



# Gupta Period Temple Remains Found: UP

## Why in News

Recently, the [Archaeological Survey of India \(ASI\)](#) discovered remains of an ancient temple dating back to the **Gupta period (5<sup>th</sup> century)** in **Bilsarh village** in Uttar Pradesh's **Etah district**.

- The Bilsarh site was **declared 'protected' in 1928 by the ASI**.

## Key Points

### ▪ About:

- Two pillars were excavated on which there is an inscription about **Kumaragupta I**, the powerful ruler of Gupta dynasty, in '**sankh lipi**' (conch script or shell script) typical of the 5<sup>th</sup> century AD.
  - The **Guptas were the first to build structural temples**, distinctly different from the ancient rock-cut temples.
- The inscription was **deciphered as Mahendraditya** which was the **title of king Kumargupta I** who had even conducted **ashwamedh yagya** during his rule.
  - The **statue of a horse having similar inscription** is at the state museum in **Lucknow**.
  - **Ashvamedha Yagya** is a horse sacrifice ritual followed by the Srauta tradition of Vedic religion.
- The discovery becomes significant since only two other structural temples from the Gupta age have been found so far — **Dashavatara Temple (Deogarh)** and **Bhitargaon Temple (Kanpur Dehat)**.



### ▪ Shankhalipi Script: [//](#)

- Also called "**shell-script**" is found in inscriptions across north-central India and dates to between the **4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> centuries**.
  - Both **Shankhalipi and Brahmi are stylised scripts** used primarily for names and

signatures.

- The inscriptions consist of a **small number of characters**, suggesting that the shell inscriptions are **names or auspicious symbols** or a combination of the two.
- It was **discovered in 1836** on a brass trident in Uttarakhand's Barahat by English scholar **James Prinsep**.
- **Prominent sites with shell inscriptions:** Mundeshwari Temple (Bihar), the [Udayagiri Caves](#) (Madhya Pradesh), Mansar (Maharashtra) and some of the cave sites of Gujarat and Maharashtra.

- These **inscriptions are also reported in Indonesia's Java and Borneo**.

#### ▪ **Kumaragupta-I:**

- He was the **Successor of Chandragupta-II** and had a long reign from **414 to 455 A.D.**
  - He performed the Asvamedha Yajna which was confirmed by **Asvamedha coins**. The discovery of **his 1395 coins confirms his extension towards the South**.
  - His period is also regarded as **forming part of the Golden Age of the Guptas**.
  - Towards the middle of the fifth century A.D. The reign of the Kumaragupta-I was **disturbed by the revolt of Pushyamitra tribe** and the invasion of the **Hunas**.
- His greatest achievement was his **repulsing the attack of the Pushyamitra**.
  - After the death of Kumaragupta-I **Skandagupta succeeded in 455 A.D.** and reigned from **455 to 467 A.D.**

## **Gupta Empire**

#### ▪ **About:**

- The Gupta Empire stretched across **northern, central and parts of southern India** between **320 and 550 CE**.
- The period is noted for its achievements in the **arts, architecture, sciences, religion, and philosophy**.
- **Chandragupta I (320 - 335 CE) started a rapid expansion** of the Gupta Empire and soon established himself as the first sovereign ruler of the empire.
- It marked the **end of 500 hundred years of domination of the provincial powers** and resulting disquiet that began with the **fall of the Mauryas**.
- It began a period of overall prosperity and growth that continued for the next two and half centuries which came to be **known as a Golden Age in India's history**.

#### ▪ **Governance:**

- The efficiency of their **martial system was well known**. The large kingdom was divided into smaller **pradesha** (provinces).

#### ▪ **Trade:**

- **Gold and silver coins** were issued in great numbers which is a general indicator of the health of the economy.
- Trade and commerce flourished both within the country and outside. **Silk, cotton, spices, medicine, priceless gemstones, pearl, precious metal and steel** were exported by sea.

#### ▪ **Religion:**

- They were devout **Vaishnava (Hindus who worship the Supreme Creator as Vishnu)** themselves, yet that did not prevent them from being **tolerant towards the believers of Buddhism** and [Jainism](#).

#### ▪ **Literature:**

- Poet and playwright **Kalidasa created** such epics as *Abhijnanasakuntalam*, *Malavikagnimitram*, *Raghuvansha* and *Kumarsambhava*. **Harishena** composed *Allahabad Prasasti*, **Sudraka** wrote *Mricchakatika*, **Vishakhadatta** created *Mudrarakshasa* and **Vishnusharma** penned *Panchatantra*.

- **Varahamihira** wrote *Brihatsamhita* and also contributed to the fields of astronomy and astrology. Genius mathematician and astronomer **Aryabhata** wrote *Surya Siddhanta* which covered several aspects of geometry, trigonometry and cosmology. **Shanku** devoted himself to creating texts about Geography.
- **Architecture:**
  - The finest examples of painting, sculpture and architecture of the period can be found in **Ajanta, Ellora, Sarnath, Mathura, Anuradhapura and Sigiriya.**

**Source: IE**

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