

## Gupta Empire

The point should be made that the Gupta Empire represents the classical ideal due to a combination of political and social conditions:

- a general state of contentment under good government.
- an era of great works of culture such as the plays of Kalidasa, the Gupta relief carvings illustrating scenes from the *Ramayana*, and fine Ajanta cave paintings.
- a system of advisement to the Gupta monarchs by Buddhist scholars.
- an anti-xenophobic attitude (despite caste principles) that brought intermarriage with pre-clan families.
- the introduction of Kushan, Scythian, and Greek women into Gupta households.
- mercantile success in Buddhist communities and along trade routes to China where great monastic centers and cave monasteries served as centers of scholarship, trade, and spiritual exchange [from a testimony of Fahsien, a Chinese pilgrim].
- slow decline, by the end of the Gupta period, of Mahayana Buddhism in India due to Brahmin challenges and intent to reduce Buddha to a lesser god status and increasing concerns of rural people over the atheistic aspects of the Eightfold Path.
- proficiency of casting bronze and copper (examples of life-size bronze Buddhas).
- superb stone cutting techniques.
- a blend of aesthetic harmony and anonymous craftsmanship.
- mathematical studies that evolved by the 5<sup>th</sup> century into what the Arabs called "the Indian science," a numerical notation with 9 digits and a zero.