

History Part - 11

11] Harshavardhana

NOTES

Harshavardhana (606 – 647 AD)

- After Gupta's decline, Harshavardhana, a ruler of Thanesar, Haryana extended his authority over all fiduciaries
- Harshavardhana made Kannauj his capital & seat of power & became last great Hindu ruler of North India.
- In his early life, Harsha was devoted to Shiva but later he became an ardent Mahayana Buddhist under the influence of Chinese pilgrim Huan Tsang.
- Prabhakaravardhana is the founder of vardhana dynasty.
- Harsha supported scholars like Haridatta and Jeyasena.
- Bhaskaravarman helped harsha to fight long with Sasangan who killed harsha brother.
- Harsha initiall followe d Bhraminism.
- Hieun- Tsang and Rajyasri influenced harsha to follow Buddhism

Pushyabhuti Dynasty

- It's founder was Pushyabhuti.
- They became independent after the Hun invasion.
- Their capital was Thaneshwar, to the north of Delhi.

- An important king of Vardhan Dynasty was Prabhakaravardhan.
- After his death, his elder son Rajyavardhan assumed the throne. He was treacherously murdered by Sasanka, the ruler of Bengal.
- Thereafter, Harshavardhan succeeded his brother.

Extent of Harshavardhan's Empire:

- Harsha ruled over a vast territory consisting of eastern Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Bihar, Orissa under their control. Nepal had accepted his overlordship. Harsha defeated the ruler of Kannauj and made Kannauj his new capital.
- Most important battle fought by Harshavardhan was against Chalukyan ruler Pulakeshin II with the ambition to extend his empire beyond Narmada. Aihole inscription of Pulakeshin mentions that Harsha was defeated.

Administration in Harshavardhana's Reign:

The administration during Harsha's reign was similar to that of the Guptas. Hiuen Tsang has described it in much detail.

- The administration was more feudal and decentralized during Harsh's reign as compared to that of the Guptas.

- Harsha probably began the practice of granting land to officers in lieu of salary.
- The maintenance of Public records was a characteristic feature of Harshavardhan's administration.
- The archives were called *nilopitu*, and were handled by special officers. The records of good as well as bad events that occurred during the the time have been recorded in them.
- Taxation was light and forced labour was also rare.
- One-sixth of the crop produce was collected as land tax.
- The king made frequent visits of inspection throughout his dominion.
- Harshavardhans Army consisted of four divisions- foot, chariot, horse and elephant. It was much more than that of the Mauryans.
- There was provision of cruel punishments, similar to the Mauryan times.
- Harshavardhan had diplomatic relations with China.

Economy and Society during Harsha's rule:

- There was fourfold Varna system in place comprising- Brahmins, kshtriya, Vysya, and Sudra.
- Brahmins received land grants from the king, Kshtriyas were the ruling class, Vysyas were involved in trading and Sudras practiced agriculture. There were many sub-castes.

- **Position of Women:** Women lost the privileges of Swayamvar(the choice of choosing the husband), Widow remarriage was not permitted, especially among higher castes. The practice of Dowry and Sati became prevalent.
- **Burial of dead:** dead were disposed either by cremation, water burial or exposure in the woods.
- During Harshavardhana's reign, trade and commerce declined, as depicted by an decrease in trade centres.
- This decline also affected handicraft and agriculture. This also led to rise of self-sufficient village economy.

Kannauj Assembly:

- It was held to honour Hiuen Tsang.
- 20 kings, 1000 scholars of Nalanda University, 3000 Brahmins and Jains attended this assembly at Kannauj.
- It continued till 23 days.
- Here Hiuen Tsang explained and established superiority of values of Mahayana doctrine over others.
- However, violence broke out and an assassination attempt was made on Harsha's life.

Allahabad Assembly also known as Prayag Assembly:

- It was held for 75 days where quinquennial distribution by the king to the people happened.

- Hiuen Tsang was invited by Harshavardhan to withdraw this sixth distribution of alms and gifts(Maha Moksha Parishad) at Prayag.
- Hiuen Tsang writes that Harsha actually gave away everything in the royal treasury.

Revenue collection during Harsha's period was divided into 4 parts namely

1. For kings
2. For Scholars
3. For officials
4. For Religious purposes

Hiuen Tsang (prince of pilgrims)

- In AD 644 Hieun – Tsang came to india
- Book → Si – Yu – Ki and Biography → Hui – Li
- Prevalent dowry & Sati system with no system of widow remarriage
- Sudras were known as agriculturist
- Trade declined & less issuance of coins
- Grants of land gained popularity
- Thieves at state were met with extreme punishments

Literary Sources

Banabhatta(Sanskrit scholar) Harshacharita , Kadambari

Harshavardhana

Ratnavali, Nagananda, Priyadarsika

- Harsha patronised Nalanda university (Mahayana type mostly), which attained international reputation as a center of learning during his reign
- At Valabhi lied Hinyana form of Buddhism Institution
- Nalanda (Giver of knowledge) name was founded by Kumargupta – 1 in Gupta period.
- Harsha Empire was the last Empire in North India before the invasion of Muslims

Expected Questions

1) Who created the kingdom in the north India after the fall of the Gupta?

- (A) Sasangan
- (B) Prabhakaravardhana
- (C) Rajyavardhana
- (D) Harshavardhana**

2) Who is the founder of vardhana tradition?

- (A) Rajyavardhana
- (B) Prabhakaravardhana**
- (C) Sasangan
- (D) Harshavardhan

3) The scholars supported by harsha is

(A) Haridatta

(B) Jayasena

(C) Both (A) and (B)

(D) None of these

4) What was the last Empire in North India before the invasion of Muslims?

(A) Gupta Empire

(B) Harsha Empire

(C) Kushana empire

(D) Maurya Empire

5) Which language scholar is bana ?

(A) Sanskrit

(B) Hindi

(C) Marathi

(D) Telugu

6) Who was known as 'The prince of pilgrims'?

(A) Bana

(B) Bhaskaravarman

(C) Hiuen-Tsang

(D) Harshavardhan

7) Who helped harsha to fight long with Sasangan who killed harsha brother?

(A) Bana

(B) Bhaskaravarman

(C) Hieun- Tsang

(D) Harshavardhan

8) Which of the following statement is/are correct ?

1) Chalukya King Pulakeshi II defeated Harsha on the Narmada River

2) Harsha initially embraced Hinduism.

(A) 1 only

(B) 2 only

(C) 1 and 2

(D) None of these

9) Which of the following statement is/are correct ?

1) The famed university of Buddhist University Nalanda Harshra was the best educated college in the world of Petra University was due to the harsha influence.

2) During the time of Harshārtha, Dharmabalar served as the patron of the Ship Art Corporation.

(A) 1 only

(B) 2 only

(C) 1 and 2

(D) None of these

10) Who influenced harsha to follow Buddhism?

(A) Hieun- Tsang

(B) Rajyasri

(C) **Both (A) and (B)**

(D) None of these

11) Why did Harsha's great religious conferences take place in Kanauj and Prayaga?

(A) **To honor Hieun –Tsang boarding in India**

(B) To support art, literature

(C) To follow Buddhism

(D) None of these

12) In which year Hieun – Tsang came to india ?

(A) AD 544

(B) AD 677

(C) AD 555

(D) **AD 644**

13) Who came to power after the death of the Prabhakavarthana?

(A) **Rajyavardhana**

(B) Baskarvarman

(C) Sasangan

(D) Harshavardhan

14) Which of the following statement is/are correct ?

- 1) Harsha transferred the capital from Kanauj to Thaneshwar.
- 2) Harsha sought to conquer South India and He was successful.

- (A) 1 only
(B) 2 only
(C) 1 and 2
(D) None of these

15) Which of the following statement is/are correct ?

- 1) ' Si-Yu-Ki' is a travel book Written by Hiuen -Tsang, that offers many news about India and Buddhism.
- 2) Farmers paid their share of 10 percent to the government

- (A) 1 only**
(B) 2 only
(C) 1 and 2
(D) None of these

16) What partition did Harsha followed in Buddhism?

- (A) Mahayana**
(B) Hinayana
(C) Both (A) and (B)
(D) None of these

17) Who wrote the books ' Harshacharita' 'Kadambari'?

- (A) Bhaskaravarma

(B) Bana

(C) Hiuen - Tsang

(D) Prabhakaravardhana

18) What were the books written by Harsha?

(A) Nagananda

(B) Ratnavali

(C) Priyadarsika

(D) All of these

19) Which of the following statement is/are correct ?

1) Buddhist monk HiuenTsang of the Chinese country came to India during Harsha period.

2) Hiuen – Tsang Kanauj, Prayag, Nalanda, Kanchipuram and many other places.

(A) 1 only

(B) 2 only

(C) 1 and 2

(D) None of these

20) Which of the following statement is/are correct ?

1) During harsha period there were no severe penalties such as death sentence.

2) Harsha donated his wealth in prayag convend which was held once in a five-year.

- (A) 1 only
- (B) 2 only
- (C) 1 and 2**
- (D) None of these

