



Post-Mauryan Period (200 BCE - 300 CE)

The Post-Mauryan Period, spanning the fall of the Mauryan Empire to the rise of the Gupta dynasty, is marked by the absence of a centralized empire, increased political and cultural interactions with Central Asia, and the emergence of regional kingdoms.

Political Landscape

- ◆ **Eastern, Central India, and Deccan:** Dominated by native rulers such as the Shungas, Kanvas, and Satavahanas.
- ◆ **Northwestern India:** Controlled by Indo-Greek and Central Asian rulers, with the Kushans emerging as the most prominent power.

Foreign Invasion during Post-Mauryan period

Indo-Greek Dynasty (2nd century BCE - 1st century CE):

- ◆ **Origins:** They were the first among a series of invaders to cross the Hindukush around 200 BCE. Known as Bactrian Greeks, ruled from Bactria (modern Afghanistan). Referred to as Yavanas in Indian literature.
- ◆ **Causes of Invasion:** Weak Seleucid Empire and pressure from Scythian tribes.

◆ **Notable Rulers:**

○ **Demetrius:** Invaded Afghanistan and Punjab.

▶ Demetrius and Eucratides—simultaneously ruled northwestern India.

○ **Menander (165-145 BCE):** The most renowned Indo-Greek king, Menander (also known as Milinda)

▶ **Capital at Sakala** (modern Sialkot).

▶ Converted to Buddhism by Nagasena; their dialogues are recorded in Milinda Panho ("Questions of Milinda").

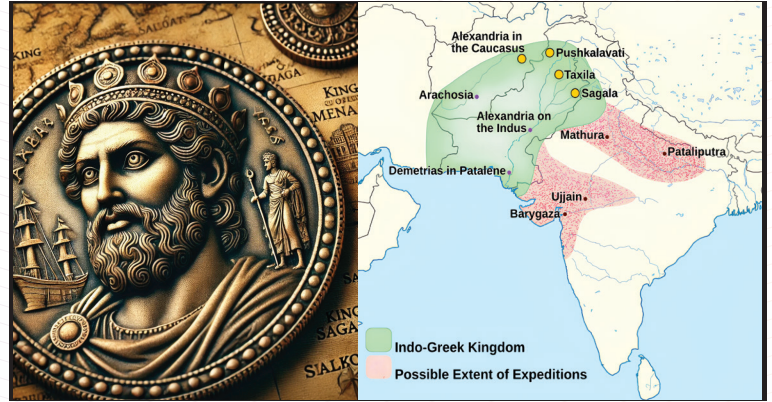
○ **Antialcidas (115-95 BCE):** Sent Heliodorus to erect the **Heliodorus Pillar near Vidisha.**

◆ **Contributions:**

○ **Coinage:** They were the first to mint gold coins in India, influencing future dynasties like the Kushans. **Unlike the punch-marked coins of the Mauryan era, their coins bore distinct royal imprints. Minted bilingual coins (Greek and Pali languages).**

○ **Satrapy System:** They introduced the concept of military governorship, with governors referred to as strategos or satraps.

○ **Art and Culture:** Hellenistic art merged with Indian traditions, giving rise to Gandhara art, renowned for its Greco-Roman influence on Buddhist sculptures.



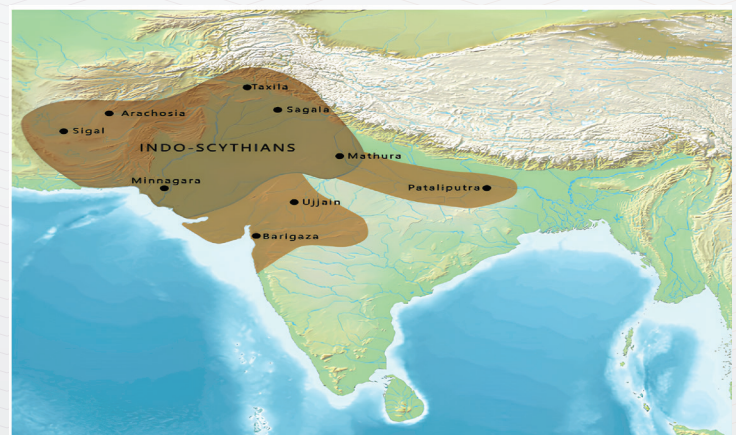
Central Asian Dynasties of the Post-Mauryan Period

1. Sakas (Scythians 1st century BCE):

◆ **Origins:** The Shakas, or Indo-Scythians migrated from Central Asia and replaced the Indo-Greeks.

◆ **Division:** Five branches—Afghanistan, Punjab (Taxila), Mathura, Maharashtra + Saurashtra and Central India (Ujjain).

◆ Northern Satraps (Taxila) and Western Satraps (Maharashtra).



◆ **Important Ruler:**

- **Maues (Moga):** The first Saka king in India.
- **Rudradaman I (130-150 CE):**
 - Expanded rule to Sindh, Kutch, Konkan, Malwa, and Kathiawar.
 - **Issued the first long inscription in chaste Sanskrit (Junagarh Rock Inscription).** It documents the repair of the Sudarshan Lake, originally built during Chandragupta Maurya's reign. Rudradaman also married his daughter to a **Satavahana king to foster peace.**
- ◆ **Key Events:** King Vikramaditya of Ujjain drove out the Sakas in 58 BCE, starting the **Vikrama Samvat era (57 BCE).**
- ◆ The Shakas adopted a confederation-style polity where clan chieftains ruled under the Saka king.
- ◆ They borrowed the satrap system from the Indo-Greeks, appointing governors called Kshatrapas or Mahakshatrapas.



2. Parthian Dynasty (1st century CE):

- ◆ **Origins:** Originated in Iran and ruled northwest India alongside the Sakas.
- ◆ **Unique Features:** Practiced dual rule (two kings governing simultaneously). Referred to as Saka-Pahlavas in Indian texts.
- ◆ **Notable Ruler:**



- **Gondophernes (1st century CE):** Associated with St. Thomas the Apostle, who is believed to have introduced Christianity to India.



Silver coin of Gondophares, minted in Drangiana

3. Kushan Dynasty (1st - 3rd century CE):

- ◆ **Origins:** The Kushanas were part of the Yuechi or Tocharian tribe from Central Asia. They emerged as a dominant power after displacing the Shakas and Parthians.
- ◆ **Extent:** Controlled regions from Central Asia to northern India, fostering cultural amalgamation.



◆ **Capitals:** The **Rabatak Inscription** reveals that Kanishka's empire stretched from the Oxus River in the west to Pataliputra in the east, with **Purushapura** as the capital and **Mathura** as a secondary hub.



◆ **Prominent Rulers:**

- **Kujula Kadphises (30–80 CE):** Unified the five tribes of Yuechi and laid the foundation of the Kushan Empire.
- **Kanishka (127–150 CE):** The most illustrious Kushan ruler, known for:
 - ▶ **Hosting the Fourth Buddhist Council**, which marked the rise of **Mahayana Buddhism**.
 - ▶ Patronizing art and literature, including **Ashvaghosha, the author of *Buddhacharita***.
 - ▶ **Issuing high-purity gold coins** purer than Gupta-era ones with Hindu, Buddhist, Greek, and Persian deities, reflecting their syncretic culture.



**Imitation of Vasudeva-I's gold coin
Lord Vasudeva in the Rear**



Portrait of Kushan emperor **Vima Kadphises**, AD 100-127

◆ **Economic Impact:**

- Controlled the Silk Route, a vital trade network connecting China to the Mediterranean.

◆ **Cultural Contributions:**

- **Art:** The Kushanas fostered **Gandhara and Mathura schools of art**. **Religion:** They patronized both Buddhism and Hinduism, strengthening the idea of divine kingship.

Impacts of Central Asian Contacts

1. Military Influences

- ◆ Introduction of advanced cavalry tactics by Shakas and Kushanas.
- ◆ Popularization of reins, saddles, and toe-stirrups for better mobility.



2. Cultural Influences

- ◆ Adoption of Central Asian attire like tunics, trousers, coats, helmets, and boots.
- ◆ Strengthened cultural ties between Central Asia and India.

3. Trade and Agriculture

- ◆ Kushans controlled the Silk Route, earning revenue through tolls.
- ◆ Gold from the Altai Mountains enriched trade.

- ◆ Promotion of agriculture and early irrigation in Central Asia and surrounding regions.

4. Polity and Administration

- ◆ Indo-Greeks introduced **military governorship (Strategos)**.
- ◆ The "Satrap system," borrowed from Persia, organized empires into provinces under governors.
- ◆ Strengthened divine kingship, with rulers claiming to be "sons of god."
- ◆ **Hereditary dual rule allowed joint reigns by father and son.**

5. Religious Developments

- ◆ Central Asian rulers adopted Indian religions; Menander converted to **Buddhism (Milindpanho)**.
- ◆ Religious harmony under Kushans, who worshipped **Shiva, Buddha, and Vishnu**.
- ◆ Mahayana Buddhism emerged **with idol worship**, supported by Kushan patronage.
- ◆ Early Bhakti references, such as the **Garuda Pillar at Besnagar (Vidisha) by Heliodorus, honoring Krishna Vasudeva**.



Literature and Learning

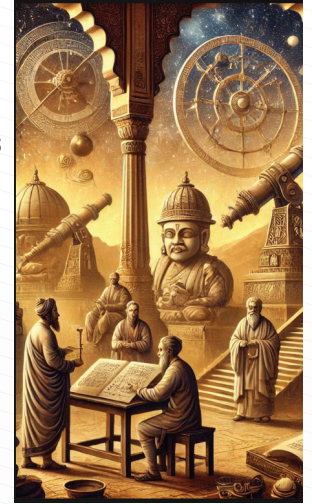
- ◆ Central Asian rulers patronized Sanskrit, with **the Junagarh inscription** of Rudradaman I being **the earliest example of Sanskrit kavya**.
- ◆ The Kushans supported **Ashvaghosha**, author of *Buddhacharita*, *Saundarananda*, and *Sariputra Prakaran*, and promoted Mahayana Buddhism, leading to the **composition of Avadanas** like *Mahavastu* and *Divyavandana*.
- ◆ Secular literature, including **Vatsyayana's Kamasutra**, *Charaka Samhita* by Charaka (on medicine) flourished during this period.



- ◆ Greek influence introduced the **curtain (Yavanika)**, contributing to the development of **Indian theatre**.

Science and Technology

- ◆ Greek contact enhanced Indian astrology and astronomy during the post-Maurya period.
- ◆ The practice of making **leather shoes likely began during this time, with Kanishka** depicted wearing **trousers and long boots**.
- ◆ Kushan coins in copper and gold closely resembled Roman currency.
- ◆ Foreign influence also impacted glassmaking techniques.



Extensive collection
comprising 20000+ VisionIAS
and UPSC Prelims PYQs



Scan to
know
more

25 JANUARY



FAST TRACK COURSE 2025
GENERAL STUDIES PRELIMS

- Coverage of UPSC GS Prelims subjects
- Efficient time utilization with a focus on core topics of the syllabus
- Access to PT 365 classes for current affairs preparation
- Sectional mini tests for regular assessment and performance



Scan to
know
more

ADMISSION OPEN



Lakshya Prelims

Mentoring Program 2025

A Strategic Revision, Practice and
Mentoring Program
for UPSC Civil Services Examination



Scan to
know
more

11 JANUARY



DELHI

HEAD OFFICE

Apsara Arcade, 1/8-B 1st Floor,
Near Gate-6 Karol Bagh
Metro Station

MUKHERJEE NAGAR CENTER


Plot No. 857, Ground Floor,
Mukherjee Nagar, Opposite Punjab
& Sindh Bank, Mukherjee Nagar

GTB NAGAR CENTER

Classroom & Enquiry Office,
above Gate No. 2, GTB Nagar
Metro Building, Delhi - 110009

FOR DETAILED ENQUIRY

Please Call:
+91 8468022022,
+91 9019066066

 enquiry@visionias.in

 [/c/VisionIASdelhi](https://www.youtube.com/c/VisionIASdelhi)

 [/visionias.upsc](https://www.facebook.com/visionias.upsc)

 [/vision_ias](https://www.instagram.com/vision_ias)

 [VisionIAS_UPSC](https://www.telegram.com/VisionIAS_UPSC)



AHMEDABAD



BENGALURU



BHOPAL



CHANDIGARH



DELHI



GUWAHATI



HYDERABAD



JAIPUR



JODHPUR



LUCKNOW



PRAYAGRAJ



PUNE



RANCHI