

***WELCOME TO  
THE HISTORY  
DEPARTMENT.  
A SEM-2***

*TOPIC NAME :*  
*HARSHAVARD*  
*HANA*  
*CORE AND EC-111*

Professor Name :  
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# Harshavardhana

Born : 595 CE

Died : 647 CE

Dynasty : Vardhana  
[Pushyabhuti]

Father :

Prabhakarvardhana

Religion : Hinduism,  
Buddhism



# Harshavardhan

Harsha [c.590-647CE] also known as Harshavardhana. Was an Indian emperor who ruled North India from 606 to 647 CE. He was a member of the Vardhana Dynasty and was the son of Prabhakarvardhana who defeated the Alchon Huna invaders and the younger brother of Rajyavardhana a king of Thanesar, present-day Haryana. At the height of Harsha's power, his Empire covered much of North and Northwestern India, extended East till Kamarupa and South until Narmada River and eventually made Kannauj [in present Uttar Pradesh state] his capital and ruled till 647 CE.

# *Origins*





- ❑ After the downfall of the Gupta Empire in the middle of the 6<sup>th</sup> Century, North India was split into several independent Kingdoms.
- ❑ The Northern and western region of India passed into the hands of a dozen or more feudatory states.
- ❑ Prabhakarvardhana the ruler of Sthanvisvara who belonged to the vardhana family, extended his control over neighbouring states.
- ❑ Prabhakarvardhana was the first king of the Vardhana dynasty with his capital at Thaneswar.
- ❑ After Prabhakarvardhana's death in 605, his eldest son, Rajya vardhana ascended the Throne.
- ❑ Harshavardhana was Rajya vardhana's Younger Brother.
- ❑ This Period of kings from the same line has been referred to as the vardhana dynasty in many Publications.

- ❑ Sources suggest that Harsha, like the Guptas, was a member of the Vaishya Varna.
- ❑ The Chinese traveller Xuanzang mentions an emperor named Shiladitya, who had been claimed to be Harsha, Xuanzang mentions that this king belonged to “Fei-she”.

# *Reign*

- ❖ As North India reverted to small republic and small monarchic states ruled by Gupta rulers after the fall of the prior Gupta Empire, Harsha united the small republics from Punjab to Central India, and their representatives crowned him king at an assembly in April 606 giving him the title of Maharaja.
- ❖ Harsha established an empire that brought all of northern India under his control.



- ❖ The peace and prosperity that prevailed made his court a centre of Cosmopolitanism, attracting Scholars, artists and religious visitors from far and wide.
- ❖ The chinese traveller Xuanzang visited the court of Harsha, and wrote a very favourable account of him, prasiing his justice and generosity.



# Autograph of King Harsha

- ❖ Pulakeshine 2 defeated Harsha on the banks of Narmada in the winter of 618-619.
- ❖ Pulkeshin entered into a treaty with Harsha, with the Narmada River designated as the border between the Chalukya Empire and that of Harshavardhana.
- ❖ Xuanzang describes the event thus:  
“Shiladityaraja [i.e.,Harsha] filled with confidence, marched at the head of his troops to contend with this prince [i.e.,Pulakeshin] but he was unable to prevail upon or subjugate him”.

- ❖ In 648, Tang dynasty emperor Tang Taizong sent wang Xuance to India in response to Harsha having sent an ambassador to China.
- ❖ However once in India he discovered Harsha had died and the new king attacked wang and his 30 mounted subordinates.
- ❖ This led to wang Xuance escaping to Tibet and then, leading a joint force of over 7,000 mounted infantry attacked the India state on June 16.
- ❖ The success of this attack brought wang Xuance the prestigious title of the “Grand Master for the closing court”.

- ❖ He also secured a reported Buddhist relic for china.
- ❖ The new king Arjun Jha was among the captives during wang Xuance's attack.
- ❖ After captured, king Arjun Jha was brought to chang'an city of Tang dynasty by Wang Xuance.

# *Religion*

- Like many other ancient Indian rulers, Harsha was eclectic in his religious views and practices.
- His seals describe his ancestors as sun-Worshippers, his elder brother as a Bhuddhist and himself as a shaivite.
- His land grant inscription describe him as Paramamaheshvara [supreme devotee of Shiva] and his play Nagananda is dedicated to shiva's consort Gauri.
- His court poet Bana also describes him as a shivite.



**“King Haesha pays homage to Buddha”,  
a 20<sup>th</sup> – century artist’s imagination.**



- According to the Chinese Buddhist traveler Xuanzang, Harsha was a devout Buddhist.
- Xuanzang states that Harsha banned animal slaughter for food, and built monasteries at the places visited by Gautama Buddha.
- He erected several thousand 100-feet high stupas on the banks of the Ganges river and built well-maintained hospices for travellers and poor people on highways across India.
- He organized an annual assembly of global scholars, and bestowed charitable alms on them.
- Every five years, he held a great assembly called Moksha.

- Xuanzang also describes a 21 – Day religious festival organized by Harsha in Kannauj during this festival, Harsha and his subordinate Kings performed daily rituals before a life – sized golden statue of the Buddha.
- Since Harsha's own records describe him as Shaivite, his conversion to Buddhist would have happened if at all, in the later part of his life.
- Even Xuanzang states that Harsha Patronised scholars of all religions, not just Buddhist monks.

# *Author*

- ✓ Harsha is widely believed to be the author of three, Sanskrit plays Ratnavali, Nagananda and Priyadarsika.
- ✓ While some believe that it was Bana, Harsha's court poet who wrote the plays as a paid commission, Wendy Doniger is "Persuaded, however, that king Harsha really wrote the plays.....himself."

# Empire of Harsha, 7<sup>th</sup> century CE India





# Coin of Harshavardhana, circa 606 – 647 CE





# THE END

Thenkyou for watching