

Names of the Gupta Kings and Queens

NAMES OF THE GUPTA KINGS

All Gupta kings excepting Ghaṭotkaca have the surname 'gupta' at the end. Before taking up the names of individual Gupta kings we may discuss the significance of the term 'gupta'. Does it signify the family (a vaiśya family) or the predecessor of the family ?

In the inscriptions, Śrī Gupta appears as the founder of the dynasty. His name is always given first in the dynastic table.¹ Moreover, we find in the Udayagiri Cave inscription, of the year 106² the wording "*Guptānvyānām nṛpasattamānām rājye*" (in the reign of the family of the best of kings, belonging to the Gupta lineage) which shows that all these kings belonged to a family which was founded by the above Gupta ; hence they were called Guptas.³

In Śrī Gupta 'Śrī' is an honorific term as in the case of other Gupta emperors mentioned in the inscriptions.⁴ Had the name of the first king been 'Śrī Gupta', it would have been mentioned as Śrī Śrī Gupta⁵ as we find in the case of the name of Śrīmatī in the Deo-Barnark Inscription of Jīvitagupta II.⁶ If we accept that Gupta was the name of the first king of the family we may dismiss the possibility of the Gupta ending signifying a surname.

Now the question arises why the family was named after this Gupta ? In many cases families are named after some important person born therein, and when once a family is so named, the tradition is maintained even though the successors may reach much higher positions. Prior to this the family might not have attained any significant status. For the first time this Gupta got the status of a Mahārāja as is mentioned