

Objective:

What led to the Gupta Golden Age? How did the Gupta Golden Age impact India, other regions, and later periods in history?  
Contextualize the Gupta Golden Age.  
Explain the impact of the Gupta Golden Age on India, other regions and later periods in history.

## Introduction

Directions: Read the definition of golden ages, then complete the tasks that breakdown the definition.

Historians refer to certain time periods of some civilizations as **golden ages**.

**Golden ages are periods of great wealth, prosperity, stability, and cultural and scientific achievement.**

Let's break down the definition...

**period-** span of time

1. What other time periods have you learned about?

**wealth-** a large amount of money

2. What effects might wealth have on a civilization?

**prosperity-** success

3. Describe the characteristics that a prosperous civilization might have.

**stability-** consistency

4. Explain why a stable civilization is more likely to have a golden age than an unstable civilization.

**culture-** relating to language, ideas, inventions, and art

5. Given what culture means, give an examples of what might count as a cultural achievement.

**scientific achievement**

6. Identify one scientific achievement that you learned about in history class this year.

## Why Golden Ages are Important to Historians

During Golden Ages, a lot of new ideas and **innovations** are produced in **visual arts, architecture, literature, philosophy, and science and technology** in a relatively short period of time in one geographic area, but these new ideas and ways of doing things do not stay in one place for long. They are carried to other civilizations through **cultural diffusion** and passed down to new generations through the process of **collective learning**.

**Golden Ages move human intellectual and technological life ahead by leaps and bounds.** These spurts of growth in our collective ability to understand the world around us, express it through art, and invent new ways of doing things have been important in getting the human race to where it is today.

## The Gupta Golden Age Museum Walk



Categorize



Contextualize



Connect Cause  
and Effect



A lot of the artifacts that appear in museums come from the golden ages of civilizations.

In this activity, you will visit exhibits on the Gupta Golden Age. **As you learn about the Gupta Empire, fill out the appropriate row in the [Golden Ages of Classical Civilizations Graphic Organizer](#).**

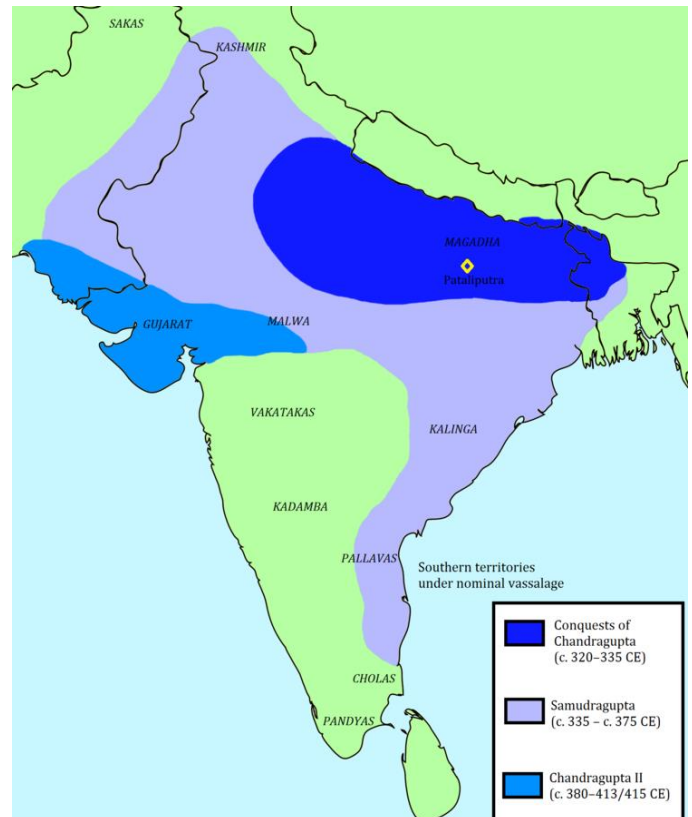
## Exhibit A: The Gupta Empire (320-550 CE)

### Timeline of Indian History through the Classical Age

Indus River Valley Civ	Vedic Period	Maurya Empire	Regional Dynasties	Gupta Empire
3300-1700 BCE	1500-321 BCE	321-185 BCE	180 BCE-320 CE	320-550 CE

The Gupta Empire ruled parts of India from 320-550 CE. **Chandragupta II** was one of the most powerful emperors of the Gupta empire. His rule spanned from 375 to 415 C.E. when the Gupta empire was at its height, often referred to as the *Golden Age* of India. He attained success by pursuing both favorable **military alliances** and **an aggressive expansionist policy** which made it possible for him to control a vast empire.

In addition to military prowess, Chandragupta II elevated culture, art, mathematics, philosophy, religion, and astronomy during his reign.



The Gupta Empire and conquests of its most powerful rulers.

[Gupta empire map.png](#) by Javierfv1212 is published under the [CC BY-SA 3.0 Unported](#) license

## Exhibit B: Trade, Prosperity, and Wealth

### Standardized Money

Golden Ages require a lot of wealth. For artists and scientists to devote themselves to their work, they need someone to pay them for it so they can focus on their scholarly pursuits. Usually wealthy families or governments provide this support.

The government funded many of the innovations during the Gupta Dynasty. The government regulated and taxed trade and earned money from the mines and land it owned.

As evidence of the Gupta government's control and support for trade in the economy, archaeologists have unearthed many coins created by the Gupta government. The coins show that the Gupta had the technology and power to mass-produce them, and the power needed to get merchants to use them. This also made it possible for the government to more easily tax business transactions.



Citation [1](#)

Left: Golden coin from the Gupta Empire depicting an archer.

Below: Silver coin from the reign of Chandragupta II.



Citation [2](#)

## Exhibit C: Trade, Prosperity, and Wealth

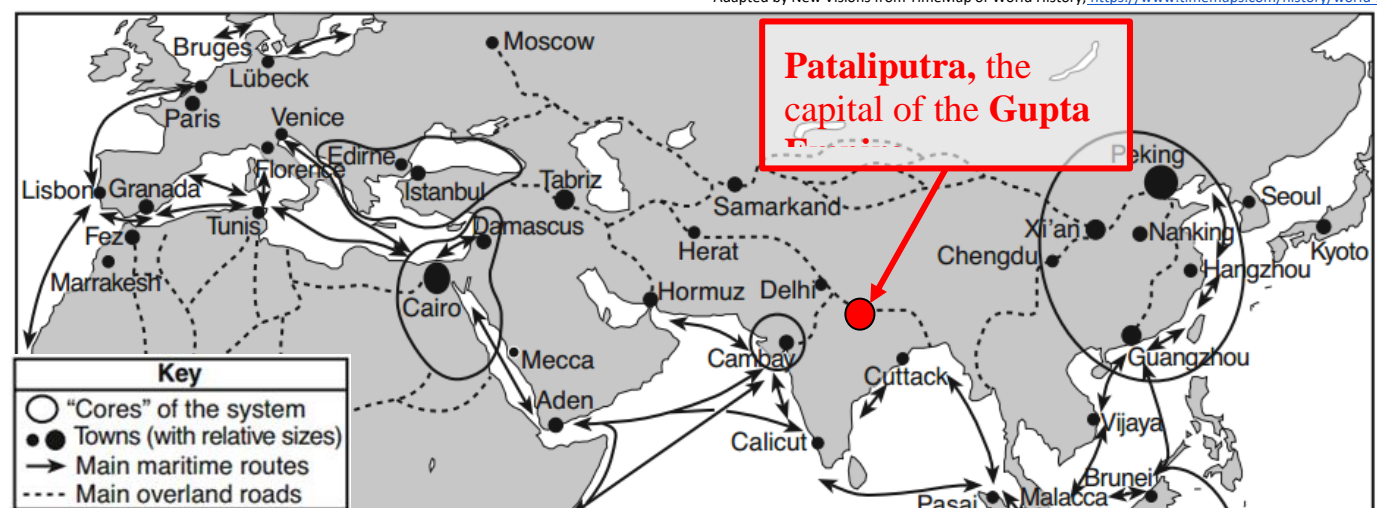
### Located On Trade Routes Between Rome and China

The Gupta ruled the largest and most **prosperous** empire in India, but in the first centuries CE it was not the most powerful in the world. To the west, **Rome** ruled the area around the Mediterranean Sea, and to the east, the **Han Dynasty** controlled China. The stability that the Roman, Han, and Gupta Empires brought spurred trade in Asia on the **Silk Roads**. This greatly benefited all three empires and the areas in between. Wealth and ideas passed along the trade network providing the money and ideas necessary for Golden Ages.

Classical Civilizations ca. 400 CE



Adapted by New Visions from TimeMap of World History, <https://www.timemaps.com/history/world-200ad/>



Source: Philippe Beaujard in "The Indian Ocean in Eurasian and African World-Systems before the Sixteenth Century," *Journal of World History* (adapted) from the NYS Global History and Geography Regents Examination, August 2012.



## Exhibit D: Visual Arts and Architecture

### Visual Arts and Architecture: Gupta Cave Shrines

Most of the examples we have of Gupta sculpture and architecture were inspired by Hinduism and Buddhism. The most well preserved and impressive of these examples are reliefs carved out of caves.

#### Udayagiri Caves

The image below is of a sculpture carved out of a cave wall of the Hindu god Vishnu in a boar-headed incarnation. It is roughly 23 feet tall and 13 feet wide.



[Vishnu as Varaha, Udayagiri Caves](#) by Jean-Pierre Dalbera is published under the [CC BY 3.0 Unported](#) license

#### Ajanta Caves

The Ajanta Caves are covered in carvings and paintings that depict the lives of the Buddha.



[Cave 19, Ajanta, Deccan](#) by Sankarshan Mukhopadhyay is published under the [CC BY-SA 3.0 Unported](#) license



[Image](#) is courtesy of Wikimedia and is in the public domain

## Exhibit E: Literature

Some sources state that Chandragupta II supported literature and science in his empire directly by providing for a circle of scholars known as the **Nine Gems** in his court. A writer named **Kalidasa** stood as the greatest among them. He authored numerous pieces of literature, poems and plays, earning him the title of “the Shakespeare of India.”

**UNIT 3 | Classical Civilizations | SQ 14: What led to the Gupta Golden Age? How did the Gupta Golden Age impact India, other regions, and later periods in history?**

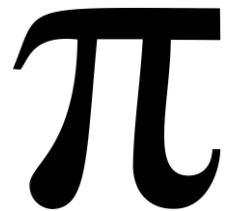
## Exhibit F: Mathematics



Watch an excerpt of [“Ancient India’s Contributions to the World”](#) (7:37- 10:33) and read the text below on other achievements in mathematics and made by Gupta scholars then answer the questions that follow.

Scholars during the Gupta period, made important **advances in mathematics** including:

- a close approximation of the value of  $\pi$  (pi)
- advances in **trigonometry**
- the use of **negative numbers**
- the use of **decimal points**



## Exhibit G: Science and Technology

### Stepwell Architecture



Watch an excerpt of [“Ancient India’s Contributions to the World”](#) (23:16- 26:38) about stepwells.



Stepwell in Abhaneri, India

[ChandBaori.jpg](#) by Doron is published under the [CC BY-SA 3.0 Unported](#) license

### Metallurgy and the Iron Pillar of Delhi

Indian metal workers were known for their expertise in ancient times. The swords used by their soldiers were admired by other armies for their strength and the officers carried metal bows. In Delhi, there is an iron pillar from the Gupta era that stands 23 ft tall. It is over 1,500 years old but has very little rust or wear.



Iron Pillar of Delhi.

[Image](#) is courtesy of Wikimedia and is in the public domain

FA

**SQ 14: What led to the Gupta Golden Age? How did the Gupta Golden Age impact India, other regions, and later periods in history?**

→Directions: Based on what you have learned about the Gupta Golden Age, complete the prompts below.



Contextualize

FA 1. Contextualize the Gupta Golden Age by completing the following tasks:

- Identify when and where the golden age took place
- Describe the factors that led to the golden age

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Connect Cause  
and Effect

FA 2. Explain the impact of the Gupta Golden Age on India, other regions, and later periods in history by completing the following tasks:

- Identify two innovations developed during the golden age
- Describe the effects of those innovations on India, other regions and/or later periods in history

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