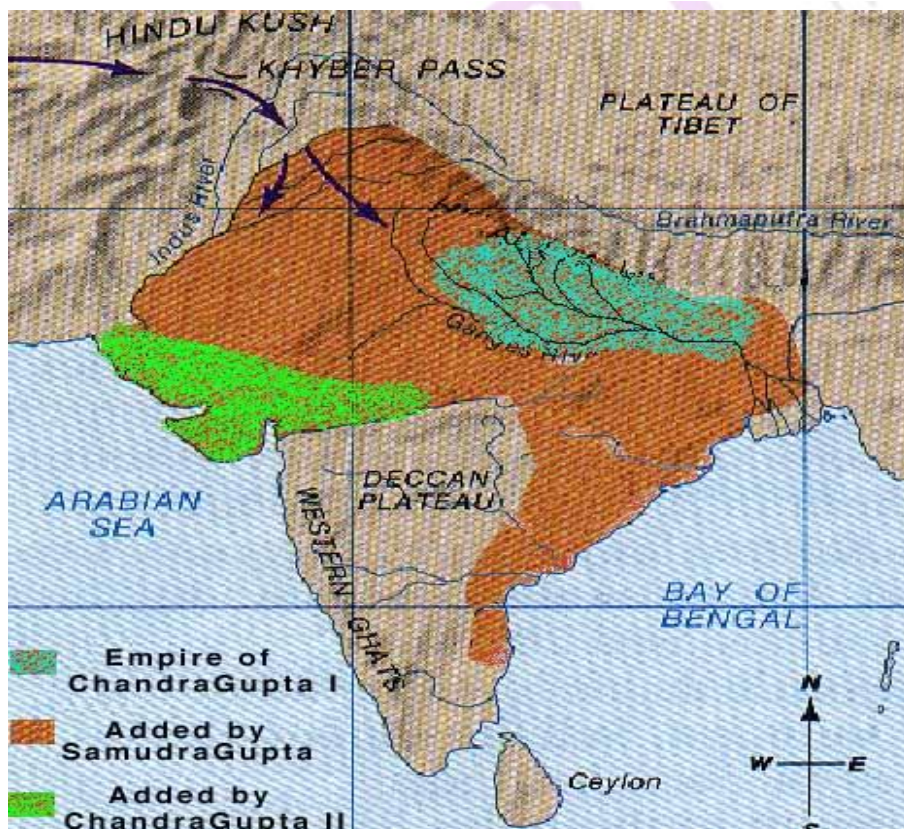
### UPSC Notes [GS-I]

#### Topic: Gupta Dynasty - Origin & Famous Rulers (NCERT Notes)

In Ancient India, the Gupta Dynasty ruled the mid-to-late 3rd century (approximately) to 543 AD. Founded by Sri Gupta, the dynasty rose to fame with rulers like Chandragupta-I, Samudragupta, etc. An important topic in History syllabus, it is also important for [IAS Exam](#) to know about the Gupta Dynasty.

#### Origin of Gupta Dynasty

- The Gupta Empire rose to prominence in 320 AD and spread to large parts of northern India, central and small parts of southern India.
- The founder of the Gupta dynasty is Sri Gupta.
- The original homeland of the Guptas is not known for certain. But they might have originated from Bengal. Some scholars think they are from Prayaga (Allahabad in UP).
- They are thought to be either Brahmins or Vaishyas.



## Gupta Dynasty Kings

A brief about the kings of the Gupta dynasty is given in the table below:

Gupta Dynasty Kings	Facts about Guptan Kings
Sri Gupta	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Founder of Gupta Dynasty</li> <li>• Reign from 240 AD to 280 AD</li> <li>• Used the title of '<b>Maharaja</b>'</li> </ul>
Ghatotkacha	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Son of Sri Gupta</li> <li>• Took the title of '<b>Maharaja</b>'</li> </ul>
Chandragupta I	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reigned from 319 AD to 334 AD</li> <li>• <b>Started the Gupta Era</b></li> <li>• He assumed the title of '<b>Maharajadhiraja</b>'</li> <li>• Married Lichchavi princess Kumaradevi</li> </ul>
Samudragupta	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reigned from 335 AD to 380 AD</li> <li>• Called 'Napoleon of India' by V.A. Smith (Irish Indologist and Art Historian)</li> <li>• His campaigns are mentioned in <b>Eran inscription</b> (Madhya Pradesh)</li> </ul>
Chandragupta II	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reigned from 380-412 AD</li> <li>• <b>Navratnas</b> (9 Gems in his Court)</li> <li>• Took the title 'Vikramaditya'</li> </ul>
Kumaragupta I	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reigned from 413 AD to 455 AD</li> <li>• Founded <b>Nalanda University</b></li> <li>• He was also called <b>Shakraditya</b></li> </ul>
Skandagupta	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reigned from 455 AD – 467 AD</li> <li>• Took the title of '<b>Vikramaditya</b>'</li> <li>• Was a '<b>Vaishnavite</b>'</li> <li>• Son of Kumaragupta</li> <li>• Repulsed an attack by the Hunas but this strained his empire's coffers</li> </ul>
Vishnugupta	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Last known ruler of the Gupta Dynasty (540 AD – 550 AD)</li> </ul>

## Gupta Dynasty – Chandragupta I (Reign: 320 – 335 AD)

- Was the son of Ghatotkacha.
- Acquired the strategically important Magadha kingdom on marriage to a Lichchhavi princess Kumaradevi.
- He extended his kingdom through conquests. His territory extended from the Ganges River to Prayaga by 321 AD.
- He issued coins in the joint names of his queen and himself.
- He assumed the title of Maharajadhiraja (great king of kings).
- He was successful in building a small principality into a great kingdom.
- He is considered the first great king of the Gupta Empire.

## Gupta Dynasty – Samudragupta (Reign: 335 – 380 AD)

- Son of Chandragupta I and Kumaradevi.
- Was a military genius and was successful in adding many territories into the Gupta Empire.
- The Allahabad inscription describes his bravery as composed by his court poet, Harisena. There it is said that he defeated nine kings of the Ganges Valley, twelve kings from the southern region and eighteen forest tribes.
- His region extended from the Himalayas in the north to the Krishna and Godavari Rivers in the south; and from Balkh (Afghanistan) in the west to Brahmaputra River in the east.
- He was a follower of Vaishnavite Hinduism but was tolerant of other faiths. He gave permission to the king of Sri Lanka, Meghavarna to build a monastery in Bodh Gaya.
- He was also called “Indian Napoleon” by art historian Vincent Smith.
- He also performed Ashvamedha sacrifice. Hence, one of his coins refers to him as “the restorer of Ashvamedha.”
- He was also called “Kaviraja” since he composed verses.

## Gupta Dynasty – Chandragupta II (Reign: 380 – 418 AD)

- Son of Samudragupta and his queen Dattadevi.
- He was also known as ‘Vikramaditya’.
- He further annexed territories including Saurashtra which gave him the western coastline.
- He used matrimonial alliances to expand his kingdom. He established matrimonial alliances with the Nagas and the Vakatakas. He gave his daughter Prabhavatigupta in marriage to Vakataka ruler of Maharashtra Rudrasena II.
- He also annexed three Satrapa kingdoms and assumed the title Sakari (destroyer of the Sakas). He defeated the Saka king Rudrasimha III thus acquiring Saurashtra and Kathiawar.
- Through the western ports, the kingdom’s prosperity grew through trade links with Roman Empires.
- After East and West India, Chandragupta II defeated northern rulers also like the Hunas, Kambojas, Kiratas, etc.
- He was a brilliant conqueror and an able administrator as well.
- Like his father, he was a Vaishnavite but was tolerant of other religions.

- His other names (as mentioned in coins) include Vikrama, Devagupta, Devaraja, Simhavikrama, Vikramaditya Sakari, etc.
- His court had nine jewels or Navaratnas, nine people eminent in various fields of art, literature and science. This included the great Sanskrit poet Kalidasa, Harisena, Amarasimha (lexicographer) and Dhanvantari (physician).
- Fa-Hien, a Buddhist from China visited India during his reign. He records the prosperity of the Gupta Empire.

