
THE VARDHANAS (AD 550-647)

As the Gupta Empire disintegrated, the kingdom of Sthameshwar emerged as a seat of power in the region of Kanauj (earlier known as Thanesar). The first known king of this kingdom was Pushyabhuti. Their forefathers were never full kings as they were subordinates or appointed officials under the Imperial Guptas or the Hunas. Many records testify the rise of the Vardhanas to power and how they flourished under Prabhakaravardhana and his two sons, Rajyavardhana and Harshavardhana.

HARSHAVARDHANA (AD 606-646)

Harshavardhana, the younger son of Prabhakaravardhana, belonged to the Pushyabhuti family who ruled in Thanesar, north of Delhi. He ascended the throne in AD 606 in difficult circumstances at a very young age of 16 years. Prabhakaravardhana had a daughter, Rajyashree, who was married to Grihavarman, the Maukhan King of Kanauj. After Prabhakaravardhana's death, the King of Malwa, Devagupta, attacked Kanauj, killed Grihavarman and took Rajyashree as a prisoner. His elder brother, Rajyavardhana, who had succeeded his father to the throne, attacked the Malwa king to restore Kanauj and free his sister. Rajyavardhana was killed in the battle and it was later Harshavardhana who defeated Devagupta and his allies and reclaimed Kanauj. As his brother-in-law Grihavarman had no heir to the Kanauj throne, Harshavardhana merged it to his kingdom. He later moved his capital from Sthaneshwar to Kanauj. He established a strong

empire conquering Bengal, Malwa, eastern Rajasthan and the entire Gangetic plain up to Assam. Under Harshavardhana, North India was reunited briefly, but neither the Guptas nor Harsha controlled a centralised state, and their administrative styles rested on the collaboration of regional and local officials for administering their rule rather than on centrally appointed personnel. However, he was successful in consolidating all the North Indian feudal states, which had emerged because of land grants after the fall of the Gupta Empire, under his sovereignty. By the end of his reign Harsha's Empire extended from the Brahmaputra to eastern Punjab, from the Himalayas to the Narmada.

ADMINISTRATION

Harshacharita by **Bana** and biography of the Chinese traveller **Hsien Tsang** by Heuili throw light on Harshavardhana's reign. Harshavardhan personally supervised all the business in the state. The empire was divided into provinces called bhuktis and put under the charge of governors called the bhuktis.

Bhuktis were further sub-divided into districts called visayas, tehsils or pathaks and villages or gramas. A large army was maintained during his reign. The tax levied by him was a convenient one-sixth of the produce.

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MAP 1.9 Harshavardhanas (Kingdom)

ECONOMY

The main sources of income were land taxes and revenue paid by the kings whose land had been conquered. Soldiers were also sent by them when the emperor had to fight a war.

RELIGION

Harshavardhana was initially a Hindu but later on converted to Buddhism. He was, however, tolerant towards

TABLE 1.5 States and their Capitals Under the Vardhanas.

S. No	Name of the state	Location	Capital
1.	Maithrakas	Gujarat	Vallubhi
2.	Yashodhrama	Malwa	Mondasar
3.	Maukharis	Kanauj	Kanauj
4.	Gurajaras	Jodhpur	Jodhpur
5.	Gurajaras	Nandipur	Naandoda

6.	Samantha Guptas	Magadha	Patalipura
7.	Gowdas	Bengal	Rangmati
8.	Lichhavis	Nepal	Kathmandu
9.	Varmas	Kamarupa	Pragjothishyapura
10.	Manas	Orissa	Padmakoti
11.	Huns	Punjab	Sialkot
12.	Vakatakey	Vidharba	Parverapura
13.	Kadambas	Goa	Panaji
14.	Kadambas	Hanagal	Hanngal
15.	Nolambas	Hemavati	Hemavati
16.	Gangas	Kalinga	Kalinga City
17.	Kalachuris	Chedi	-
18.	Trikutas	Aparantha	Anirudapura
19.	Shilaharas	Konkan	Balipattana
20.	Kalabras	Kodumbalur	Kodambalur
21.	Satyaputras	Konganadu	Kongunadu
22.	Vishnu Kundis	Vinukonda	Vinukonda
23.	Solankis	Vengi	Vengipura
24.	Anands	Guntur	Kundapur
25.	Brihadphalyan	Mashipotam	Mashipotam
26.	Jkshwakus	Nagarjunakonda	Nagarjunakonda
27.	Cholas	Uraiyur	Uraiyur
28.	Pallavas	Kanchi	Kanchi
29.	Pandyas	Madurai	Madurai
30.	Gangas	Talkad	Kuvalala
31.	Alupas	Udyavara	Udyavara
32.	Alupas	Barakur	Barakur
33.	Cheras	Kodangallur	Kodangullar

★ Religion

Buddhism no longer received royal patronage. Jainism remained unchanged and continued to be supported by the merchant communities of

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Western India. Christianity remained confined to the region of Malabar. In Hinduism, the image emerged as the centre of worship and encouraged Bhakti [devotional] worship rather than sacrifice.

all religions. He patronised both Hinduism and Buddhism. He held many religious conferences and among them the most significant were the Kanauj Conference and the Prayaga Conference in which all religions were given equal importance. He sent a Brahmin priest as an ambassador to the Chinese king and welcomed **Wand-Huc-Itsi**, an ambassador of the Chinese king, in his court.

SOCIAL

There was no purdah system, but sati was prevalent. The government used to adequately support all public welfare causes and adopted measures to keep people happy. Hospitals and rest houses were built in good numbers to help the sick and poor people and travellers. The **Nalanda** University was patronised by the king and a fixed amount of funds were deposited with the university administrators to carry out the proper functioning of the university.

LITERATURE

Harshavardhana had profound interest in literature and administration. A prominent Chinese traveller, **Hiuen Tsang**, who stayed in India during the reign of Harshavardhana wrote a detailed account on India as it was at that time. He described Indians as hot tempered but honest and observed that there was no death sentence. He studied at Nalanda, a Buddhist university and

a famous centre of Buddhism, which flourished during Harshavardhana's period. He stayed in India for 8 years (ad 635-643). Another Chinese traveller, **Yuangchang**, wrote Si-yu-ki (a record of the western kingdom), which also discredited Harsha's reign. Banabhatfa, one of the four poets of Harshavardhana wrote Harshacharita a biography of the king. The history of Harshavardhana is reconstructed from a study of these two works. **Bana** also wrote Kadambri and Chandishataka but Harshacharita is the most prominent of them all.

Haridatta, Siddhasana, Mathangadivakara.

Mayura (author of Suryaihatkham) and **Bhartruhari** (who wrote Bhartruharishatakam) are prominent literary figures of this era. The latter penned various dramas, prominent among them are Tarnavalli, Naiftinandan and Priyadarshika, which were considered to be of very high standard by the Chinese traveller **I-tsing**, in his accounts on India. I-tsing had visited India sometime after the death of Harsha.

Ancient/Medieval Eras

Buddha Samvat: 544 BC
 Mahavira Samvat: 528 BC
 Vikram Samvat: 57 BC
 (Chandragupta Vikramaditya)
 Saka Samvat: AD 78
 (Kanishka)
 Gupta Samvat: AD [Chandragupta]
 Vallabhi Samvat: AD 319
 Kalchuri (Samvat: AD 248
 (Isvarsena)
 Harsha Samvat: AD 606

(Harshavardhan)
Hijarai Samvat: AD 622
(Prophel Muhammad)
Laxman Samvat: AD 1119
(Laxmansena of Bengal)
Ilahi Samvat: AD 1584
(Solar calendar of Akbar)

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